

Fr. Francis J. SMITH      90      USA

\* March 20, 1901, Philadelphia

+ May 16, 1991 San Antonio, TX

The second of the six children born to Charles Smith and his wife Margaret, nee Connolly, he attended public school in Amber, PA. In 1915 he entered Cornwells' junior seminary, where he proved to be a very good student. His profession took place August 15, 1921, at Ferndale. His theology studies there were interrupted from 1924 to 1926 by prefecting at Duquesne Preparatory School, where he also acted as coach of the Junior Dukes baseball team. He was ordained a priest at Ferndale on August 27, 1927.

The following year he received his appointment to the Southern Missions among African-Americans in Louisiana. He was destined to spend 54 years in Louisiana, 40 years in full activity, and 14 increasingly more in retirement. Here is the list of his Louisiana assignments:

1928-31    assistant, St. Paul, Lafayette  
1931        assistant, Holy Ghost, Opelousas  
1931-40    pastor, St. Anthony, Natchitoches  
1950-61    pastor, Holy Ghost, Opelousas  
1961-75    pastor, St. Anthony, Natchitoches  
1975-77    pastor, St. Augustine, Isle Brevelle  
1977-86    retired, Isle Brevelle  
1986-91    retired, Maison Brottier, Natchitoches

During the "missing" years 1940-1950, he held the very responsible position of Novice Master at Ridgefield, CT. Always a very conscientious man, he was rather strict as a novice master, and in the 1940s being conscientious and faithful to one's vocation was identified with the exact observance of numerous very detailed regulations. He instilled this ideal

into his novices, but did not lose sight of the fact that one's withdrawal from the novitiate did not necessarily mean unfaithfulness to God. As one departing novice told it: "He is truly a man of God. He brought me peace and showed me how I can be a faithful servant of God in another vocation."

In his pastoral work among African-Americans Father Smith made up by total dedication to his people for whatever he might have lacked in the exuberance of extroverts. Unsurprisingly, then, he was held in great esteem by his parishioners as well as by other people.

During his pastorate at Carencro he received a sign of this regard when President Franklin D. Roosevelt appealed to him in connection with the Social Security Legislation that had just been enacted. The President asked his advice as to how best implement this new law for the greatest possible benefit of all in need, especially the poor and the unemployed.

In 1991, after spending some 14 years in retirement in Louisiana, he had to enter Padua Place, San Antonio, TX, for nursing care. Having been a priest for 63 years, he died soon after in Baptist Hospital, San Antonio TX. Burial was in his family plot at Holy Sepulcre Cemetery in Philadelphia.

In a letter of condolence, Bishop Sam G. Jacobs of Alexandria, LA, wrote: "I do not need to tell you of the respect and admiration in which he was held by all those he served."