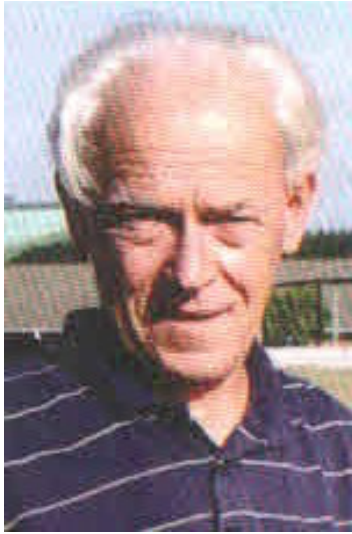


June 10

Fr ANTHONY BERRIDGE

26 June 1950 – 10 June 2011



The things Tony did are easily enumerated. Born in Kadoma, educated at St Michael's and St George's, he entered the Society in 1969, taught and later was headmaster at St Ignatius from 1977 to 1991 with a break for theology, became education secretary and later general secretary of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference 1991-99, formation delegate to 2008 and finally province treasurer. What is more difficult is describe who he was.

Tributes poured in when the news went round that he had died suddenly while seemingly in good health.

Nigel Johnson read out a number of them at his funeral. Sisters' congregations warmly appreciated his organising and facilitation of training sessions. Children loved his Masses and rapport with them. Scholastics in formation were inspired by him and gained much consolation from knowing him. Those who came for spiritual direction found him insightful and thorough. 'He gave content to what it means to be a Jesuit: available, committed, dedicated, practical, true and steadfast.'

One tribute simply said, 'What an extraordinary person!' Another wrote, 'He combined all the many tasks he had at Arrupe, and yet had enough time to paint our beautiful chapel. I asked him how he managed. "I am a very organised person you know." And a formator recalled his words at a formators' evaluation: 'You must love the scholastics; you must never get angry with scholastics'. Tony lived those words.

Then there was Tony the painter. He designed, painted and decorated entire chapels. He made Africa Synod House not only an administrative block but a cultural exhibition in itself. He painted cartoons, especially the Snoopy one with four panels: a boy holds a candle, another boy says 'what's this?', the first boy says, 'it is better to light a candle than curse the darkness', and the fourth panel shows a little girl shouting 'You stupid darkness!'. Other paintings have direct political overtones.

But many found Tony intimidating. People would hesitate before knocking on his door. You could be scrutinised and found wanting. Yet beneath his forbidding public posture there was a tender though restless heart. An old friend wrote in his condolence message, 'Tony was an intensely shy and insecure man

who over compensated in his public persona.’ Another said, ‘I am grateful for having had my life touched by the extravagance of Tony’s emotions, and the vividness of his language, as well as his darkness and brooding moods which were so much part of him.’