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*"Brethren,
we are certain that
he who raised Jesus Christ from the dead
will raise us up as well with Jesus
and bring us with him into his presence"*

(2 Cor 4,14)



Fr Zygmunt Labun

Salesian Priest



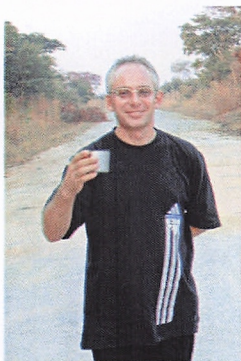
Dear Confreres,

It came as sudden and totally devastating news – Fr. Zygmunt Labun is dead. It was hard to believe that this was true, especially for those who were close friends of Fr. Zygmunt and spent some years working together.

2 He had gone to Poland for his holidays in October 2011. He also wanted to do some medical check up as he was not feeling very well. In Poland he was ready to come back to Zambia after a long treatment which he successfully managed to undergo. As the last task of his long stay at home, he decided to paint the wooden fence around his parents' house. Fr. Zygmunt celebrated the 7am Mass at the parish church on the 16th of July and, after returning home, he decided to go shopping with his brother Henryk and his sister-in-law Bernardetta. Together they went to buy the paint for the decaying fence. The road crosses the railway tracks. He was driving the car on the railway track, but unfortunately, the car stalled and could not be restarted. A local train coming in his direction failed to stop. All three in the car were crushed and died on the spot. Their funeral was sad as manifested by the grieving people in Reda where the accident occurred. He died at the age of 48, - 22 years of religious life, 20 years of missionary work and 13 years of priesthood.

Fr. Zygmunt died on the same day that Don Bosco's relics arrived in Harare for the pilgrimage around ZMB.

Who was Fr. Zygmunt Labun, also known as Zyga?



He was born on the 17 of November, 1964 in the village of Chocielewo as the second son of Stephanie and Leon Labun. His younger sister tragically drowned at the age of 12. From that time he was frightened of water. His parents had no problem to raise him.

He was kind and always the first willing to help at home without being asked. As a young boy he divided his time between running the parents' big farm and continuing his secondary education.



Every year he carried the cross during the pilgrimage from Wejherowo to Czestochowa, the Shrine of the Black Madonna (a pilgrimage of more than 300 kms). After one of the pilgrimages he took part in, he announced to his parents his decision to join the Salesian Congregation. After his decision to join the Salesians, the family decided to sell the farm and build a house in Chechocina – Reda.

He joined the Salesians in Czerwinsk on the August 1, 1989 at the age of 25, already a mature man. He did the novitiate in Czerwinsk and made his First Profession on August 22, 1990. During the novitiate, the desire to be a missionary grew strong in him. He lived with that idea during his philosophy years (1990 – 1992); he afterwards filed an application to go to the Missions, which was accepted.

Missionary Life in Africa

Zygmunt arrived in Zambia in 1992. He liked and had a sound knowledge in farming; because of this background he was sent to the Lufubu Youth Training Centre to teach farming during the years of his practical training. The experience of work in Lufubu went on well. Zyga helped the villagers from Lufubu make great progress in the area of agriculture. Oftentimes the hard work was not always rewarded with good crops. Nevertheless, this was not an occasion to give up but rather to continue working, trusting in God's help. Certainly, life in Zambia was not always easy for him, a new culture, new language and a new environment altogether made a deep impression in him. He came to love Zambia and the Zambian people, especially those of Lufubu with whom he would spend a good deal of time after his ordination.

On June 12, 1994 he travelled to Nairobi to study Theology. His first year was a nightmare due to his poor command of English. His life as a student at Tangaza College was quite challenging. The continuous assessments and paper work weighed heavily on him. He spend countless sleepless nights in front of books and the typewriter in order to meet the deadlines; this situation had a negative effect on him. He began to suffer from stomach problems, a health condition that deteriorated in the following years.

During his years of theological studies in Nairobi he took part in the 'streets kids' project of AFE Province. He dearly loved this project. Every Saturday and Sunday mornings he organised various activities for



kids and also raised funds for the needs of the 'street kids.' He would enjoy the encounters with the boys of the streets of Nairobi; he became a faithful friend to them. Every Sunday after bidding farewell to them, he would look forward to meeting them again, and sometimes he had the chance to meet them on the weekdays. Zygmunt would rather be with them than with the books.

Priestly Ministry in Zambia

Zygmunt was ordained to the priesthood on Solemnity of Pentecost on May 23, 1999 in Lufubu by Bp. Andrew Aaron Chisha of the diocese of Mansa. The ordination ceremony was well attended, not only by the Salesians and Salesian Sisters but mostly by the people from Lufubu who knew and loved him very much. Fr. Zygmunt chose Lufubu as the place for his priestly ordination rather than his native country, Poland.

4 In Lufubu he spent half of his priestly ministry serving and educating young Zambians in farming skills and preparing them to be good citizens and good Christians. Zyga dedicated himself totally and without any reservation to that mission. His time, his health and all available material resources he dedicated them all for the youth. As his mission statement he took the motto from Don Bosco: ***"It is enough that you are young for me to love you."***

Collecting the material resources, adjusting the projects to give the best education to the young from the villages consumed his all energy and health. But his dedication to rural youth was not always well received by other Salesians who joked about it; they didn't see that the rural youth had the same right to receive care from the Salesians as those from the city.

His dedication to the mission in Lufubu brought him many hardships and also disappointments. The various projects he managed did not go as well as it was planned. In many cases all this dedication to the human promotion of the villagers met with failure, especially because of the lack of understanding. People took advantage of his good heart and disappointed him in the end.

