



John Dooley, S.J.

(1930-2022. In Zambia 1981-2008)

12 November 2022

Although John Dooley was born on 22 May 1930 in Ilford, Essex, United Kingdom, he was raised in Tramore, Co. Waterford, Ireland. His early schooling was at Waterpark College, Waterford and then he went to Clongowes Wood College (1939-1946). He entered the novitiate at Emo in 1946 with Michael J. Kelly, S.J.

He spent a substantial portion of his adult life, 27 or his 92 years, in Zambia. For the first 13 of these he was stationed at the Christian Brothers Secondary School, St Edmund's in Mazabuka, where his ministries were twofold: Serving as school chaplain and teaching Religious Education, English and Geography (1981-1995). These were followed by 11 years at Mukasa Minor Seminary in Choma (1994-2006, where he continued to teach the same three subjects. These teaching years brought John to the age of 75 when he assumed the less demanding pastoral responsibility of assisting in Nakambala parish in Mazabuka. Three years later, in 2008, at the age of 78, a variety of health problems made it necessary for him to return to Ireland where he spent the remainder of his life assisting in the Milltown Park community and in Cherryfield Lodge.

From the day he entered the novitiate, at just over 16 years of age, John always had a strong and clear speaking and singing voice. This stood him in good stead throughout his life as a teacher, school chaplain and assistant pastor. The clarity of his diction contributed in no small measure to his success as a teacher during the seven years he taught in Jesuit schools in Ireland (1954-1957, 1962-1966), the thirteen years he spent as a teacher in the Leo XIII Institute in Milan, Italy (1966-1980) and the twenty-four in St Edmund's and in Mukasa, especially as this was mirrored by the almost equal clarity of presentation and thought - though at times, he could easily misunderstand an argument or misread a situation.

As for his singing, John greatly appreciated the opportunities that arose in Zambia to prepare choirs, to sing with them and to be part of many different liturgical celebrations. In the years after his return to Ireland, many generations of Cherryfield residents enjoyed or tolerated, according to their disposition, his regular leading of their daily liturgy and choice of hymns.

When he was still a novice, John contracted diphtheria, as did a number of his fellow-novices. This necessitated their being sent for a period to an isolation hospital and being given a fairly gentle daily regime after which they eventually returned to the novitiate. This seems to have left a mark on him for much of the rest of his life, showing itself in concern about his health, withdrawn from community chores or other activities that he felt might be taxing. This did not stop him doing excellent work or from being a very agreeable and pleasant companion. Yet he frequently gave the impression that he was a bundle of energy and ability, just waiting to explode into action, but incapable of doing so because of an inbuilt fear that if he did so, it would send him back to the infirmary-type existence he had known in his novitiate days.

John was simple and direct in outlook. For the greater part, he found that issues were straightforward and lines of possible or permissible action were clear, while he never seemed to be in doubt about what was right and what was wrong. Moulded in this approach he lived a straight forward and uncomplicated life in which he related well to the people and they to him, though these relationships never seemed to have been marked by any notable depth. He was always a good, kind and easy companion. Almost effortlessly he was a man of God, deeply religious, pious and sure in his faith and in its practice. John was bigger than any limitations implied by these characteristics, He was a very engaged apostolic man. He was an excellent teacher, He was a deeply religious person. He was one who in his simple naivety was transparent to God and through whom the goodness and graciousness of God readily communicated itself to others.