



Fr Michael Tyrrell, S.J.
(1928-2001. In Zambia 1955-1970)

28 June 2001

Before entering the Jesuits in 1947 he worked for a short time for Guinness, Brewery becoming proficient at barrel rolling! After philosophy in Tullabeg, he came to Zambia, first as a scholastic in 1955 for three years and then again in 1964 when he came back as a priest. The first time, he learnt the language and taught in Canisius Secondary School. He returned to Ireland for theology and for ordination which took place in Milltown Park in 1961. Before returning in 1964, he obtained his Master of Arts in History. When he came back he hoped to get into the newly opened university in Lusaka to lecture in history but unfortunately this was not to be. He was in Canisius again teaching the A-level course and also got interested in sports. With Des Aungier and Peter Quinn, he help train the Canisius athletic team which won the National Inter High School Sports at Matero Stadium in Lusaka (July 13 1966) at which a few records were broken. It was a proud day for the school.

He liked to walk, and he liked to talk. He would laugh at jokes among the brethren, even those against himself at times, with the oft repeated expletive 'James' Street.' He organized a walk from Chikuni to Chivuna, a journey of over 30 miles. When they arrived, tired and footsore, they saw a large notice put up by the Sisters, 'Blessed are the feet of those

He was quite disappointed in not getting into the university even though he was a successful teacher at Canisius. He moved into parish ministry in the Monze diocese, in Kasiya and Chivuna parishes.

His health deteriorated, a condition which was not helped by a failure by others to appreciate that he was genuinely ill and not just suffering from imagination. While on home leave, a doctor friend put him straight into hospital for surgery for a rather rare stomach condition which had not been previously detected. A second operation was deemed necessary, the doctor warning the family that he might not survive the night. However he did survive and was advised not to return to Zambia.

When he recovered, he entered the university chaplaincy in the British Province. As Mick had always hankered after the academic life, the twelve years spent in London University were perhaps the most fulfilling and satisfying period in his life. His specialty seems to have been working with post-graduate students, with whom he relished hours of discussion and stimulating conversation for which he was amply qualified.

In 1983 he went to Berkeley USA for a sabbatical year. On returning to Ireland he gave retreats and directed the Spiritual Exercises. In 1987 he was posted to Gardiner Street where he remained until his death in 2001. While there he was chaplain to Temple Street Hospital, assisted in Gardiner Street Church and was Province Archivist for three years.

Michael was admitted to Cherryfield Lodge on 17 October 1998 with an unusual degenerative condition of the brain. He had a problem of mobility and in the last six months or so he was confined to a wheelchair. His condition was treated with medication. In the last few weeks his condition deteriorated rapidly, and he died peacefully on 28 June 2001, surrounded by his family and Jesuit colleagues.