The human promotion and social development of Lufubu was his greatest dream; however, the last project he worked on became his greatest cross. He loaded upon himself the supervision of the project





and its full development. He believed in the importance of the project for the future of Lufubu. He knew it would bear abundant fruits for the local people. Fr. Zygmunt travelled to and from Lusaka innumerable times in search of funds to see the project come to life; he also spent sleepless nights on the road and in the office try to keep up with the work. In many ways he was alone, misunderstood and criticised. In one occasion the frustration build up so much that we went missing for a few days. It was near Christmas time when the news came to the provincial house that he did not reach his destination in Lufubu. People believed that he was kidnapped, or victim of a road accident; but he only needed a few days of rest and peace, which he found among some Greek farmers on the way to Lufubu. Fr. Zyga was a man of strong self-control, in the most pressing and hard moments of his life, he was able to control his temper and very often he withdrew so as to avoid offending anyone.

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Health Condition of Fr. Zygmunt

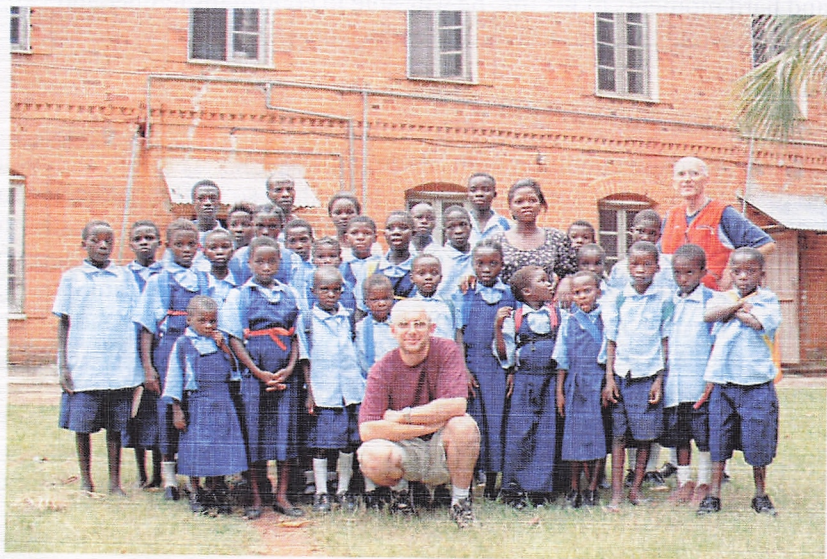
The health condition of Fr. Zygmunt was not very good, although he would let anyone notice it; twice it failed him so badly that he had to return to Poland for serious health treatment. After his first health treatment in 2009, he received the obedience letter from Fr Joseph Czerwinski, provincial superior of ZMB, to go to Hwange (Zimbabwe); there he worked only a short time because of visa problems. Although Fr. Zyga spent a few months in Zimbabwe, he made a deep impression on people. Young people found in him a friend who accepted and loved them. Unfortunately, when the ninety days of his stay in Zimbabwe on tourist visa were over, he had to leave Zimbabwe and his new friends to go back to Zambia. On returning to Zambia, he was sent for pastoral work to Kabwe.



Being on holiday in Poland, he underwent some medical check-ups and doctors discovered a very serious health problem. The health condition he suffered in Nairobi had now become quite alarming. Thanks to the advice of his parish priest in Poland he found the best specialist. After the operation, he recovered and his body started to function normally. Still in Poland, Fr. Zygmunt received a new appointment to go to Chingola and was ready to go there when on July 16, 2012 the tragic event happened.

Fr. Zygmunt's greatest passion was to work with youth and for youth. He endured everything for the sake of the young because he really loved them. His fatherly love was not soft. He demanded a lot of hard work from the youngsters to forge ahead to a bright future. He helped them a lot. In the Lufubu Training Centre the students had free education and the poorest students were able to get additional work from him (piece-work) to be able to buy their text books and personal items. In times of difficulty and during conflicts at school his quiet persuasion and arguments cooled the heat of the discussion.

On many occasions Fr. Zygmunt postponed or even cancelled his vacation, especially when his presence was needed. Many times, money allocated or designated for his personal use, he would invest in the projects to benefit the youth. Always looking optimistically even in



the worst situations he knew how to see the positive side and would always joke. He saw his work as that of the Congregation and, if needed, he was always willing to move to a different mission. He accepted all confreres and had no grudges with any. He never looked for any kind of personal advantages due to his position or capacity. It was easy to approach him and to talk to him. He was unassertive and also a bit inscrutable. He was a modest, restrained and responsible person, respecting others and trying to understand their view.

The Congregation will miss in Fr. Zyga, a capable and humble person. May God our Father, who knows all the secrets of the heart, give him eternal reward for his faithfulness to the mission to which he called him. For those of us who knew Fr. Zyga, may his dedication to the youth mission bring about a moment of reflection and meditation inspiring us to be more determined to serve the youth with passion as Fr. Zyga did.

May he rest in peace!

Fr. Pawel Dziatkiewicz sdb



For the Archives:

Born: CHOCIELEWO, Poland on 17/11/1964
Novitiate: CZERWINSK 01/08/1989 - 22/08/1990
First Vows: CZERWINSK on 22/08/1990
Final Vows: LUFUBU on 31/05/1997
Ordination: LUFUBU, Zambia on 23/05/1999
Died: REDA, Poland on 16/07/2012

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