

**Fr Ambrose Casset, S.J.**  
**(1863-1928. In Zambia 1909-1912; 1914-1920)**

**14 November 1928**

Like Blessed Peter Fabre, Fr Casset was from Savoy in the east of France. He was born at Myans on 20 July 1863 and was educated at Dole. He took up teaching but then he entered the Society in 1883 already with a view to joining the Zambesi Mission. His novitiate and juniorate was at Tronchiennes in Belgium where he met many others who had volunteered for the same Mission: Lallemand, Verdin, Loubiere, Perrodin, Goetz, Erhart, Corboy, Moreau and Apel.

He began his philosophy at Dunbrody in South Africa with all his companions in 1886 and then spent five years teaching at St Aidan's College, Grahamstown. When the international mission became the responsibility of the English Province he was transferred to it and so he was sent for his theology at St Beuno's in Wales where he was ordained in 1897. His tertianship was in Tronchiennes.

He was assigned to Gokomere (Zimbabwe) which was opened shortly before by Fr Boos. After the deaths of the early men, they closed the station but not before Fr Casset himself fell seriously sick. The Mission was transferred to Driefontein. He was sent to Empandeni where he recovered. He then spent seven years at Keilands, a remote and very difficult station in South Africa. It represented all the difficulties a missionary had to face from drought to witchcraft. Fr Bontemps wrote "I met Fr Casset first at Dunbrody in 1888... then we were companions at St Beuno's and later at Keilands for five years... He was a bright young scholastic cheerful, witty, with a good brain and a better heart... But the years had told upon his rather delicate constitution... I noticed then that he had become high-strung and sensitive. The barrenness of Keilands was a terrible trial to this sensitiveness and the slow pace of progress was a torture".

After another year teaching at Grahamstown he was sent to Chikuni in Zambia, which had recently been opened by Fr Moreau. During his nine years there (1909-1912; 1914-1920) he mastered chiTonga and became quite prolific, writing the basic books needed by the early Mission e.g. Catechism in Tonga (1911), Phrase Book of English & Tonga (1915), Bible History (1915), Tonga Prayer & Hymnbook (1919), Tonga Grammar & Vocabulary (1920).

In 1920 he came back to Empandeni where he hoped he might recover his health. His work was confined to the four outstations which fortunately were not far distant. However his health did not improve and when he returned to England he was sent to his native Savoy where he seemed to recover and even taught and did light pastoral work at Thonon-les-Bains, not far from his home town of Myans. He returned with confidence to England and went to St Beuno's, but his health collapsed again. He took on a chaplaincy with the Shaw Stewarts but he lasted only a short time and passed away on 14 November 1928.