



## **Father Francis Xavier Loughran (1915 - 2011)**

*Died 25 May 2011, in Blantyre (Malawi)  
aged 95, with 74 years of religious profession*

Fr. Frank was born on the 17th August, 1915 and was the last of eleven children born to his Irish Parents who, like so many others, has left their native land in order to find employment in Liverpool, England.

Being a relatively late vocation he attended Montfort College, Romsey at the age of 14 and stayed there till, at the age of 20, he was accepted into the Novitiate at Celle sur Belle, France where he made his first vows on the 8th September, 1936. He did most of his Philosophy and Theology in France before coming back to England making his final profession on the 20th September, 1941 and being ordained on 8th December 1941.

From the very beginning his eyes were turned to working in the foreign missions and his heart was set on going to Haiti. However, for various reasons, not least the Second World War, it was finally decided that he should instead go and serve in what was then called Nyasaland.

After a dangerous six week journey, travelling in convoy and on a circuitous route, he finally landed in Nsanje, the Southern most part of Malawi, on the 3rd December, 1943, which was also the feast of his Patron Saint, St Francis Xavier.

His first appointment was to teach the Diocesan Junior Seminarians at Nankhunda which he did faithfully and well while at the same time using this opportunity to learn, Chichewa and prepare himself for the beginning of 68 years of service to the Church in Malawi.

Having quickly mastered the language and demonstrated his very practical mechanical and building skills, he was asked to move to Limbe where he served as aide to Bishop Auneau and curate in what is now Limbe Cathedral. He then was elected as the Provincial for the Shire Vicariate and helped in the transition and establishment of the first two Dioceses of Zomba and Blantyre. He also accepted responsibility for the establishment and setting up of so many schools in the Southern and Central Regions of Malawi, travelling to them all, finding teachers and paying them their salaries. Shortly after moving to Zomba he was asked to oversee the building of the Cathedral: he designed and constructed what is without date a timeless, well lit and well ventilated Church that is still the envy of the other Dioceses in the country.

But it was in parish ministry where he was most at home. We, the younger priests are in awe as we hear of the life style of Frank and his confreres of that time. For three weeks of every month, he

would travel by bicycle moving from one village to the next, eating what the people had to offer, sleeping in the huts that they would make available, hearing confessions for hours at a time, baptizing, marrying and making sure that the children were being adequately prepared for the reception of the Sacraments. He was often heard to say how the fourth week, spent at the Parish, was always the least satisfying.

As a confrere, he was an inspiration. Living a simple life with few possessions other than his well worn tools, he was happy to be of help to one and all. He enjoyed company and had the gift of making people feel at home and somehow knowing what their greatest needs were. Whether it was at table or playing bridge, he revelled in the companionship of his fellow priests.

As a missionary he was tireless and dedicated. Nothing would make him happier than to see a full church and the longest line of penitents. He had time for everyone and made sure to help those most in need regardless of the cost to himself. He was especially good at looking out for the newly ordained and making sure that they were equipped with whatever they needed in order to be effective ministers.

As a man he was humble. He had a simple non complicated faith. He was forever there at the service of the Church and was sure, that provided he did his best, that Our Lady would do the rest.

His greatest disappointment came in 1998, when at the age of 93, he was asked to retire from active ministry. His eyesight was failing and his legs were weak, but his desire to serve was as strong as ever. Humbly, he accepted but never stopped praying for those who were to labour in his place and in the service of the people that he so dearly loved.

Frank passed away peacefully on the 25th May, 2011 at the nursing home in Blantyre and was buried in the grounds of his Cathedral on the 30th May.

May he rest in peace and enjoy the company of Our Lady and her Son.