



**Br Patrick Sherry, S.J.**  
**(1920-1983. In Zambia 1953-1983)**

**5 November 1983**

“We imagine his going left many hearts empty and evoked memories of all kinds of services and kindnesses, not least his unfailing patience and cheerfulness”. With these words Fr John Fitzgerald, writing from the Seychelles, summed up well the immediate aftermath of Br Sherry's death on the night of Saturday 5 November 1983, in the Bishop's house.

Br Sherry's passing was sudden. On Friday ‘Sher’ (as he was known to his friends) stayed in bed for the greater part of the day. He came to meals and evening prayer. The following morning saw him as usual at the early Mass. At about 13.00 hours on Saturday he phoned the Sisters in the hospital. The Sisters and doctor came over. The crisis came at about 22.50 when Sher struggled to the door of Fr Jim Carroll's room to say that he could not breathe. Sr Grainne arrived and started cardiac massage. But the Lord had called Sher to himself.

Br Sherry was born in Ireland on 17 March 1920. He entered the Society on 10 February 1939 and arrived in Zambia on 1 September 1953. For the next 30 years he served the young Church in Zambia selflessly and with unbounded generosity. In Chikuni he served as a kind of ‘minister of supplies’. Fr MacMahon would lean heavily on him but Sher had his little hideouts which constituted his survival kit! He finally moved into the field of mechanics and water pumps. After Chikuni he moved to Chivuna where he was engaged in the trade school and with odd jobs of maintenance. Then he started to be a sort of ‘move and fix it’ on a diocesan level. About 1965/1966 he moved into the Bishop's house in Monze from where he continued his ‘move and fix it’ campaign. He loved to color these trouble shooting journeys with a touch of drama and life and death urgency.

“Sher is a great loss. Apart from his work, he was a great community man”, said the Bishop of Monze. “He was part and parcel of everything that went on in the community. He was interested in parish affairs. He never stinted himself in anything he did. In community discussions he often brought them back to some basic spiritual principle’.

He was a gentle; understanding, thoughtful and patient man. He was both candid and open with the ability to talk about the small things of life. People appreciated this and were greatly saddened by his death. He was loyal to the group of men who worked with him and was ready to defend them when criticism was leveled against them. They, on their part, appreciated this and made his coffin when he died, planed and varnished it, washed and shone his vanette and drove him to his grave to show the fellowship they enjoyed in his company.

Perhaps it was his generosity that shone most brightly. He had no hours. He once said, “My Philosophy of life is to try to help everyone as best I can”. He liked praise and a pat on the back but he never worked for it. He was a self-made man. He battled with great courage against illness and disability. Without any chance of professional training, he became proficient in general mechanics, electricity and plumbing. But he specialized in water pumps where he often succeeded where more professional people failed! He had well developed hobbies, stamp collecting being close to his heart and he left behind him quite a valuable collection. ‘If you want your watch repaired, Sher's your man’ indicates his other hobby.

His religious life and Jesuit vocation were something very dear to him. He never had an identity crisis. He was a fully convinced and dedicated religious. His was a deep and direct faith: a gospel faith, which led him directly to the person of Christ in His church, in His

sacraments and in His People. This faith enriched his many human qualities and his selfless service of others.

A great crowd thronged the Church in Monze for his funeral Mass. They came from every corner of the diocese to pray for Br Sher and to offer thanks for his life. Fr Dominic Nchete, the VG, at the graveside voiced the official thanks of the diocese for Br Sherry's life of service and dedication to the church in Zambia. The leader of the Salvation Army in Monze offered a prayer and thanks to God for him. As the 28 concelebrants left the altar, the leading priests lifted his coffin and carried it to the waiting vanette - a last gesture of closeness to him.