



Fr Louis Haven, S.J.

(1920-1987. In Zambia 1961-1987)

9 October 1987

Lou (as Fr Louis was always known) was born in Hardin, Montana on 23 March 1920, but the family moved to Seattle when he was quite young. His brother Albert also became a priest. Lou entered the Society at Sheridan in 1938 and pursued the normal studies of a young scholastic. After ordination in 1951 and then tertianship, Lou, a most promising young priest, was quickly initiated into the many apostolates of his area. He rapidly faced such challenging appointments as teacher in a secondary school, a posting to the theology department in a university, and rectorship of an emerging Jesuit High School in the large city of Portland. But Lou's mind and heart was on a broader field, witnessed by the fact that he had volunteered both for the Alaskan and Japanese missions.

In November 1961, he came to Zambia, the first of the Oregon Jesuits to come to Africa. He came to Mpima minor seminary, Kabwe, as teacher and headmaster. He moved from there in 1964 to become Education Secretary for the Archdiocese for eight years. In the educational field he built up a relationship with the teachers and educational administrators that he valued very deeply and it was always a source of contentment to him. He then became Socius (secretary) to the Provincial for three years. He was always open, friendly and accommodating. It was not uncommon for his Jesuit colleagues to say, 'Get hold of Lou, he will do something'. Kasisi saw him for a short time and so did Luwisha House in Lusaka, as minister for a longer time.

He was in the USA for a medical check-up in 1981 and wrote afterwards in a letter to relatives and friends about Portland: "I was very surprised at the great number of really destitute people. But I was equally uplifted at the Christian response to it all: provision of warm places to sleep, hot showers and clean or secondhand clothes and many thousands of free meals monthly. The Church is alive and well here".

This really impressed Lou as he had two items close to his heart, namely, his preferential option for the poor and his concern about justice/injustice as found in Zambia. At a later stage in his life when he was undergoing treatment, a psychologist wrote of him: "depressed and exhausted due to years of productivity in the work of loving the poor in Zambia and being always ready to serve others".

When he was sent to Kabwe again for pastoral work he wrote to his Provincial, "God has to have a sense of humor to inspire you to send me here when I can't say or understand 'Boo!' in chiBemba yet". Kabwe was the town he really liked. When he became ill he was admitted to Kabwe hospital, diagnosed with pulmonary TB, and died there on 9 October 1987.

At his funeral Mass, Fr J O'Leary, his old friend and companion, spoke well of Lou whom he had known both in USA and in Zambia. He spoke of Lou's love of people, especially poor people, and how they appreciated him in return. He spoke of Lou's intelligence and his driving concern for justice at all times and in all circumstances, especially if it were to protect someone who was less privileged. He spoke of Lou's love of nature and the great outdoors and the water. He spoke of his love of adventure and desire to do the things no one else did and his love of the new. Finally he said how much Lou loved being a priest and doing the work of a priest. Even while he was an administrator, he always found a parish to help in.