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# Memorial of St Stanislaus Kostka

**Date:** Wednesday, November 13, 2024 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** B
**First Reading:** 2 Peter 1:2-11
**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 122:1-2, 3-4a, 4b-5, 8-9 | **Response:** Psalm 122:1
**Gospel Acclamation:** Matthew 1:25
**Gospel Reading:** Luke 2:41-51
**Preached at:** the Chapel of the Most Holy Name, Kolvenbach House **in the** Archdiocese of Lusaka, Zambia**.**

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Brothers,

Today we celebrate the Memorial of St Stanislaus Kostka. He was a polish Jesuit, famed for walking 750km to Germany to be admitted into the Society by St Peter Canisius. He died of illness in 1568, aged 18. He was, all agreed, a Jesuit who died too young. In reflecting on his life today, I cannot but also link in my mind at this moment, another Jesuit who died too young – Fr Alex Muyebe.

I lived in community with Alex for two years. In fact, he was one of the first Jesuits I met in the Society. I was a novice, and he was living in our novitiate community in Birmingham. He was a very diligent student. Present when the Novice Master required his presence and at work on mission – which from the perspective of the novices, seemed to be either a mixture of tennis or law. He was not aloof, as such, but I was not too aware of much else going on in his life – preoccupied as I was with the novitiate. But he was a good role model for a Jesuit. In him I saw someone who was serious; organised; he worked hard; he was quite sober in his habits and always polite. Qualities that one could always emulate, I thought. I will remember sitting next to him at meals and talking and sharing with him.

From him I learned a little about Malawi's history; bits and pieces about the Zambia-Malawi Province – which seemed so far away from South Africa then; but mostly I admired his work-ethic.

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Sitting together with Tanaka on Monday's vigil, and listening to the Gloria – it made me think of another quality that Alex exemplified. He saw time as a great gift and one that should not be wasted. Soon after arriving in Lusaka I went to visit Alex at Mwapona Road and we had Mass together. It was clear to me then that Alex did not want to waste any moment. For those who did not have the privilege, Alex was able to start and finish Mass in the time that it took for the Gloria to be sung. I do not think it was irreverent – but merely that Alex really did not want to waste any time. Given that he has now gone to God, I do not think we can regret his life – he packed it as fully as possible. I know that while he was at JCTR he would often start work and be at his desk at 6am so that he could leave at 15h30 – having done the equivalent of everyone's else's full day and more – and come to Kolvenbach to work at the Gym. In his regular rhythm – a habit he kept from his novitiate – he was able to find God in all things.

Our first reading tells us how our "entry into the eternal kingdom… will be richly provided" if we make "every effort to support our faith with goodness, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godliness and mutual affection."

In my experience, Alex was not affectionate – there was a seriousness and dedication to his way of life that perhaps caused him to appear distant – but to those he lived with, he always greeted us with a smile – a smile and a laugh that was larger than life. I hope that he felt the affection many had for him.

In tonight's Gospel we hear the story of how the 12-year old Jesus was already at work, doing the mission of the Father. Even though this caused some anxiety to his parents, Jesus is presented to us as the one who is focused on doing the will of the Father. Alex was committed to his missions – whether in studies or afterwards – he threw himself into doing them as well as he could. For myself, that is the image of him that I will remember – a dedicated servant of God's people whose faith encouraged him to work for justice. As a lawyer he understood how justice could be protected and as a priest, he laboured to ensure that it was always pursued, especially for the poorest.

The life of a Jesuit is one lived, or attempted to, with Ignatian indifference, i.e. without being swayed by anything other than God's will and remaining free before all created things. As St Ignatius said in his Spiritual Exercises:

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> Consequently, on our own part we ought not to seek health rather than sickness, wealth rather than poverty, honor rather than dishonor, a long life rather than a short one, and so on in all other matters." (Spiritual Exercises, Annotation 23:6)

St Stanislaus died of an illness and was granted only a short life - and yet was remembered for his holiness. Alex, too, knew that - in the end - it was how one lived and pursued God's will in one's life that really mattered. He knew that sickness or health, a long life or a short one, that was the package that was the lot of Christ's disciples.

As we said in the Psalm this evening: "'Let us go to the House of the Lord', and now our feet are standing within your gates" Alex is surely within the gates of God's Kingdom, and we give thanks for the gift of having known him. Let us commend his soul to the Lord, and pray through the intercession of another young Jesuit taken too soon, St Stanislaus, that the Lord might hear our prayer. Lord hear us.

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