



Fr Anthony Froch, S.J.
(1903-1998. In Zambia 1935-1998)

7 October 1998

Fr Froch was the oldest member of the Province at his death on 7 October 1998, having almost reached 95 years. He was born on 24 December 1903 at Markowice about 20 km south of the National Marian Shrine of Czestochowa in Poland. He was the eldest of the family of John and Antonine (Kuszak) who were staunchly traditional in their faith.

His missionary vocation started very early, as he said in a letter to his brother Ladislav (professor emeritus of Lublin Catholic University): "One day, I was then about 10 years old, our father brought home some religious periodical – was it the Messenger of the Sacred Heart? I was reading it aloud to the whole family. I came to the point where it narrated about the work of the Polish Jesuits somewhere beyond the seas. I became so moved that I could not read any further. This thought of the missions, far beyond the seas, was continuously returning to me". From this came the need and desire of education which was far from easy under the oppressive Russian power. The young Anthony prepared himself for admission to the Jesuit novitiate in Stara Wies in 1922 by finding private tuition, first locally and then in Czestochowa, although it cost the family many a sacrifice.

The persistent idea of the missions, now identified as that of Northern Rhodesia, brought the young scholastic to Heythrop (England) in order to master English and later to be ordained. After the fourth year of theology and the year of tertianship he was ready. Still the Provincial of Cracow had doubts about his aptitude for the missionary life because of health problems. Fr Froch wrote to Mgr Wolnik, the Prefect Apostolic of Kabwe, who solved all the problems.

From the beginning he felt at home in the mission. He immediately started to learn chiLenje and before long he was hearing confessions and soon preaching in it and visiting the schools. He spent two years at Kasisi. In 1937 he was transferred to Chikuni where he spent 6 years. In a letter of 27 March 1938 to his brother he wrote: "I feel very happy here in Africa. The missionary work gives me much consolation. I am healthy, even healthier than in Poland. Of course, Kasisi and Chikuni have the best climate".

In 1943 he was transferred to Chingombe where he was to spend 20 years of his missionary life until 1963. Chingombe and Katondwe were the most difficult places to work in because of the very hot climate. However Chingombe was much more remote. The mission had to be self-sufficient in everything because there was no road to it until Br Perdik constructed one in 1952. Whatever supplies they needed had to be brought by hired carriers the 90 km from the Old Mkushi Boma or even the 202 km from Kabwe.

At the age of 60 he left Chingombe to be consecutively superior of Kasisi and Karendia. Then from 1967 he served in most of the parishes of the archdiocese as a missionary. That is what he liked best. His special joy was to be a priest serving the people of God, as he often wrote to his superiors. In 1972 on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of his Jesuit life, celebrated in Ngungu near Kabwe, he was extolling the goodness of God in giving him this vocation and calling him to the priesthood. Through this he was able to serve the people in their relationship to God. He expressed exactly

the same sentiments when celebrating the 50th anniversary of his priesthood in 1985 in Matero.

In his long missionary life he only went back home twice to visit his family and country; once in 1969 and again in 1980. Both times he went there happily but somewhat reluctantly. He had to be talked into going because, as he said: 'When I go, those for whom I have pastoral care will have no Mass nor sacraments'. Even at the age of 73 he wrote to the Provincial 'I am idle here in Katondwe. There is not much for me to do during the whole week. I like the Sundays best when I say two Masses in different places, and a third one in the afternoon in the hospital for the patients'.

As he got older his hearing became a problem and often his lengthy sermons became quite mixed linguistically as he would use chiLenje, chiNyanja, chiTonga and even English. He was changed from Matero in 1989 and spent a short time in St Paul's Mulungushi and then at Bwacha. Finally he was persuaded to come to Chula House. He still liked to hear confessions at the Marian Shrine. To the end he was interested in everything that concerned the Church both in Zambia and elsewhere. He was an avid reader of anything which concerned the Church, and was still able to read without glasses. Full of years and service he passed way on 7 October 1998.