

Solemn Vespers at the Tomb of St Genesius

Church of Santa Susanna

With a free afternoon, some members of the group did the last of their shopping while others returned to the Casa La Salle to perform the sorrowful duty of packing bags. The last organized event on itinerary was the celebration of Solemn Vespers in the Church of Santa Susanna – a farewell to St Genesius. The Vespers began at 4.30pm, but members of the group arrived a little early to spend some time in prayer at the tomb of the Saint. Bishop Smith himself spent a few moments praying at the tomb fulfilling his promise at the last feast day Mass to go to the tomb to honour Genesius for his fidelity to Christ.



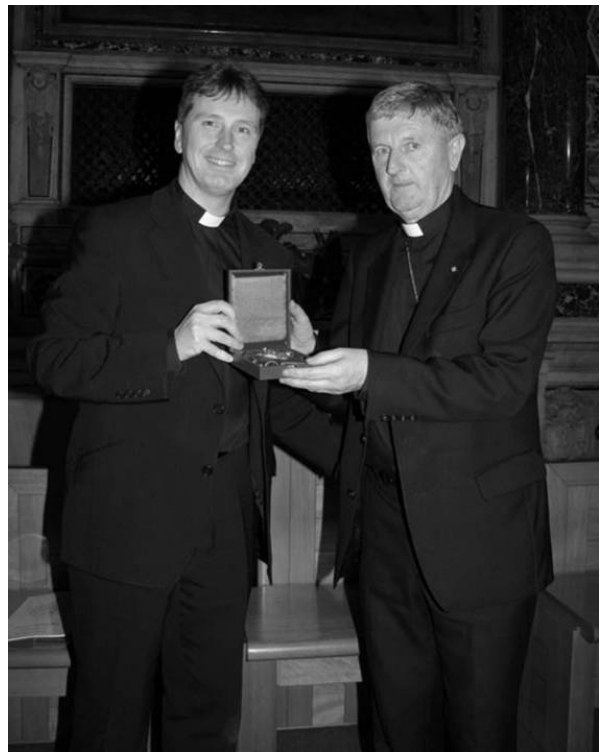
Bishop Smith prays at the tomb of St Genesius

The Bishop presided at Vespers at the main altar of the church; the prayers were taken from the Office of Martyrs, and among the musical pieces sung was the new hymn to St Genesius. During his homily, the bishop spoke about the Fraternity's mission and its gradual growth. He encouraged the members to continue their prayer and sacrifices in union with Christ while congratulating the Father Director on his work and thanked him for his service. Expressing his delight with the Pope's words of encouragement during the Papal Audience, he saw it as yet another sign that the Fraternity and its mission are blessed by God.



At the end of Vespers, Fr John took the opportunity to thank the Bishop for his support and advice. Since the Fraternity's foundation, he said, Bishop Smith had been a friend and wise advisor, encouraging the association through his presence at the feast day Mass and recognizing it as an official private association within the Church. The Fraternity, Fr John reminded the pilgrims, seeks to be in the heart of the Church, at prayer within the Church and to be of service to those who work in the arts. On behalf of the Fraternity, Fr John presented the Bishop with an icon of St Genesius.

Fr John thanked Bishop Smith for his many years of service. In January 2009, he said, the Bishop will celebrate the 25th Anniversary of his Episcopal Ordination and this



will be an occasion for great joy in the diocese. As an association of the diocese, it would only be right for the Fraternity to acknowledge the celebration and to participate in it. As token of the Fraternity's appreciation and to mark the anniversary, Fr John presented the Bishop with a gold pectoral cross on behalf of the members.

Following the ceremony, the group left for a final evening meal together in a Roman restaurant, to reflect over the week and to spend the last night together; rousing music was provided by a Roman ballad group. Later some pilgrims said goodbye to *La bella Roma* with dishes of the city's famous ice cream in Giolitti's renowned Caffé on the via Uffici di Vicario near the Italian Parliament building; Genesius, no doubt, would have approved.

