



**Fr Edward O'Connor, S.J.**  
**(1905-1993. In Zambia 1960-1993)**

**8 September 1993**

Fr Ernest Mackey S.J. was a well-known school retreat giver. The vocations of Fr Eddie O'Connor, and a few years later of Walter, his brother, were influenced by him. The father of the two brothers was Peter O'Connor a local lawyer and former Olympic champion. The story has it that Peter, encountering Fr Mackey after Fr Eddie had entered the Society, said "That man has taken one of my sons." Fr Mackey's undaunted reply was, "And now, he is coming to take another" (Walter)'.

Fr Eddie was born in Waterford, Ireland, in 1905. After secondary school, he entered the Society in Tullabeg in 1923. The normal course of studies brought him to ordination at Milltown Park in 1935. He taught for a year in Mungret College and then moved out to Rome to work in Vatican Radio from 1938 to 1946, remaining there during World War 2. He returned to Ireland and was on the retreat staff up to 1960.

He volunteered to come to Zambia and came in June of 1960, immediately setting about learning chiTonga. He worked mainly in the Southern Province where his brother Walter was. His work was pastoral, preaching, retreat work and parish work. However, he is very much associated with Namwala where he resided and administered for 17 years, 1963 to 1980.

His driving ability was not good, mainly because of failing eyesight. It is told that once when driving with his brother Walter, Walter suddenly shouted, 'Look out for that cow!' 'What cow?' replied Fr Eddie. After that it was decided that he stop driving. How now to get around his far-flung parish? Easy. He got a horse and this worked extremely well. He became a familiar sight trotting near and far, in fact one of the local farmers used to refer to him as 'Galloping Jesus'.

Fr Eddie was deeply devoted as a pastoral priest ready to give time and attention to his people, the result being that his work was fruitful. After his stay in Namwala, he was chaplain to St Joseph's Secondary School in Chivuna as well as carrying on his pastoral work. In 1989 he moved to Monze where he did dedicated work as chaplain in the hospital. He was dependable and always available when needed. He was a man of regular habits in his prayer life and daily routine.

For several, years Fr Eddie wrote the Monze Diocesan Newsletter. Over the years he produced articles for magazines on devotion to the Sacred Heart and the Pioneers. He wrote a pamphlet called *Spotlight on Matt Talbot* which went into a number of printings.

In the middle of 1992, Fr Eddie weakened considerably and moved to John Chula House, the Jesuit infirmary in Lusaka. In September of the following year he suffered severe back burns while taking a bath that was too hot and was confined to bed. September 8 was a big day for four Jesuits whose Jubilee was being celebrated and Fr Eddie was one of these, celebrating his 70th year in the Society. Just as Mass was beginning in the novitiate chapel news came across from Chula House that Fr Eddie had passed away quietly. The eighty or so Jesuits, priests, brothers, scholastics and novices who had gathered for the Jubilee, moved over to the chapel of Chula where Fr Eddie had already been laid out in his priestly vestments.