

Oct 29, 1985



## **SILVIO MOREIRA**

1941- 1985 (extreme right of the picture)

## **JOÃO DE DEUS**

## **GONÇALVES**

## **KAMTEDZA**

1930-1985 (second from right)

On 4 September 1985 the Jesuits in Mozambique learnt the hard truth that their companions, Frs Silvio Moreira and João de Deus Gonçalves Kamtedza, had been murdered five days earlier on the night of 29/30 October in Chapotera, where the Jesuits had moved when Lifidzi Mission in Angonia had been nationalised. The soldiers on the government side in the civil war that followed Independence (1974) were believed to be responsible. It seems they were bent on silencing the criticism by the Church of the terror tactics they were using towards civilians. By this time several Jesuits and nuns had been kidnapped by the guerrillas and handed over to Caritas in Zimbabwe. So when the two Jesuits went missing it was believed they suffered the same fate.

When the Jesuits returned to Mozambique in 1941 – they had been expelled four times and they returned four times - they made Angonia the main focus of their mission. By the time of the civil war the district was a flourishing centre for Christianity. Now there were disappearances and kidnappings and the Jesuits, who opted to stay with the people rather than retire to the safety of the cities, were sharing the ordeal of the people. When the priests did not return to their base on the 29 October the people became anxious but it took several days to find the bodies. They were beginning to decompose and were partly eaten by wild animals when they were found some 300 meters from the outstation. They had been bayoneted to death.

**Fr Silvio Alves Moreira** was born in Rio Meão, Portugal, in 1941, the ninth in a family of thirteen children. It was a profoundly Christian family and a natural place for a vocation to the priesthood. In 1952 he joined the minor seminary in Coimbra and in 1957 he entered the novitiate at Soutelo, near Braga in Northern Portugal. He volunteered to go to Mozambique for Regency and taught at Boroma Teacher Training School and also in Ulongwe. He returned to Portugal for theology and was ordained in 1972. He then returned to Mozambique and worked in the seminary at Zóbue. After Independence he went to Tete where he

taught at the Secondary School in the city while doing pastoral work at Matundo, a nearby town across the river.

In 1981 he was sent to Maputo and lectured there in the Major Seminary while doing pastoral work in Matola city where he started a new community and a parish at Amparo. After returning from leave in Portugal in 1984 he went to Satemwa in Angonia and applied himself to learning Chewa. In August that year he moved to Chapotera to work with Fr João de Deus and it was there that his fearless voice condemning the atrocities was finally silenced by the assassins the following year.

Those who knew Fr Silvio remember a man who was courageous, not discouraged by difficulties, enterprising, lively and joyful. In the May before his death he wrote a letter full of his activities during Holy Week when he seemed to have no time to eat or rest. On Holy Thursday, after the Eucharist and Adoration, which he celebrated at an outstation, he tried to sleep on a mat but without success. In his letter he describes how he heard a cock crow towards morning. It crowed a second time and then a third and it was only then that he got up. This struck him because in rural villages the cock crowing is important and people normally rise at the second crow.

30 October

16 April 1941 – 30 October 1985

### **Fr. Sílvio Alves MOREIRA**

He was born in Santo António, Freguesia de Rio Meão, Concelho de Vila da Feira, Aveiro, on 16 April 1941 and entered the Society of Jesus on 24 October 1957, in Soutelo, Braga. After his studies in humanities in Soutelo, he was sent to the Faculty of Philosophy in Braga, where he graduated in philosophy in 1965. In the same year, he left for Mozambique, where he worked as a teacher at the Teacher Training School and at the Seminary in Zóbue (1965-1968). He did his theology at the Catholic University of Portugal, in Lisbon (1968 - 1972). He was ordained priest on July 30, 1972, in Covilhã. He returned to Mozambique where he was assigned to work as a teacher at the Seminary in Zóbue. After the nationalisation of the Seminary, he worked in the Matundo neighbourhood, in Tete City. He took his final vows on 17th August 1980, in Beira. In 1981, he went to Maputo where he was appointed parish priest of N<sup>a</sup> S<sup>a</sup> do Amparo Parish, in Matola and taught at the Diocesan Seminary. In 1984, he was sent to Satémwa, Angónia, and in 1985 to Chapotera. From the residence of Chapotera, with Fr. Joao de Deus Kantedza, he was murdered on 30 October 1985. He was a generous, courageous, enterprising and fearless religious person. He was also sensitive to injustices and violations of human dignity as he denounced crimes against the people of the region. He was aware of the danger he was going through, but he preferred to stay with the people.

(Cf. APSI, Livro das entradas; Necrológio; JESUÍTAS..., n. 117, Novembro 1985)