



Fr. Reginald Russo, OFM Cap.

July 30, 1941 - February 15, 2021

Father Reginald Russo, OFM Cap., died late Monday night at Shadyside Hospital from post-Covid pneumonia. He entered eternal life in the presence of fellow Capuchin friars, including his older brother Father Francis X. Russo, who prayed with him as he died.

Father Reginald, given the name Carmen at his birth, was born on July 30, 1941, the sixth of seven children born to John and Theresa (Izzo) Russo of Mahoningtown, PA. He was baptized at St. Lucy Church in Mahoningtown and educated in the local public elementary school before following his older brother by enrolling at St. Fidelis High School and College Seminary in Herman, PA in 1955, where he received both his high school and college education. In 1961, following his second year of college he went to Saint Conrad Friary, Annapolis, MD where he was invested with the Capuchin habit and entered the novitiate. It was there that he received the religious name Reginald by which he would be known for the rest of his life. He made profession of the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience on July 14, 1962 before returning to St. Fidelis to complete his college studies.

Father Reginald was an outstanding student, completing his BA in Philosophy with Magna Cum Laude honors in 1964. He studied theology at Capuchin College in Washington, DC, and was ordained to the priesthood in 1967. He received a Master of Arts in Religious Education in 1968. He returned to Pennsylvania after completing his studies in Washington, DC, and served as parochial vicar at St. Cecilia Parish in Rochester, PA briefly before being

assigned to St. Augustine friary in Pittsburgh to begin work on a Master of Library Science degree at the University of Pittsburgh. He received his degree in 1970.

Father Reginald began his service as librarian of the High School and College at St. Fidelis in Herman in 1970, an important time in the history of the school. The school had only recently received accreditation from the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, and the quality of the library holdings and their administration were key elements of this accreditation. Young Father Reginald took on the complexities of upgrading and maintaining the St. Fidelis library. It is a testament to Father Reginald's keen intelligence and compassionate heart that he carried out this critical task effectively and amicably.

While at St. Fidelis, he was approached by his Provincial Minister about attending an important program of Franciscan studies at St. Bonaventure University in the summer of 1975. Father Reginald excused himself at that time because of his deep commitment to efforts in the library, only to reconsider a few years later. By 1978 Father Reginald's hard work in the library allowed him to leave the library in other capable hands and to begin to study in earnest the life and history of Saint Francis of Assisi and the Franciscan Order. Father Reginald was passionate about Saint Francis, the patron and founder of the Franciscan Order to which Father Reginald belonged. He wanted to understand his Franciscan heritage and to share the story and inspiration of Saint Francis with others. He earned an MA degree in Franciscan Studies in 1982. Father Reginald devoted the next ten years of his life serving and inspiring Secular Franciscans of the Third Order as Local, Regional and Provincial Spiritual Assistant and by serving as Chaplain to the Poor Clare nuns of the Second Order of St. Francis in Cleveland.

In 1986 Father Reginald was asked by his superiors to serve the sick and elderly friars and he was appointed Guardian (local superior) of St. Augustine friary in Pittsburgh, the geographic and fraternal heart of the Province and the residence for disabled and sick friars. During his five year tenure, the badly

deteriorated friary was demolished and a new structure erected, requiring that he lead the community in diaspora for three years in Phelan Hall at St. Paul Seminary before returning to Lawrenceville and a new friary in 1991.

The farmworker union organizer, Cesar Chavez once observed that "The people who give you their food, give you their heart." By his own admission Father Reginald was an excellent cook, and anyone graced by his culinary efforts would certainly agree. He loved cooking for friars, friends and family, always working to restore dining to its proper place in human experience. Father Reginald loved to cook and bake and he enjoyed creating a meal that would gather people around a table. Father Reginald thrived in the kitchen and he thrived in community. He understood that Capuchin community functioned best when friars sat together at table and enjoyed good food. Part of his legacy was to feed others and he leaves behind many memories of good meals at friaries in York and Rochester in Pennsylvania, Dover in Ohio, Cumberland, MD, St. Louis and Washington, DC.

In 2000 Father Reginald returned to Pittsburgh and took up residence in Our Lady of the Angels Friary. Over the next 20 years he was chaplain to the Vincentian Sisters Motherhouse, to Vincentian Home and Vincentian Regency Manor in North Hills, and the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth. As needed, he served as a confessor at St. Mary of Mercy at the Point in downtown Pittsburgh for 11 years, from 2007 until 2018 while at the same time assisting the local Secular Franciscan fraternity at St. Augustine Church and for three years as the Regional Spiritual Assistant to the Lady Poverty Region of the Order of Franciscan Seculars. Because of declining health and physical limitations he moved to the newly built St. Augustine friary in November of 2020.

On January 16th, Reginald began an extended struggle with the Covid virus. He was hospitalized and stabilized and had recovered enough that he could be transferred to a rehabilitation facility but quickly returned to oxygen deficiency and hospitalization. As the attempts to stabilize his medical

condition became necessarily more aggressive it became evident that only a miraculous intervention would restore Father Reginald to health. Father Reginald understood that he was dying and refused burdensome and useless medical interventions. Father Reginald told his family and friar visitors that he would not survive and that he was in God's care, and that he was ready to go to his heavenly home. This past Monday, February 15th, as his family gathered around him, he said his farewells, consoling his visitors with the promise that they would be together again in heaven. He entered eternal life just before 10 PM, returning in full faith to the God whom he had served for more than fifty years as a friar and a priest.

Father Reginald was preceded in death by his parents, his sisters Mary (Calabrese) and Rose (Evanoski) and his brother Anthony. He is survived by his sister Irene (Scaramazza) of Butler, PA, and two brothers: Father Francis X. Russo, OFM Cap. of Washington, DC, and younger brother Vincent, of New Castle.

The friars of St. Augustine Friary will receive Father Reginald's body on Friday afternoon, February 19, offering their fraternal prayers before transferring his body to St. Augustine Church of Our Lady of the Angels Parish, Lawrenceville, where viewing will occur from 7 until 8 PM. A Vigil Service will be held in the church at 8:00 PM. The Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated on Saturday, February 20th at 10:00 AM in St. Augustine Church. Burial will follow in the friars' plot at St. Augustine Cemetery. Contributions in memory of Father Reginald may be sent to Capuchin Friars, 220 37th St., Pittsburgh, PA 15201.

Previous Events

Prayer

FEB 19. 7:00 PM (ET)

D'Alessandro Funeral Home and Crematory Ltd.
4522 Butler Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15201

Viewing

FEB 19. 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

D'Alessandro Funeral Home and Crematory Ltd.
4522 Butler Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15201

Vigil Service

FEB 19. 8:00 PM.

church

Mass of Christian Burial

FEB 20. 10:00 AM (ET)

St. Augustine Church
225 37th Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15201

Tribute Wall



“ *Fr. Reginald Russo, OFM Cap.*

January 13, 2023 at 04:43 PM



“ *Fr. Russo I was sorry to hear of you passing may you have everyone in heaven laughing and smiling with you. Fr. it was always good to see you and was always asking about my children and grandchildren. Dr. Gilchrist nurse Camille Neemes*

Camille Neemes - February 19, 2021 at 11:19 PM



“ *Paula A Calabrese lit a candle in memory of Fr. Reginald Russo, OFM Cap.*



Paula A Calabrese - February 18, 2021 at 09:32 AM



May dear Fr. Reginald rest in peace and may heaven be his happy home. Your memory will always be a blessing to those of us who knew and loved you.

Paula A Calabrese - February 18, 2021 at 09:34 AM