

Pope sends condolences on death of cardinal in Zambia

VATICAN CITY - Pope Benedict XVI sent condolences on the death of Cardinal Adam Kozłowiecki, a Jesuit who worked more than 50 years as a missionary in Zambia.

The pope praised Cardinal Kozłowiecki in a telegram to church officials in Lusaka, the Zambian capital where the cardinal died Sept. 28 at the age of 96.

Cardinal Kozłowiecki was the first archbishop of Lusaka but gave up his post in 1969 because he thought an African should take his place. He headed back into the bush and resumed his missionary work.

The African who took over in Lusaka was Archbishop Emmanuel Milingo, whose conflicts with the Vatican - over his healing ministry, his own short-lived marriage and his ordination of married men as bishops - led to his excommunication last year.

The papal telegram praised Cardinal Kozłowiecki's zealous service as a missionary and bishop and his "unwavering commitment to the spread of the Gospel."

Cardinal Kozłowiecki was born in 1911 at Huta Komorowska, a village in Poland's Sandomierz Diocese. He joined the Jesuit order as a teenager and was ordained in 1937.

He spent World War II in Nazi concentration camps - first at Auschwitz, then at Dachau - before heading for Zambia as a missionary in 1946. In 1955, he was named apostolic administrator of Lusaka, and in 1959 he became its first archbishop.

After his resignation in 1969, he returned to a simpler missionary life, cooking and

cleaning for visiting priests and acting as a personal confessor for missionaries. He rarely visited his native country, preferring to stay with his charges in Zambia's remote Punde Mission.

"People came great distances to seek his advice. He always told us that, whatever the difficulties, his greatest joy lay in serving God and the poor as a priest," said Father Andrzej Haremba, who worked in Zambia with the cardinal.

A participant in the Second Vatican Council, he championed the council's call for inculturation and making the church indigenous.

When Pope John Paul II appointed him a cardinal in 1998 at the age of 86, it was seen as a sign of personal recognition and an encouragement to missionaries around the world.

Cardinal Kozłowiecki's death leaves 180 members of the College of Cardinals. Of that number, 104 are under age 80 and therefore eligible to vote in a conclave.