



Fr Aloys Baecher, S.J.
(1869-1952. In Zambia 1910-1913)

1 October 1952

Aloys Baecher was born in Muckenthal, Bavaria, Germany on 22 May 1869. After his secondary education in Ratisbon he studied theology for two and a half years at the Jesuit University in Innsbruck, Austria. After listening to Fr Czimmermann, a Hungarian preaching for recruits for the Jesuit Mission in Mozambique, he interrupted his studies and entered the novitiate at Barro since the Portuguese province had been entrusted with the mission of the Lower Zambesi. He studied philosophy in Setubal and spent 1893-1894 teaching Latin in Campolide at our college in Lisbon.

By 1894 he was already in Mozambique, in Quelimane teaching catechism until 1896. He used his free time to decorate the church there. He was sent to Borroma Mission to teach and again decorated the fine Church, the largest in the Mission. He fell critically ill and was anointed but later recovered and was sent back to Enghien, Belgium for his theology. He spent the last two years of his theology (1900-1902) at the Gregorian University (Rome), where he was ordained on 29 September 1901. After two years studying science at Kalocsa (1902-1904) he returned to Campolide College in Portugal.

By 1906 he was back in Mozambique and began in Chupanga with Frs Araujo and Moskopp and then was named superior of Miruru and Zumbo Missions. At Miruru he oversaw the construction of a large three-nave church, school buildings (including a boarding section for girls) which he gave into the care of the St Joseph of Cluny Sisters. He greatly developed the central mission and set up a whole network of outstations, helping to establish a good relationship between the local people and the missionaries.

On 5 October 1910 a revolution brought a new anti-Church Government to power which quickly expelled all Jesuits from Portugal and its colonies. It took a couple of years before all the due process was complete in remote Mozambique, during which time efforts were made to get Divine Word Missionaries to take over. Some of the Jesuits wanted to cross the Luangwa River into the British territory of Northern Rhodesia and continue their missionary labors there. He helped greatly in setting up the initial stages at Kapoche and then Katondwe, with due permission obtained from the Boma in Feira. When the new Luangwa Mission was erected under the care of the Polish Jesuits, Baecher was appointed acting superior until his replacement came from Poland, and then he returned to Europe. Before he left, he drew up a detailed plan of the area from Luangwa to the Kafue with his usual courage, initiative, determination and diplomacy. This plan could be entrusted both to the Polish and Austrian Jesuits. He was in communication with the local superior in Harare as well as the major superiors back home. In a short time the Polish Province took full responsibility under the capable leadership of Fr Kraupa.

Fr Baecher remained a year at Jette College, Belgium as spiritual father. In 1915 he went to Brazil and was appointed superior of the Institute of St Aloysius at Caetete. Later he was superior of the whole mission of North Brazil, rector of the Apostolic School at Baturite and of the College of Bahia and Recife. In 1927 the Apostolic School was opened while he was still Mission Superior and when the novitiate was opened in 1932 he was its first rector. He was renowned for his charity, affability and large heartedness, gifts which won the confidence of his people. During the last ten years of

his life he suffered from deafness and nervous disorders so that he could only say Mass but he was still able to be procurator and revisor of the temporal administration of Bahia College and of the *arcae* of the vice-province. He passed away in the College on 1 October 1952.

1 October

22 May 1869 – 1 October 1952

Fr. Luís Gonzaga BAECHER

He was born in Wiesau, in the province of Oberpfalz, Bavaria, Germany, on May 22, 1869. He studied in Regensburg (Regensburg) for nine years and then started his studies at the University of Innsbruck (Austria). There, he studied theology for two and a half years. He entered the Society of Jesus on January 23, 1890, at Barro. He did a year of philosophy in Setubal. Then, he did part of his regency at Colégio de Campolide (1893 - 1894) where he taught Latin. In 1894, he left for the Zambezia Mission (Mozambique) and spent about two years in Quelimane (1894 - 1896), working as an elementary school teacher and catechist. He continued his regency for three more years in the Boroma Mission (1996 - 1999) and returned to Europe to study theology. For this formation, he did one year in Enghien, Belgium, and two years in Rome, at the Gregorian University. He was ordained priest in Rome on September 21, 1901. He also spent some years at Colégio de Campolide, teaching mathematics and German. In 1906, he went to Mozambique for his apostolate. He took his final vows on March 19, 1906, in Quelimane and, on June 23, he was appointed superior of the Miruro mission, in Zumbo. He organized all the services of the mission and equipped it with a good infrastructure: He designed the church in a beautiful gothic style and imprinted on it a remarkable development. He left Mozambique, expelled by the government of the 1st Portuguese Republic, and founded, with other companions, the mission of Katóndue, in Rhodesia. In 1915, he embarked for the Mission of Brazil. He was superior of the Institute of St. Aloysius Gonzaga (1915-1920), Superior General of the Mission (1924-1929), Rector of the Apostolic School, in Baturité, Ceará (1929-1934), Rector of Manuel da Nóbrega College, in Recife (1936-1940) and superior of the residence of St. Anthony of Barra, in Salvador (1940-1950). He died in São Salvador da Baía, on October 1st, 1952. As part of his publications, he translated, from Greek, Sófocles' "Antigone", which was turned into music by Fr. Luís Gonzaga Mariz, SJ.

(Cf. APSI, Livro das entradas - Barro's Noviciate, 1885 – 1897, 213/03; Dicionário Histórico de Companhia de Jesus, I, p. 320; Grande Enciclopédia Portuguesa e Brasileira, 38, p. 758)