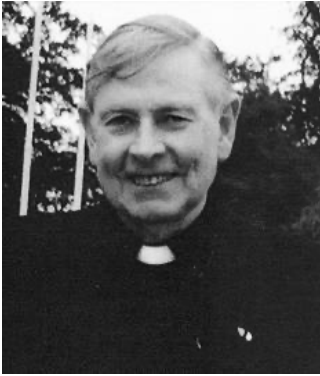


Fr Vincent Murphy, S.J.
(1929-2016. In Zambia 1959-1973)



28 November 2016

Fr Vincent Murphy died in Dublin on 28 November 2016. He was born in the year of the Great Depression, on 19 April 1929. He went to school in Synge Street – and how proud he was of his Christian Brothers' education there! He joined the Jesuits in 1954 as a 'late' vocation, having qualified as a quantity surveyor in Bolton Street, DIT.

The Irish Province's mission to Zambia was still developing, and Vincent joined the growing band of Irish Jesuits for his regency there in 1959. After theology and ordination here in Milltown, and a final year of study in Rathfarnham, Vincent returned to Zambia where he ministered in parish work in Mazabuka, before returning to Ireland permanently in 1973 to head up the Mission Office in Gardiner Street.

Vincent Murphy was a very special gift from God to all who knew him and in particular to his Jesuit brethren. Through his gentle, kindly and agreeable manner, he made life better for everyone with whom he came into contact. Unfailingly, he showed himself not only as a gentle person but also as the perfect gentleman in dealing with people, whether they were schoolboys during his two years of regency in Chikuni or in his later years in Clongowes, parishioners in Mazabuka, Nakambala, Limerick or those attending the People's Church in Clongowes, Jesuit companions in Zambia or Ireland, staff and Jesuits seeking help in the Mission Office in Gardiner Street, Dublin, the patients and staff he encountered as a chaplain in one of Dublin's large hospitals. Goodness and kindness surely radiated from him all the days of his life. Nobody could ever be cross or upset with him. He was altogether too gentle and good for that. He revealed this goodness in a remarkable way in the care he showed for Jesuits returning to Ireland from Zambia or Hong Kong. His generous care for these men, many of whom had been his companions on the mission and in formation, was legendary and knew no limits. Here indeed was a man who, regardless of himself, always gave first place to responding to the needs of others.

Two features of his earlier life stood him in good stead when he joined the Jesuits: that he had played soccer for a professional club (Shamrock Rovers) in Dublin and that he had been trained as a quantity surveyor. His love for football lasted throughout his life, even though, in his Zambian assignments, he did not meet with much success in training the local youth. His quantity surveying background made him an ideal partner for John Indekeu in the development of the town church and community house in Mazabuka. This professional background also consolidated Vincent's characteristic love for neatness and tidiness, something that drew playful teasing from some of the brethren when they would move the pencils and pens that Vincent had so meticulously arranged on his desk and then watch with amusement as he put them back into order again.

Four Jesuits played a significant role in the early pastoral development of Mazabuka and the adjoining Nakambala Sugar Estate: Vincent Murphy, John Indekeu, Tommy O'Meara and Philip O'Keeffe. All four of them passed away in the Advent/Christmas season over the years. At the end of his faith-filled journey through life, Vincent must have received a very warm welcome from these great companions with whom he had lived and worked in Mazabuka and in the mission. And we may hope that he is waiting with these same companions to welcome each one of us as we strive in our own ways to carry on the apostolic work which he and they had begun.