



## William G. Smith, Jr.

July 17, 1940 - June 18, 2014

“What you are is God’s gift you: what you become is your gift to God.”

Hans Urs von Balthasar, Prayer

### Celebration of Life

Brother Martin de Porres, C.Ss.R

(William Grant Smith, Jr.)

Today we join hearts and hands together in final tribute to our friend and brother, Martin de Porres (Billy Jr.) The written details of his life pale in comparison to the man himself, yet we set them forth in an attempt to honor him in recognition of a life well lived. Martin was born July 17, 1940, in Richmond, Virginia to William Grant Smith, Sr. and Estelle Virginia Reynolds Smith. As a child, he attended Van de Vyver Catholic School. His need to serve came early, and he became an altar boy at St. Joseph’s Catholic Church and was later to become Holy Rosary’s first altar boy, setting the bar high for those who followed.

Martin grew up in the 1200 block of 27th Street where he learned to value family and community. These values grew into the virtues that shaped the man he would later become, and set his feet on the path that few could follow. He was the youngest member of The Vikings, a neighborhood club, and friends remember him as an active fun-loving teenager who loved to dance.

But there was also another side of young Martin that yearned to be more-to give more of himself-so at the age of 17; Martin decided to dedicate his life to Christ. He and his friend Barbara Lee, his mom and his dad, drove to Ephrata, Pennsylvania where he would begin his new life as a Redemptorist. There, he worked in the parish school until he was transferred in IL Chester, Maryland to continue his studies. It was there that he took his vows.

For the next few years, Martin lived in Esopus, New York, Suffield Connecticut and then Kentucky. He worked as a cook, dairyman and site manager. In 1972, he moved to Buffalo where he played the organ and taught catechism at St. Mary's Catholic Church. He also fed the homeless at the local shelters, worked with battered women and made regular visits to the local hospitals. At the tender age of 40, he enrolled in the College of New Rochelle in New York, receiving a bachelor' degree in Psychology. He later moved to Baltimore where he worked at the school and parish of St. Wenceslaus. Then he raised the bar higher and received a masters' degree in Theology and Black Studies from Xavier University in Louisiana and still another masters' degree in Social Work from Loyola University in Chicago. Illinois. Just like the patron saint that he was named for, Martin cared about social injustice and sought to be a beacon for racial equality. He knew that education was the key to freedom and accepted the call of the Archdiocese in Baltimore to serve as the Campus Minister at Morgan State University. Martin assisted both the Secretariat for the Apostolate and the Sub-Committee for Social Justice. In addition, he shared his talent and love at St. James and St. John, and he served as a school counselor at St. Catherine's. While stationed in Baltimore, he worked through the Catholic Charities as a social worker and helped at-risk youth to succeed in school and subsequently, in life.

Martin's spirit-filled expressions of his faith were exemplified through his life and his accomplishments in the Brotherhood were many. In 1971 he was appointed Assistant Vocation Director for the Baltimore Province. Shortly after,

he became a member of the Advisory Council for the Archdiocese of Baltimore and worked in the John Hopkins University Community Outreach Program. In 1990, he was selected by the Redemptorist General Government in Rome as one of only five Brothers from the entire Congregation to attend the 1991 General Chapter. At this Chapter, he represented all of the Brothers in North America. During his lifetime, he held memberships in the Pan-African Catholic Clergy Conference, the Religious Brothers National Institute, the National Black Catholic Clergy Conference and the Black Catholic Congress. He was instrumental in founding the Black Redemptorist Caucus. And on July 25, 2000, he received the Brother Joseph Davis Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Black Conference an award which represents the highest honor that can be bestowed on its members.

Nearly 20 years ago, Martin was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. He spent a lot of time in local hospitals and treatment centers, but it never defeated him. His loving spirit grew even more, and in his giving way, he agreed to participate in research projects related to finding a cure for MS. As the disease ran its course, Martin continued to hold strong to his spirit, his faith and his passion for life. He continued to travel all over the world, spreading the Word of God and the true message of hope, light and faith. On October 17, 2009 at Holy Rosary Catholic Church, Martin was blessed to celebrate his 50th Jubilee with an impressive assembly of lifetime friends, family and parishioners. This was truly a memorable event and an opportunity for those who adorned him best to shower him with love. He smiled and shared stories with friends, and often reflected on that day for years to come. It was a fitting tribute to a man we will hold in our hearts forever.

