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Citation for published version:

Newman, M 2021, 'The marching priest: The civil rights and labor activism of Father Sherrill Smith during the 1950s and 1960s', *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, vol. 124, no. 3, pp. 300-324.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/swh.2021.0002>

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.1353/swh.2021.0002](https://doi.org/10.1353/swh.2021.0002)

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Peer reviewed version

Published In:

Southwestern Historical Quarterly

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*The Marching Priest: The Civil Rights and Labor Activism of Father Sherrill Smith during
the 1950s and 1960s*

BY MARK NEWMAN*

In 1961, Father Sherrill Smith, the assistant pastor of St. Joseph Church in the city of San Antonio, became the first Catholic priest based in the South to participate in a direct-action civil rights protest when he joined the stand-ins at San Antonio's Majestic Theater, which confined African American customers to an upstairs balcony. For Smith, the denial of civil rights to African Americans was a "moral and religious" issue he felt compelled to address when the movement called for assistance.¹

Four years later, Smith was one of hundreds of mainly White clergy and laity from many denominations who responded to Martin Luther King Jr.'s appeal for their participation in the demonstrations at Selma, Alabama, for African American voting rights. The Selma protests marked the first time that a large number of Catholic priests and sisters had joined a direct-action civil rights protest in the South, where Catholic dioceses struggled with varying degrees of commitment and success to overturn decades of segregation in their institutions. Unlike Smith, all but a handful of the more than 250 sisters and Catholic clergy who marched in Selma were based outside the South. Smith was only one of thirty-six White people, and one of only two Catholic priests, whom civil rights organizers permitted to walk the entire fifty-four-mile route of the Selma to Montgomery march that marked the climax of the Alabama protests. His experience in Selma made Smith more militant and outspoken. In 1966, he helped mediate during James Meredith's March against Fear in Mississippi, and he endorsed the idea of Black Power.²

Father Smith's fight against racial injustice was not confined solely to discrimination against African Americans in the Deep South, however. In addition to opposing discrimination against African Americans, Father Smith supported the Mexican American civil rights movement. The same sense of morality that took him to the Majestic Theater, Selma, and Mississippi had earlier impelled him to support a Hispanic labor protest in the late 1950s and also informed his subsequent labor activism in the second half of the 1960s and the early 1970s. As the first Catholic priest to participate in labor and civil rights direct action in Texas and the South, Smith was an important part of a wider, yet underestimated, Catholic contribution to civil rights and labor struggles in the South.³

Smith's labor and civil rights activism in the 1950s and 1960s has not received sufficient attention from scholars of Catholicism, civil rights, or Texas history. Smith does not appear in Martin Herman Kuhlman's dissertation on desegregation in Texas. Robert A. Goldberg's study of racial change in San Antonio between 1960 and 1965 only mentions Smith briefly. Saul E. Bronder's biography of Archbishop Robert E. Lucey, who initially supported Smith but clashed with him in later years, discusses Smith's deteriorating relationship with his superior. More recently, Brian D. Behnken's account of the civil rights struggle in Texas acknowledges some of Smith's activism but considers him chiefly regarding Project Equality, an interdenominational program that sought to promote nondiscriminatory hiring by businesses and the Church. Max Krochmal's study of multiracial coalition building in civil rights era Texas mentions Smith briefly on three occasions. Smith contributed to both labor and civil rights struggles, but as an Anglo and a priest who saw his role mostly as supporting these struggles when called upon by those involved.⁴

Some scholars, such as Amy L. Koehlinger and John T. McGreevy, have stressed the importance of the Second Vatican Council in encouraging Catholic participation in the civil

rights movement. The council, which met in Rome between 1962 and 1965, emphasized the duty of the Church to engage with the problems of the secular world and support social justice, and it also encouraged ecumenical cooperation.⁵ While the council was undoubtedly important to some degree in motivating Catholic involvement in the civil rights movement, Smith joined his first civil rights protest in 1961, before the council began its deliberations in October 1962, and he worked with secular groups and across denominational lines with other clergy. His activism provides an opportunity to consider other factors that influenced and shaped Catholic clergy's involvement in the southern civil rights movement. Although he does not seem to have been aware that he was doing so, Smith pioneered Catholic clergy involvement in direct action civil rights protest in the South. His personality and experiences were crucial in shaping his participation, but so too were the disposition of Archbishop Lucey and the distinctive nature of labor and race relations in the Archdiocese of San Antonio.

Sherrill Smith was born in 1921 in Chicago Heights, Illinois, and raised as a Catholic in Chicago by his lower middle-class parents. He attended the first grade of a Catholic school, but was otherwise educated in public schools. Smith recalled growing up in "a white world" in which segregated housing, resulting from racial discrimination by White realtors, banking practices, and White owners, produced the largely segregated schools he attended. There were no African Americans in his grammar school and only a few in his high school. Smith "had a sense of justice from the time I was a kid," and from childhood he was "very sensitive to the sufferings of others." Regarding race, he said, "I was born without any of that kind of prejudice that many people have. I don't take credit for it – for this attitude. I really don't. I think that it's just never been there." Smith had no early aspirations to enter the priesthood and intended to pursue a career in business. He studied commerce at Notre Dame

University and then at Northwestern University. Smith joined the navy ROTC while at Northwestern and entered the U.S. Navy after graduating in 1944.⁶

