



Fr Thaddeus Walczak, S.J.
(1906-1987. In Zambia 1949-1974)

8 July 1987

Tadeusz-Franciszek Walczak was born on 20 January 1906 in Stryj-Lwow, Austria, son of Prof Franciszek Walcsak and Helena Orlicka-Walczak. After their return to Poland he entered the novitiate in Stara Wies in 1921. He went to Pinsk for his juniorate and then to Cracow for three years of philosophy. He did his regency from 1931-1933 in the Jesuit college in Chyrow and then he studied theology in Lublin where he was ordained in 1936. He went back to the college in Chyrow as prefect of discipline until the outbreak of the war in 1939.

He was chaplain in the military hospital in Lwow but then joined the underground Polish army being assembled in Russia. In April 1941 he was arrested by the NKVD and sent to the notorious Lubianka Prison near Moscow. He was sentenced to death but released in September thanks to a general amnesty. He was sent as a chaplain to the 2nd Polish Army Corps and crossed into Persia and then Iraq. By 1943 he landed at Taranto, Italy in the Polish Corps as part of the British army. He was present at the battles of Sangro, Monte Cassino, Pescara, Recanati, Ancona, Falconara, Senigalia, Pesaro, Dovoaoala, Forti, Faensa and Bologna. He was appointed senior chaplain with the rank of major in May 1945.

He received many awards: Cross for Valour; Monte Cassino Cross; two silver Crosses of Merit with Swords; Polish Army Medal; two silver British 8th Army medals; two Italy gold stars; golden Cross of Merit, the silver Cross of Polonia Restituta; the Iron Cross of the 15th Battalion of 5th Polish Infantry Division.

In 1948 he made his tertianship in St Beuno's. He came to Lusaka in 1949 and was promptly engaged in pastoral work until 1953 in the general hospital and prison. He was sent to the newly opened Karendia mission where he built a residence and convent and the novitiate for the Kasisi Sisters with Br Gajdos. He returned to Lusaka where he was superior and chaplain to several institutions including the prisons, as well as looking after Chilanga outstation. He lived at St Ignatius with Fr Paddy O'Brien and the Bishop. From 1958 to 1964 he was parish priest of St Francis and diocesan procurator and chaplain to the colored community. Despite all these activities he still managed to be present to the dwindling Polish community in the city.

In 1974 both because of his asthma and for other reasons, he left for Johannesburg. He acted as a chaplain to the Little Servants of Mary Immaculate in Lyndhurst as well as an assistant to Mgr Joworski, the chaplain for the Polish community. This latter ministry however did not work out satisfactorily, but he was able to look after the spiritual needs of the Sisters until his death on 8th July 1987.