



# Br Gabriel McKinney, S.J.

(1934-2023; in Zambia 1962-2023)

1 August 2023

*He was 89 years old and 67 years in the Society of Jesus, 61 of those in Zambia.*

Ort. .... 27 Feb 1934

Loc. Nat. .... Derry, Co. Derry, N. Ireland, U.K.

Ingr. .... 27 Mar 1956

Loc. Ingr. .... Emo Park, Ireland

Tertiaship..... Tullabeg, Co Offaly, Ireland

Dies. .... 31 Dec 1966

Grad. .... FF Dies.....02 Feb 1966

Loc. Grad..... Canisius, Chikuni Mission, Zambia

Trans.....HIB → SAP on 03 Dec 1969

Defunc. ....01 Aug 2023

Loc. Defunc....Coptic Hospital, Lusaka, Zambia

Prov: .....SAP.

Gabriel McKinney was born on 27 February 1934 in Derry, Northern Ireland, of Thomas and Mary (née Crossan) McKinney. He went to primary school at St Eugeenes and then finished off at St Columb’s College. He always remained close to his family and would spend most of his home leave with them. One of his brothers, Anthony, became a Carmelite priest working in Dublin. In the time of The Troubles of the 1960s.1970s when there was so much social conflict in the North, Gabriel would have on display in Chikuni recreation room various memorabilia, including a rubber bullet fired by a British soldier.

He entered the Society at Emo in 1956. Afterwards he did some juniorate in Milltown Park before being missioned to Northern Rhodesia in 1962. He spent two years at St Ignatius, Lusaka gaining mechanical experience in a city garage and so preparing himself for his life’s work in the garage at Chikuni. He took his final vows in Chikuni in 1966 and later joined the newly founded Vice-Province of Zambia in 1969.

In Chikuni he took charge of the garage and of all matters connected with the functioning of a large and varied fleet of motor vehicles. These were absolutely essential in the pastoral activities that were carried out not only from Chikuni itself, but also from the more-or-less dependent parishes of Monze, Chivuna, Fumbo and Kasiya. In addition, there were the tractors and other machinery for the farm, as well as the pumps so necessary for the water supplied. Gabriel and his team were always there to keep them in good working condition, even if at times they had to coax some of them back to life after the daily wear and tear, an accident, or even neglect.

A noteworthy factor in all of Gabriel’s garage work was his success in transmitting his knowledge and skills to many local young men. Some of these stayed with him for years, working alongside him. Others left and went on to start small-scale mechanics business and fitness centers of their own. Gabriel may not always have been aware of it, but the work he was doing made a major contribution to the economic independence of the people and to their all-important food security.

He also served as a well-liked and effective house minister, for a year at St Ignatius, for two years at Luwisha House and for two separate periods at Chikuni (1979-1982; 1988-1990). He brought to this work the care for order and detail that characterized everything he did in the mechanical area. In addition, he developed a flair for vegetable growing and maintained a sizeable and productive garden in Chikuni, and also at Kizito’s near Monze during his brief stay there in 2002.

Having spent more than 50 years in Chikuni, Gabriel became almost the embodiment of that community, with its positive reputation for hospitality and for apostolic outreach to the nearby religious communities and the families of teachers, development personnel and workers living in the locality. He was a warm-hearted community man who enjoyed living and interacting with fellow-Jesuits from a variety of nationalities.

Those who lived with him, or knew him reasonably well, were much aware that what really kept Gabriel going, whether in the garage, in the community or in the garden, was his deep spiritual life. There was nothing ostentatious about this, but it was clearly the guiding principle of his whole existence.

The last few months of his life he spent in John Chula House in Lusaka while recovering his health. He was due to return to his beloved Chikuni but took a sudden turn for the worse. The Lord called him home on 1 August 2023 at the age of 89.