



Fr Robert L Erickson, S.J.

(1941-2021. In Zambia 1979-1984)

22 December 2021

Robert (Bob) L Erickson was born in Wenatchee, Washington State, USA, on 13 February 1941. In 1964 he entered St Francis Xavier Novitiate in Sheridan, Oregon and afterwards followed the usual program of studies. He was ordained at St Aloysius Church in Spokane in 1974.

After ordination, he spent some years (1976-1978) at St Luke Catholic Church in Woodburn, Oregon ministering to the Spanish speaking migrant workers. He then completed his tertianship in 1979.

At 38 years of age he eventually was missioned to Zambia, where it was planned that he work in a parish in Kabwe. On arrival he spent a few months teaching in Canisius to acclimatize. He found the Bemba language course at Ilondola a challenging experience for he was not as young as the other participants.

He settled down to parish work but always kept alive his ministry of giving retreats. After some time he experienced a bad bout of hepatitis which he mostly overcame. Soon afterwards he went on home leave and received further medical attention. It was then decided that he remain in the States.

He worked for a short time helping in St Aloysius Church, Spokane before being assigned to what was to be his main life's mission – to ministering to the Native Americans. He was pastor of:

- St Mary Mission, Omak (1988-1996);
- Sacred Heart Mission, Nespelem (1997-2001);
- St Paul Mission, Hays, Montana (2002-2010);
- Finally at Sacred Heart Mission, Desmet, Idaho (2012-2017).

People spoke of his deep spirituality, his humility and self-deprecating nature, as well as his lively and humorous accounts of his life-long love of music and how he would break into song with little or no provocation.

One of his contemporaries wrote that “he considered himself very blessed that the majority of Bob’s ministry was in Eastern Washington where they were able to stay in touch... His presence on this earth was one of my North Stars, a compass point, an anchor point that no matter what, there will always be goodness and light. He was one of the most gracious, humble, spiritual, sacrificed and generous persons I have ever known.”

He died on 22 December 2021 in the Infirmary in Los Gatos, CA. His funeral Mass was at St Aloysius with a large body of Native Americans who celebrated his passing in their own liturgical fashion.