

23 November

Fr PETER DUFFY

20 July 1886 – 23 November 1947



Peter Duffy was a Londoner and educated at St Ignatius, Stamford Hill. He entered the Society in 1904 and was ordained in 1920. He taught as a regent at Beaumont and St Francis Xavier (Liverpool). He was briefly at Empaneni before moving to St George's in 1925, the year before the school moved to Salisbury (Harare). Three years later he was at Musami where he was an

energetic builder. He became a fluent Shona speaker.

There is a letter from him to the provincial in 1930 which speaks of starting a boarding school for 30 boys. It was harder to get girls. He speaks of his predecessors baptising too early as people fell away. He insisted on a two-year attendance at out schools catechism and six months at the mission before he would baptise.

He goes on, in the letter, to describe a contretemps with the circuit inspector who claimed, 'The Catholic Church does not believe in free will', presumably in the context of education. Duffy describes a clash between the technical and the spiritual roles of education and says they 'either won't or can't understand.' He thinks the latter. He also thought it was the government's job to ban 'lewd dancing' and gives the example of 'Jerusalem' which he claims is immoral. But the out schools hit back, it seems, and developed the slogan, 'No Jerusalem, no school.' We remind ourselves; this was 1930.

Duffy moved from Musami to Triashill and later Monte Cassino. But he had a break down in 1937. When he recovered, he became a military chaplain to the Rhodesian forces in Egypt during the war. In 1942, we find him in Broken Hill (Kabwe) at the request of Monsignor Wolnik.

But he kept getting heart attacks and eventually went back to the UK and died at St Beuno's in Wales.



Fr Peter Michael Duffy, S.J.
(1886-1947. In Zambia 1942-1945)

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Peter was born in 1886 and grew up in South Hackney (London) with strong cockney affinities. An outgoing personality, he made friends easily and even in the novitiate relished the Sunday catechism classes in the nearby parish.

He taught for five years at Beaumont as a scholastic and for another three at St Francis Xavier's (Liverpool) after ordination. He was a popular figure both on the playing field as well as in the classroom. While doing his theology at St Beuno's, he volunteered to help on the farm which was appreciated in the hard times of the First World War. Later he put this experience to good use in his missionary endeavors in Southern Rhodesia. He did his philosophy in Louvain (Belgium) and his tertianship in Paray-le-Monial (France). He was then appointed to the Zambesi Mission and spent a year at the oldest mission station of Empandeni acclimatizing himself. He joined the staff of St George's a year before it was transferred from Bulawayo to Salisbury. Soon afterwards he was in charge of Musami (1929) shortly after the Church was built. He welcomed Bishop Hinsley who was then on his tour of all the educational establishments of most of British Africa. He availed of the opportunity to invite the visitor with his superior, Mgr Brown, to inspect the mission where the lack of a community house was obvious. He was given the necessary go ahead on the project!

While at Musami and later Monte Cassino he was conspicuous in his hospitality, and the advent of the motor car made visiting now a possibility. He set up a boys' school at Musami and a girls' school at Monte Cassino sometimes meeting with a certain amount of opposition. His easy manner and knowledge of chiZezuru was appreciated by the parishioners. He was involved in developing the farm at Monte Cassino with the introduction of a better dairy herd. However he contracted Maltese fever (Brucellosis) which greatly diminished him. In 1939 he was assigned as chaplain to the British army camp in Bulawayo.

Mgr Wolnik, the Prefect Apostolic of Broken Hill (Kabwe), pleaded in 1942 for an English Jesuit to be sent from Southern Rhodesia to cater for the increasing number of Europeans in the town. Fr Duffy was chosen, despite his health problems. As usual his openness and easy manner was exactly what was needed. However his health continued to decline and after four years he was sent in 1945 for medical treatment in South Africa. He had to wait for a year in Cape Town before he got a berth on a ship back to England. He spent the last few months of his life at St Beuno's.