

Br. Camillus Smith

August 16, 1928 - November 8, 2022

On Tuesday, November 8, 2022 at 11:20 pm, Br. Camillus Smith died peacefully in his sleep at the St. Francis Nursing Home San Antonio, Texas run by the Franciscan Sisters from Poland. Having been born August 16, 1928 he was 95 years old. "Died peacefully in his sleep!!!" How fitting of him; he died the way he lived, peacefully. No worry, no concern, no upset. Two friars talked about how when they heard he was failing, they phoned Camillus a week before he died. They asked him how he was doing and typically he said; "Fine, I am doing okay." The friars who lived with him said of him: "laid back, easy going, pleasant to live with."

He was a quiet person but shared his thoughts and feelings at meals or house chapter succinctly. A friar told a story who visited him in the nursing home. For two years he kept asking Camillus if he wanted to go out to eat or go someplace or go to some sports event. One day Camillus who lived on the second floor said: "I don't even go downstairs." A friar remembered one time that he went downstairs; it was to visit another friar who was in the same nursing home. A friar said: "He was a true gentleman, always humble and easy to get along with." He was the same when he was guardian and when it was best to help a friar and the community he knew how to be firm and honest with a friar.

Camillus will always be remembered for his world class international championship, absolutely delicious cookies. He often made them for us. His secret was Mexican vanilla. Whenever he heard someone was going to Mexico, he asked them to bring him back some Mexican vanilla. He kept his cookie sheet in his bedroom so that a friar would not ruin it with soap and water.

Before the days of stress on healthy eating, Camillus knew how to make food tasty. Examples: he would put a whole stick of butter on top of the mashed potatoes, butternut Squash and a head of cauliflower. He shopped every day for fresh vegetables and what was on sale. The Ruby Red grapefruit stayed uneaten. He would cut them up and even remove the membranes for the friars. Quickly they would disappear. He often said: "Food is cheaper than medicine." He never cooked any fancy meals. His meals were simple but delicious. Friars thought he was one of the best cooks in the province.

A brief story: one time there was a friar new to San Antonio who wanted to find the best tamales in San Antonio. He would go out and buy a dozen and then let Camillus be the judge. He choose Ruben's Homemade Tamales, Rigsby Ave and Roland Road.

Friars would go to buy them and then immediately eat a couple tamales fresh out of the oven in the parking lot. They were still good the next day but not as good as when they were hot and freshly made.

While being the cook, he also helped with maintenance in the friary. He was the proverbial jack of all trades and master of none meaning he had learned a number of skills. One friar said: "I think he genially loved helping friars."

Also he was in three formation communities in Brazil, the Franklin novitiate near Indianapolis, and in the San Antonio San Diego Postulants Program. One formation director said: "I was happy to see that some of the novices felt comfortable to talk with Camillus. I knew him as an outstanding friar and person. I considered him to be a 'non-staff member' of the formation staff."

Every year he used the annual almanac, he fed the birds especially in the winter and at times he talked about his Timex watch being the best. When younger he loved his motorcycle in Brazil and the States. He was invaluable wherever he was stationed. Known as the "Brother at the kitchen door," he was beloved by many who approached Mission San Jose for Help.

The wake was held at Mission San Jose on Monday, November 14, 2023 and the funeral was on Tuesday, November 15 at Mission San Jose in San Antonio, Texas. Interment was at San Fernando Cemetery in San Antonio.

In your kindness, please consider making a donation in memory of Br. Camillus Smith, OFM, to the Development Office of the Franciscan Province of the Sacred Heart. Please send your charitable donation to St. Anthony Friary, 3140 Meramec Street, St. Louis, MO 63118 – 4399.