



Fr Ladislas Zabdyr, S.J.
(1890-1968. In Zambia 1928-1968)

18 July 1968

He Fr Zabdyr combined in his person the image of a loving father and the necessary authority with an obvious childlike simplicity. He preserved these qualities all his life long.

Fr Zabdyr was born in Karakow, Poland on 3 February 1890. He joined the Jesuits in 1907 and after the normal course of studies of philosophy and theology, he was ordained at Cracow in 1921. He then spent seven years in Jesuit secondary schools teaching and being prefect of discipline.

In June 1928, he arrived in Northern Rhodesia and was posted to Chikuni where he spent the next 22 years. He assisted in the parish but also with his educational background, he immediately involved himself in the school apostolate and set about firmly establishing a network of primary schools. He set up small committees in each locality consisting of a *kapitau* who ensured the attendance with the help of the headmen, an orderly for good maintenance of the schools and a "*dokotora*" who looked after the sick. Ahead of his time, really.

By 1937 he had increased the number of schools from 7 to 18 and by the time he had finished in Chikuni in 1950, there were 48 schools. Later some of these sites became mission stations with church and resident priest. The two major figures in Chikuni in these years were Fr Moreau and Fr Zabdyr and they developed a deep mutual relationship.

In 1939, Fr Zabdyr was appointed superior of all the Jesuits working in Northern Rhodesia. The outbreak of World War 2 in Europe and the takeover of a Communist Government in Poland brought serious problems of manpower and finances.

After eleven years as superior, he was posted to Kasisi, at the age of 65, and there threw himself into the same pastoral ministry of schools. He set about raising the necessary funds for the construction of an orphanage at Kasisi managed by the Sisters there.

Eight years later in 1958 he went to Karendia. The Government authorities had refused any application for a Catholic Church in Mumbwa. However, he managed to get permission for a Homecraft Centre there which would be staffed by Kasisi Sisters from Karendia twice a week. In this way, he got a foothold in Mumbwa which eventually led to establishing a parish in 1969, a year after his death.

His health began to deteriorate and he was transferred to Matero in Lusaka. Here he went through a period of anxiety about himself, maybe depression. He once told a colleague, 'Here I am at the end of my life and I stand before the Almighty God completely empty handed'.

He went to Kasisi to celebrate his 60th year as a Jesuit in 1967 which he enjoyed immensely. Soon afterwards, on 18 July 1968 he died peacefully in his room.