



Fr Jozef Olesky, S.J

(1949-2021. In Zambia/Malawi 1988-2017)

22 December 2021

Jozef Olesky was born to Francis and Kzimiene Olesky in Sechno, Poland on 10 March 1949. After his secondary school he entered the Society in 1968 and did all his Jesuit training in Poland: Philosophy in Krakow (1970-1973); Theology in Warszawa (1973-1978) and was ordained in Nowy Sacz on 31 July 1976.

He spent the first ten years as a priest in Poland in various pastoral ministries e.g. parish work Gliwice (1978-1984), hospital chaplaincy in Krakow (1984-1985) and assistant to the master of novices (1982-1984).

He was a humble but very generous person. During his stay in Africa he had constantly to struggle with the language, be it English or vernacular. But he never complained nor was depressed about it for it was all in the service of the people he loved. He quickly settled down to pastoral work in a rural area and during his more than 25 years ministry, he was only transferred once. His first eleven years was in Katondwe mostly as parish priest and as superior of the community as well. He worked in very challenging conditions in the difficult mission in Katondwe in the very hot climate of the Luangwa Valley. He spent most of his pastoral work in outstations celebrating Mass or conducting retreats, days of recollection or attending to the various needs of the people. People had a great confidence in him and donated generously - maize and other items - during the harvest period.

Later on, he was assigned to newly opened parish of St Joseph at Kasungu in Malawi where the initial years were hard. It helped greatly that he was a friend of the Archbishop Ziyaye of the diocese (Lilongwe). After a number of years, he headed off for a sabbatical which he took in Krakow and the States. On his return to Kasungu in 2007 he continued to work in the parish as an assistant. In all he did 14 years in the parish.

He was interested in herbal science and would prepare mixtures of honey and Swedish herbs that he claimed did his fragile health much good. He had a heart condition which entailed not only treatment but some intervention. Eventually after 29 years in Zambia and Malawi he returned home for treatment in 2017. He was hoping to continue his ministry as a chaplain or an assistant in a parish where, under conditions that he was used to, he might render useful service for many years. He worked initially in a parish in Nowy Sacz but within a few years his heart caused him problems. Sometime later he had a stroke, suffered partial paralysis and passed away on 22 December 2021 at the age of 72.