Martin was genuinely loved and appreciated by those who had the pleasure to meet him and be touched by his gifts. And there are scores of people Martin held dear, among them are his sister, Daisy Blair Henderson, his

brother, Herman Williams, two nieces, Regina Chaney Walker (Fletcher) and Cassandra Williams, two nephews, Paul Harris (Dana) and Todd Williams, great nephews and nieces, most devoted, are Stella, Justin and Blair Walker, a great-great niece, London Monroe, a devoted cousin, Mary E. Jones—all remain to cherish his memory.

# Cemetery Details

## Mt. Calvary Cemetery

1401 S. Randolph St.  
Richmond, VA 23220

# Previous Events

## viewing

JUN **25.** 9:00 AM - 8:00 PM (ET)

March Funeral Home-Laburnum Chapel  
Richmond, VA 23222

## Family Hour

JUN **25.** 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

March Funeral Home-Laburnum Chapel  
Richmond, VA 23222

## Service

JUN **26.** 11:00 AM (ET)

Holy Rosary Catholic Church  
3300 "R" Street  
Richmond, VA 23223

# Tribute Wall



“ *William G. Smith, Jr.*

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October 13, 2022 at 08:33 AM



“ *Sorry for your loss, may Jehovah give you comfort in your time of need. 1Corinthians 1:3,4.*

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**Carolyn** - June 26, 2014 at 10:16 AM



“ *To the family of Brother Martin Smith,*

*We at Mount Calvary Cemetery wish to express our deepest sympathies for the loss of your loved one and we pray that God will help to ease your pain in the days to come. We are proud and honored to be chosen as the final resting place for Brother Martin. This is a responsibility that we do not take lightly and we pledge the highest level of perpetual care to honor his memory. Please do not hesitate to call us with any concerns or if there is anything we can do to make these difficult experiences any easier.*

*Jim Glass  
General Mgr.  
Mount Calvary Cemetery  
804-355-5271*

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**Mount Calvary Cemetery** - June 26, 2014 at 09:47 AM

MA

“ I hope the family and friends will find comfort from these scriptures, John 11:11-14,17,20-26, 38-44, Jesus Christ spoke about the condition of the dead. He told his disciples "our friend Lazarus has gone to rest, but I am on my way to wake him up." The disciples thought that Jesus meant that Lazarus was resting in sleep, Jesus explained 'Lazarus has died.' He was at rest in death, as though in a deep sleep without dreams. And Jesus went to resurrect him from the dead. Jesus said, Do not be amazed at this, for the hour is coming in which all those in the memorial tombs will hear his voice and come out. John 5:28, 29. If you have any questions please go to [www.Jw.org](http://www.Jw.org).

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**Maxine** - June 26, 2014 at 09:25 AM

FM

“ Faye Majette lit a candle in memory of William G. Smith,Jr.



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**Faye Majette** - June 24, 2014 at 12:54 PM

FM

“ Faye & Jimmie Majette purchased the Beautiful i n Blue for the family of William G. Smith,Jr..



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**Faye & Jimmie Majette** - June 24, 2014 at 12:52 PM



“ We the March Family and Staff wish to extend our deepest and heartfelt sympathy in the passing of your loved one. Our prayers go out to you and your family in your time of loss. We know and understand that you have received many expressions of love and we will continue to lift you up in prayer. May the memories you cherish of brighter and happier days help to ease your sorrow and comfort you always.

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**March Funeral Homes** - June 21, 2014 at 01:03 PM

FC

*To the family of Brother Martin  
I send my deepest sympathy on the loss of your Brother. Know that all of his suffering is now at an end and that he is at peace. He touched and changed the lives of many people.  
Friar Douglas McMillan, OFM Conv*

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**Friar Douglas McMillan, OFM Conv** - June 26, 2014 at 01:54 PM