



**Fr Sean Murray, S.J.**  
**(1922-2008. In Zambia 1971-1986)**  
**21 July 2008**

Fr Sean was 49 years of age when he first came to Zambia in 1971. It was for him a new country, a new people and a new language. In the normal course of events, he would have come to Zambia thirty years earlier during regency time. As a scholastic, he spent his three years regency teaching, one year at the Crescent College in Limerick and two years at Clongowes Wood College.

He was born in Kilkee, Co Clare, a seaside resort, in 1922. His schooling was at the Christian Brothers in Limerick, at the Crescent College in Limerick and also at St Flannery College in Ennis.

At the age of 18, he joined the Jesuit novitiate at Emo Park in 1940. After his first vows, he followed the normal course of studies: humanities, philosophy, regency and theology, being ordained at Milltown Park in 1954. Tertianship came at the end of his formation in 1956. He spent a short time in Emo as bursar, then for twelve years he was back in Limerick to the Sacred Heart Church as minister of the house and prefect of the church.

Fr Sean brought to his work as a priest a spirit of prayer, a warm personality, a spirit of hard work, a friendliness which people found attractive, a concern for people and a good sense of humor.

In 1971 there came a great change of life and of lifestyle for Fr Sean. He came out to Zambia. His first assignment was as secretary to the Bishop of the Diocese for six months. Then he went to Malawi to the Language Centre at Lilongwe to learn this new language called chiNyanja, followed by a few months in a parish in the Chipata diocese to practice what he had learned.

Returning to Zambia, he was posted to Nakambala to the Sugar Estate in Mazabuka where he spent the rest of his time in Zambia doing parochial work among the people on the Estate. These were workers who came from various parts of Zambia with their different languages. For this, the chiNyanja Fr Sean had learned, was ideal as it is a sort of *lingua franca* in Zambia though its main location is the Eastern Province and Malawi.

Poor health took him back to Ireland for a long break but he returned to continue his work at Nakambala until 1986 when he had to return to Ireland for good. When he had recovered after a few years in Ireland he had hoped to come back again to Nakambala, as he wrote to his Provincial, 'I am keen to return to Nakambala'. But unfortunately, his health took a turn for the worse and he could not return.

For the next sixteen years until his death, Fr Sean soldiered on working in the church, often in pain but he was most welcoming to all who sought his services. The qualities – shall I call them virtues – which Fr Sean brought to his priestly life in the Crescent in Limerick, he brought to Nakambala in Zambia and he brought back with him to Gardiner Street in Dublin. He died in Cherryfield Lodge infirmary in Dublin on 21 July 2008 at the ripe old age of eighty six years.