



**Br Jakob Kuba Grybos, S.J.**  
**(1924-2002. In Zambia 1968-2002)**

**27 September 2002**

Br Grybos or Br Kuba as he was known to his friends, died suddenly on 27 September 2002. He came back from Poland at the beginning of the month after receiving some medical attention. The doctors advised him not to return to Zambia but this was his vocation in which he was so happy and which he strongly believed was given to him by the Father, through the intercession of St Teresa of the Child Jesus.

He was still working until 17.00 on his final evening repairing, with his faithful helper, the water tanks in the Kasisi orphanage. The Sisters took him to the orphanage after the attack to look after him better. Sr Mariola mentioned gently to him that his state seemed to be serious. 'I know that this is my last evening. I am ready' he replied. Before the priest could come with the holy oils, he had died.

It is not easy to describe the funeral Mass given to this humble religious who had served so quietly and executed his work to perfection. The sorrow at seeing him gone and the sincere gratitude for what he was for us all was general. Cardinal Kozłowiecki celebrated the Mass with the assistance of Archbishop Mazombwe of Lusaka and the retired Archbishop Adrian Mungandu and with about 60 concelebrating priests, both Jesuits and others.

To Fr Klaus went the privilege of preaching the homily – and rightly so. He was not only a close friend of Kuba but also his 'spiritual director' – something like the relation between St Alphonsus Rodriguez and St Peter Claver. Klaus presented Kuba's spiritual outlook: his actual poverty without any attachments, his purity and transparency of character and his dedication to those in need – expressed in his predilection for the orphanage and Katondwe hospital and mission. He also spoke of his devotion to the Eucharist, to the Mother of God and the rosary and especially to 'his Little Theresa'.

Kuba was born on 24 July 1924 in Grybow about 50 km south-east of Krakow. His parents were Stanislas and Veronica Kruk. When he was 15, Hitler invaded Poland and thus launched the Second World War in 1939. Kuba was forced to work in the German Messerschmidt aircraft factory. But the clever boy, eager to learn, used this opportunity to familiarize himself with all kinds of techniques in mechanics. In time he could not only repair engines, but he was also able to make the necessary spare parts. At the end of the war he learned shoemaking and soon opened his own private workshop which was not appreciated by the socialist government and so he ended up in prison. However, there he discovered his vocation and soon after his release he entered the Jesuit novitiate in Stara Wies. Soon after his first vows he was sent to help run the Apostleship of Prayer publishing house in Cracow. There his mechanical and photographic skills were in great demand. When the Provincial got his first car, Kuba became his driver on top of everything else.

His missionary call was thwarted by the Government's reluctance to let a religious out of the country, above all someone with a prison record. His skills were much prized in the home province and his health problems also seemed to be a hindrance. However, he would pray to Therese of the Child Jesus: 'I shall ask her and she will do it' he would say. On her feast in 1967 he received both his passport and the permission from his Provincial to go to Zambia!

He came to Lusaka in 1968. It was a fortunate coincidence, for the diocese had now quite a fleet of vehicles and the cost of keeping them on the road was increasingly difficult to support. Both the Province and the Archdiocese were considering setting up a common workshop. Eventually when the practical Zeno Pilsyk was superior at Kasisi, with the technical assistance of Klaus and in consultation with Kuba, the workshop was opened. It did not look ostentatious, not even attractive, but it fulfilled well its purpose. Over thirty years the work of Kuba and his men saved the Province much money. Yet this workshop was not the only work of Br Kuba. Water pumps, electricity, different metal works in Kasisi and Katondwe were his responsibility. He always gave top priority to the orphanage or the hospital in Katondwe.

He constantly struggled with his health and yet in spite of that he was always at the disposal of everybody, working on quietly as if he were in the best of health. Whenever his asthma or heart got out of control he would drive the 270 km to Katondwe where Sr Dr Teresa, and later on Sr Dr Mira, would put him back on his feet.

He was not talkative or an extrovert. He was ever quiet, master of himself and clearly united with God. His prayer, his devotions and his dedication to the most-needy were the most obvious things in his daily life.