



Br Francis Bulak, S.J.
(1895-1944. In Zambia 1929-1944)
7 August 1944

Francis Bulak was born on 11 October 1895 in Wierzbowiec-Trembowola (Poland). He entered the novitiate at Stara Wies in 1920. He worked as a sacristan in Cracow from 1922-28 and then headed to Northern Rhodesia shortly after Mgr Wolnik was appointed Apostolic Delegate of Broken Hill (Kabwe). His travelling companions were Fr Waligora, Br Źberman and Srs Melania, Krystyna and Cypriana.

The period between the two World Wars was a tight economic period, as Europe was only slowly recovering. Br Bulak worked mostly in the garden and his labors were essential both for the physical upkeep of the missionaries who had little means to buy what they wanted, and for producing some income from the sale of produce of the farm and garden.

Initially Kasisi was the Mission headquarters before Mgr Wolnik moved it to Kabwe. So Br Bulak's work there met an important need. Later he was sent to Kapoche with Fr Mazurek where the situation was quite difficult. Finally he was posted to Katondwe, the old center of the Mission which had developed, especially under the youthful Waligora, in his first period as superior.

Late in the evening of 7 August 1944, at 9.00 pm, Br Bulak went out to check the stables with a lantern and a gun. He knew that there was an old crippled lion around, that had already killed eight people. He was only 60 meters away from the south verandah when he was attacked and was killed instantly. The community heard the scream but when they came out all they found was the gun and the extinguished lantern. Since there was nothing they could do in the dark, they retired inside and spent the rest of the night anxiously awaiting the dawn. Early next morning Br Zak headed out to hunt for the beast and crawled into a dense thicket and confronted it. It was now 10.00 am. When the lion picked up the remains to make off, brother opened fire with his Krupp 11.2 mm and shot through the corpse to hit the lion. He then finished it off with a bullet to the head. He was able to retrieve the badly disfigured remains. Over the years there have been many stories of near misses of encounters with wild animals, but this was the only fatality.

Years later Mr Dominic Mulaisho would incorporate this event into his classic novel (*The Tongue of the Dumb*) about the clash of cultures he experienced as a youth growing up in the Luangwa Valley and from his schooling in Katondwe. He describes little Br Aruppe hearing the cry of distress of his beloved chickens and he goes out to see what is upsetting them and is attacked by a lion.

Today there is a small commemorative stone where the tragedy took place.