

In Memoriam

Father Small: The just live by faith

Father James Thomas Small, died on January 28, 2013 at the St. John Neumann Residence at Stella Maris in Timonium, MD after an extended battle with cancer.

Father Small was born on June 8, 1927 in Boston, professed his first vows as a Redemptorist on August 2, 1949 and was ordained on June 20, 1954.

He attended High School at St. Mary's College, the Redemptorist Preparatory Seminary, in North East, PA. When he finished his novitiate year in Ilchester, MD he went on to complete his theological studies at Mount St. Alphonsus, the Major Seminary in Esopus, NY, where he was ordained.

For nearly all of the first 30 years of his priesthood — 1956 to 1985 — he served generously and diligently on the foreign missions in Brazil. In cities, towns, and remote country villages he preached the word of God in Portuguese and administered the sacraments of the Church to the faithful. His apostolic work brought him to Aquidauana, Ponta Pora, Campo Grande, Paranagua, Curitiba, Santo Antonio, and Telemaco Borba.

In addition to his parochial ministries in South America, he served tirelessly in administrative positions as well. Father Small was Vicar to the first-ever elected Vice Provincial. In this important post he assisted in forging the Constitutions and Statutes for the then-Vice Province of Campo Grande as well as implementing the significant decrees and liturgical reforms brought about by Vatican Council II. Then he served as the Superior of the Redemptorist Seminary in Ponte Grossa.

If I'm not mistaken, Father Jim and Father Bill were the only brothers ever stationed in Brazil at the same time," reports his contemporary, Father John Devin. "Ordinarily whenever there were two priests from the same family, if one served in South America, the other would be stationed in the Caribbean or Puerto Rico. But the Small brothers, Bill and Jim, whom we affectionately referred to as 'Prudence and Justice,' were the exception that proved the rule.

"The life and work in Brazil was tough," Devin confirms. "But all you had to do was give Fr. Jim a project or a cause and he would be out there doing it with vigor and tenacity."

"He was certainly dedicated," agrees fellow missionary Father Frank O'Rourke who also served with him. "During the dog days of sweltering heat that drove most people indoors looking for any possible shade, Father Jim would be outside practicing with the school band, making sure they were marching in precision formation — and he was marching right there with them."

In 1985, Father Small returned to the United States to continue his priestly service in Redemptorist parishes in Boston, Brooklyn, and for 14 years in Bethpage, NY. Then, with the exception of one year for preaching retreats in Esopus, he was transferred to Pennsylvania where he served in Lancaster and Ephrata for 12 years until failing health brought him to the Neumann Residence.

"He was a very prayerful and very courteous confrere," declares his twice superior, Father Patrick McGarrity. "When he preached, he would include very interesting and pleasant stories that charmed the congregation. He was a sought-after confessor and people were drawn to him because he was always so helpful. In our community room in Ephrata there are intricate jigsaw puzzles that Father Jim completed and framed. Most thought this was merely a hobby for him, but I know that he deliberately used such techniques to keep his mind engaged and his



powers of observation sharp. Whenever anyone did the slightest kindness for him, he was very appreciative and deeply grateful.”

“He was a hard worker, sincere, dedicated and industrious,” attests his classmate, Father Thomas Hickey.

“And always upbeat, even during these final times of his illness,” asserts his confrere, Father Frank Sullivan. “He was a model of acceptance and peace during this last mile of his life. He always told it like it was. Maybe that’s what earned him the nickname: not only speaking the truth plainly but also professing the faith that upholds lives lived in true justice.”