

May 31

Fr CLAUDIO ROSSI

14 May 1945 – 31 May 2006



Claudio was born in Crema, Italy. His family moved to South Africa when he was still young and he was at school with the Marist Brothers in Port Elizabeth and later went to St Aidan's. In 1965 he entered the seminary and in 1970 he was ordained deacon in Rome where he was doing theology. It was only then that he acted on a long-felt desire to join the Society and he did his novitiate as deacon and soon after first vows was ordained a priest (1975).

His first post was at Mount Pleasant with Tommy Cockett and then, in 1979, he moved to Braamfontein. He became chaplain at Groote Schurr in 1981 and three years later we find him at Stamford Hill in London. In 1988, he was in Bristol as parish priest and then in 1997 he was a priest in a parish in Rome. In 1998, he was again in Braamfontein before going in 2003 to be chaplain at the Sapienza in Rome.

To this writer it sounds like a dizzying round of appointments in different countries and continents and there seems to be little comment on the constant movement in the record. What is remembered is his great energy, humour, kindness and devotion to people. He seemed always bright and happy. His spirituality is described as 'pious and traditional', 'given to devotions and apparitions' (Kevin Donovan). He spent many hours in the confessional and his office, caring and consoling.



He loved art, the study and the practice, and he was never far from his paint brush. Attracted to John Bradburne, the English layman who lived and died for the people with leprosy at Mutemwa, NE of Harare, he painted a collage of his life (see left).

His death was dramatic, in some way in keeping with his life. Visiting his mother at Palastrina, where she lived, he was placing some flowers at the shrine of our Lady in the church when the floor gave way and he fell 30 meters into dry well, dying instantly it seems.