



Fr Stephen Smrzik, S.J.
(1920-1996. In Zambia 1958-1976)

7 December 1996

Stephen Smrzik was born at Vavrecka, Orava, northern Slovakia on 2 October 1920. He entered the Society in 1937 and did his novitiate and juniorate in Ruzomberok, Slovakia (1937-41). He began his philosophy in Zagreb (Croatia) and finished in Kosice (Hungary) due to the upheavals of the Second World War. He started his theology in Ruzomberok but completed it at the Gregorian in Rome (1945-49) where he was ordained on 15 July 1948. His tertianship was in Paray-le-Monial in France. He worked in the Vatican Radio in the Slovak section from 1950-57 during which time he also studied for a doctorate in the ancient Roman-Slavonic liturgy graduating in 1954. His thesis 'The Glagolitic or Roman liturgy' was published in 1959.

He came to Zambia in December 1957 and went immediately to Chingombe to learn the language (1958-59). He then taught and was rector of the Mpima Minor Seminary in Kabwe (1959-64) after which he returned again to Chingombe as superior from 1964-66. He was then transferred to Kabwe to look after Railway Parish (1967-70). He became socius to the provincial for a couple of years (1970-72) and afterwards was appointed as Education Secretary for the Lusaka archdiocese residing in Kabwe (1972-73). He had a short stay in Chingombe again from 1973 to 1976 when his health began to deteriorate.

He was a gifted and talented person who could put his hand to different works but basically he always was involved in pastoral ministry. He was an exact and serious person who invariably did a competent job wherever he was. He was gifted intellectually and had many languages at his command. He was a good administrator and spent much of his life as a Jesuit in administration of one form or another. Despite all these academic qualities he was also a practical man who could turn his hand to different jobs that needed to be done. He was always a pleasant companion to be with and remarkably well informed on current situations.

He developed some wounds on his legs which did not heal. Consequently he had to leave the Mission and joined the Slovak Jesuits in Cambridge, Ontario, Canada where he ministered to Slovak as well as Italian and Polish immigrants for many years. He published many articles in the Slovak magazines the *Posol* (The Messenger) and the *Echo* as well as translating some books into Slovak.

By 1995 he wrote to Rome requesting that he be relieved of some of the administration of the local parish and of the Slovak Jesuits in Canada as his health was beginning to cause serious problems. He suffered from blood pressure and had eye and prostate problems as well. He went down with the prevalent flu at the end of 1996 but while he made a brief recovery, he succumbed and passed away on 7 December 1996 in Cambridge, Canada.