



Br. Happy Patrick Mzumara, S.J.
(1960-2021)

21 October 2021

Happy Patrick Mzumara, fondly known as HP, was born of Edward Mzumara and Elizabeth Chirwa, on 10 March 1960 at Mzambazi, Malawi. He was the second child of a family of ten. He had quite an unusual background for his maternal grandfather was the first Catholic of the Mzuzu Diocese and was baptized while in Zimbabwe at Kotama in 1935. He returned home to Pitra Village where the first Mass was celebrated in his house. He became the first catechist of the diocese. His own younger sister, Cecilia joined the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception and was recently elected their Mother General. The second bishop of Mzuzu, the late Rt Rev Joseph Zuza, was his uncle.

He went to St John Bosco Secondary School in Katete (Mzimba District). When he entered the novitiate in 1983 he was the first Tumbuka Jesuit. While there he went to the KATC at Kasisi and worked with Fr Lesseps. With his agricultural background, he developed his desire to work in agriculture. After vows he completed his O-levels in Canisius, Chikuni and then worked at KATC. In 1989 he obtained a certificate from the Zambia College of Agriculture at Monze. He spent 1990-1991 at Hekima College, Nairobi earning a diploma in theology.

He worked as manager in Chikuni farm from 1991 to 1995. His legacy in making a short cut to the main road from Chikuni which does not pass through Chisekesi, is sometimes referred to as the 'Mzumara highway'.

He did his tertianship in St. Mary's, Alaska, and then proceeded to Spokane, WA and completed the Focus on Leadership Program in 1997. On returning home he worked for a number of years with CHEP (Copperbelt Health Education Program) in Kitwe helping the youth face the problem of AIDS. He was sent to Marivale in South Africa for studies in development and theology where he obtained a master's degree from the University of KwaZulu Natal. He worked as minister in Lilongwe, Malawi from 2005 to 2008.

Fr Terry Muteshi writes of his time later in Kasungu: "He was passionate about agriculture... He would explain the medicinal aspects of many plants and quite a number of people would consult him on their illness and he would refer them to certain plants. We used to call him the 'witchdoctor', for he would sit under a mango tree in Kasungu community and talk to people about the various plants he had planted and their medicinal properties."

He was assigned to Kasisi for quite a number of years. He started working at KATC (2008-2009) and then as minister looking after the Province farm (2012-2014) and finally the community garden (2014-2017). While at KATC he developed a small livestock enclosure which had chickens, ducks, turkeys and rabbits. It was built in such a manner that villagers could copy the idea at their farms.

During his time at Kasisi, he experienced serious health problems and was eventually sent to South Africa where his cancer was successfully treated with chemotherapy.

He was regular contributor at BBC and provided them with many African proverbs and sayings. BBC even gave him a prize for his many submissions. He loved telling stories and making people laugh. He liked recounting events about the first president of Malawi, Dr Kamuzu Banda, and would imitate his mannerisms and way of talking to the delight of his listeners. Fr Charlie Searson writes of a time in Ireland when he invited Happy to visit his brother's family. "I still have a wonderful photograph of that visit which shows Happy entertaining my nieces and nephews, bringing out the very best smiles in them. As his name implied he had the ability to make people discover their happiness."

Mother General Sr Cecilia writes: "My dear brother Happy Patrick will always be remembered for his unconditional love, generosity, simplicity and perseverance in many ways. He was a selfless and sociable with anyone. The knowledge and skills he had were easily and happily shared with everybody. He was also a joyful person, and took life easy. He indeed found God in everything! Never in a hurry for anything."

During his sabbatical and his later work in Mzuzul Diocese he organized a whole program of planting trees. He also renovated the diocesan cemetery in Katoto where he was buried, having passed away on 21 October 2021. As Bishop John Ryan of Mzuzu remarked at his funeral Mass to a full cathedral "he was making the bed in which he was to lie."