



**Br Francis Xavier Meier, S.J.**  
**(1883-1961. In Zambia 1915-1939)**

**20 December 1961**

Francis Xavier Meier was born in Switzerland at Cham in the canon of Zug on 3 December 1883. For his early education he attended the local elementary school for six years and then, for two years, a secondary school. At the age of seventeen he applied to the German Province and was sent to Holland. He worked for a time in the kitchen at Valkenberg and then began his noviceship in Bydenbeek but returning for part of it to Valkenberg. He was then sent for two years to Feldkirch. In 1901 he was sent out to the Zambesi Mission and he did not leave the region until 1960 when he paid a visit to his home country.

His first eleven years he spent at Chishawasha with Frs Richartz, Biehler and Bert as well as nine brothers who ran the farm and garden. As a young energetic and willing man he was, as occasion demanded, woodworker and carpenter, brick maker, builder, cook, mechanic and whatever else needed to be done. There is something very admirable in a man who is content and able, over long periods of time, to turn his hand to the work waiting to be done, whatever kind of work it may be. In Br Meier's case it was the expression of a strong and deep spiritual motive. His religious life to the end of his long years was according to the rule: punctual (if not ahead of the clock) for all spiritual duties of the day, faithful to them even in the midst of urgent work, happy in them and never giving the impression that they were only part of the routine. He was by nature a shy man, rather reserved, not easily drawn into conversations, but when he got started he could tell his 'lion' stories by the dozen – or by the hour. About not a few of them it would be interesting to have the lion's account. No one could ever quite make out how many he had actually disposed of, but there was no lack of corroborative detail.

From 1915 until December 1938 he was stationed at Chikuni Mission, a rather simple station in those days. When he went to Chikuni it was still part of the Zambesi Mission but by the time he came back to Southern Rhodesia in 1939, it had become part of the Prefecture of Lusaka having given birth also to the Prefectures of Livingstone and Ndola. On his return he settled down at Triashill until 1948 where he worked, this time on the farm as well as in the woodwork department. He moved then down to St Barbara's Mission in the same district for a year and then he was at Mount Melleray (1949-51) which had only been opened in 1945. From there he came back to Chishawasha, nearly 70 years of age and not as energetic as once he had been. He took charge of the mission store and was assiduous in his attendance at it. In June 1961 he left for his first home leave to Switzerland in 60 years and had the distinction of being the only passenger on the flight. But he was glad to be back. He died still at work at Chishawasha preparing the refectory for supper when he collapsed and died from heart failure.