

The President's Insignia of Mercy attributed to Léopold Lalonde

On the Independence Day of Zambia, 24th October, the President of the country, Michael Chilufya Sata, honoured 18 people for their distinguished service to the country. Among them is our confrere Léopold Lalonde who came to Zambia in October 01, 1956.

His award is attributed to him for two main reasons. The first one is related to his involvement, as a young priest, in protecting the lives of many people who were at risk at the time of the uprising in 1964 of a young prophetess called Alice Lenshina Mulenga Lubusha, founder of an independent church, the Lumpa, meaning "to excel, to be superior" Church. Unfortunately, over two thousand people, including women with their children on their back, lost their lives. For more details, see: *History of the Catholic Church in Zambia, 1895-1995*, by Hugo F. Hinfelaar, M.Afr, Bookworld Publishers, 2004, pages 184 to 190.



The second but more important reason to receive an award was the commitment of Léopold as Catholic Chaplain in the General Hospital of Kasama. His dedication to the sick lasted fifteen years from 1995 to 2010. Beside the pastoral care, Léopold provided medicine and means of transport for the sick. He was greatly appreciated. He truly deserves the award of *Insignia FOR MERCY*.

Eighteen recipients surrounded the President of Zambia at the State House for the official picture. Among them, nine wives of freedom fighters and Jules Roy who received the award on behalf of Léopold Lalonde who was referred as Lalonda, which sounds more Zambian.

What this honour represent for me!

I am surprised to receive this honour and I have been asking myself: what have I done out of the ordinary? I have simply tried to be faithful to my missionary call. Looking at the Insignia of Mercy, I look back in the past years into the vineyard of the Lord without nostalgia but rather more with gratitude. I thank the Lord for all those 55 years he has given me to live with the Zambians.

The joy that I feel today seems to me the beginning of the reward that Jesus has promised to all of us.