



Fr Desmond O'Loghlen, S.J.

(1918-2003. In Zambia 1951-2003)

4 September 2003

Des (as he was known to his fellow Jesuits) died on 4 September 2003 at the age of 85, completely unexpectedly. His mother lived to be 101 and all thought that Des would follow suit. He had gone to the Mina Medical Centre with a touch of 'flu and there he died.

He was born in Waterford, Ireland, in 1918, attended school at Blackrock College and Ballyfin and then entered the Society at Emo Park in 1936. The usual course of studies, arts, philosophy, theology, brought him to ordination in 1949 at Milltown Park, Dublin. For his tertianship he went to Paray-le-Monial in France, 1950/1951.

The second batch of Irish Jesuits to come to the then Northern Rhodesia in 1951 included Des who came to Chikuni to be Assistant principal of the newly opened Canisius College, 1951-1952. He then went north to learn chiBemba for a year and came to Lusaka to work in the Regiment church for a few months before moving to St Ignatius (1953-1959), doing parish work at Chilanga and Kafue, and being chaplain to Munali Secondary School and Chalimbana Teacher Training College. He became judicial Vicar for the Archdiocese. He moved to Charles Lwanga Teacher Training College to teach for a few months in 1960. He returned to St Ignatius as Superior and chaplain as before.

He was appointed Regular Superior of the Mission from 1962 to 1969, first residing in Choma and then in Mazabuka in Moreau house. As Des never gave a snap decision but one which was cautiously thought out, where he lived became known as 'Tomorrow House'. He returned to Lusaka to St Ignatius in 1970 where he spent the rest of his life. Parish priest there from 1970 to 1977, he then became full time chaplain to the University Teaching Hospital from 1977 to 1991, where he also built a chapel. Even after retiring as official chaplain, his devotion to the sick took him twice a week to other hospitals in Lusaka, Hill Top, Mina Medical Centre and Mine Hospital etc. At the same time parish work in St Ignatius, Masses, funerals, marriages, occupied his ever busy life right to the end.

Des was a very hospitable person, sincere and genuine in his relationships with others. He was sensitive to the needs of others and had a great serenity about him. He never became upset, was 'unflappable'. He 'hastened slowly' and was known to arrive for meals or any other function always 'slightly late'.

He had a marvelous memory for people and occasions, and could be relied upon to remember who was who, and recall when such an event took place. 'Ask Des' was always the solution when one was looking for information about the past. In fact after he died, letters, newspaper cuttings and records were found in his room, in short, ample material to gladden the heart of the archivist!

He would never be rushed. Once when he was having a cup of tea in the sitting room at St Ignatius, someone came to the parish office to see him without an appointment. He continued with his tea even pouring a second cup and was reminded that someone was still waiting at the parish office. He is said to have remarked 'I am not a fireman'! But, despite that, he was always kind and understanding to all who came to him. He was the perfect example of a gentleman in his graceful old age who had spent 52 years of dedicated priestly service in Zambia and especially Lusaka.