He first encountered southern segregation when the navy sent him for training in Norfolk, Virginia. Oblivious to a bus segregation ordinance, Smith invited an African American woman who was standing next to an empty seat beside him to sit down, leading someone behind him to say, “He must be from the North.” Undeterred, Smith urged the woman to sit down a second time, which she did, undisturbed for the rest of the journey. While in the navy, Smith read recent literature about racism in the United States, such as *Native Son* (1940) by Richard Wright and *Strange Fruit* (1944) by Lillian Smith. He claimed to have “immediately and instinctively . . . understood what was being said.”⁷ One of Smith’s duties as an officer was to censor the mail for security breaches. Incensed by the racism in one of the letters he read, he cut out the offending section and then summoned and “really lit into” its writer, a white South Carolinian who had disparaged the ship’s Black cooks. Smith was also “disturbed . . . that all the blacks were doing the dirty work. They were cleaning the dishes and cooking our food, making our bunks and things like that.”⁸

In June 1947, Smith left the navy and began a career in business. He became engaged to a woman from Chicago, but after he increasingly became attracted to the religious life after reading theology and philosophy books, he broke off his engagement. Beginning in 1948 he spent a year at the School of Saint Philip Neri, a seminary for delayed vocations (priests who come to their calling later than usual) run by the Jesuits at Boston College. While in Boston, Smith asked Archbishop Lucey of San Antonio to accept him for training as a diocesan priest.⁹

Born in Los Angeles in 1891, Lucey attended Catholic institutions in California before completing his theological education at the North American College in Rome. He

returned to Los Angeles and became director of the Bureau of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Monterey-Los Angeles in 1921. As director, Lucey came to understand the practical implications of Catholic teachings when he witnessed poverty, unemployment, and the inequities of industrial capitalism. Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891) had called for fair wages and better conditions for workers and supported unions. On its fortieth anniversary, Pope XI issued the encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, which called for a social order imbued with justice and charity. Applying these teachings to American conditions, Lucey supported unionization and fairness in workers' pay, employment, and business practices. As bishop of Amarillo, Texas, between 1934 and 1941, Lucey supported President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal and ensured that work undertaken for diocesan employment contracts paid union wage rates. Lucey was appointed archbishop of San Antonio in 1941, and he repeatedly condemned racial segregation. With financial support from the American Catholic hierarchy, Lucey established and became chairman of the Bishops' Committee for the Spanish Speaking. Based in Texas, the committee focused its attention on the problems of unorganized, poorly paid, migrant farm workers. Lucey also established the San Antonio Archdiocesan Committee on Interracial Relations, which condemned segregation as racial discrimination and a violation of the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ. The doctrine held that because all people were created by God, they were all members or potential members of the Catholic Church, which constituted the Mystical Body of Christ. Consequently, there should be no racial discrimination or prejudice within the Church or among its members.¹⁰ In June 1953, Lucey referenced the Mystical Body of Christ when he asked Catholic orders that operated schools in San Antonio to desegregate them, and in 1954 he ordered Catholic schools run by the archdiocese to admit Catholic students regardless of race.¹¹

Although he was to become virtually a surrogate for Lucey in social action, Smith was not committed to activism when he contacted the archbishop, whose outspokenness had brought him national attention among Catholics. He recalled that “when I got out of the service in 1947 I kind of moved around in some catholic action circles in Chicago,” but “I wasn’t that flaming about social justice.” Rather, “the idea of working in Spanish appealed to me a bit . . . I wasn’t that zeroed in on any given place, and I think I heard about Lucey and his social justice stand and everything, but at that time I wasn’t into that really. I was still in the more personalistic, individualistic spiritual phase.”¹²

Accepted by Lucey, in September 1949 Smith enrolled in St. John’s Seminary in San Antonio and learned Spanish. Although he was aware of White racism against Mexican Americans, he first observed and experienced it when he taught catechism in Cotulla, Texas, as a seminarian in summer: “to see the sharp division economically, educationally, psychologically – to see those divisions . . . to taste them, to have my nose rubbed in them for the first time, to be upset by them – really, down here, for the first time was my initiation into the real world, the real setting of where I would be working in the future.”¹³ Smith also noted that many White Catholic Texans, including his fellow seminary students, shared a prejudice against Mexican Americans, whereas he “came down with a very liberal attitude not only from my background in the north but from my own convictions.” When he took social science classes, Smith questioned his teachers about “how the church is treating *Mexicanos* or are we being too paternalistic.” Smith believed that the faculty alerted Lucey to his interest in social issues. Following his ordination in May 1955, the archbishop sent him “to study the social doctrine of the church” at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. However, the university no longer offered the course Lucey had in mind. Instead, Smith studied two years for a master’s degree in economics.¹⁴

In 1957, he returned to San Antonio keen to work with Mexican Americans and believing that Lucey wanted him to become involved in social action. In June, Lucey made Smith assistant pastor of St. Mary Magdalene Church in San Antonio, and in September, he began working at the Espada Mission, a Mexican American parish, where he preached in Spanish and English. Smith also spoke at local union meetings. In late February 1959, members of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union at the Tex-Son Garment Manufacturing Company in San Antonio, 90 percent of them Mexican American, voted to strike in a dispute about pay scales, outsourcing of work, and benefits. Other local unions agreed to join the strikers in a march around the plant and asked Smith to join them. Smith, who considered the strike justified, did not consult Lucey. Unsure whether to march, Smith sought advice from Father Raymond McGowan, a semi-retired priest in San Antonio, who had once headed the Social Action Department of the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC) in Washington, D.C. Smith initially followed McGowan's advice to address the marchers but not walk with them. Smith also went to the homes of Tex-Son workers and successfully urged some of them to join the strike. During the strike's first week, violent clashes occurred between the strikers and strikebreakers hired by the company. Police jailed six strikers for inciting a riot.¹⁵

In March, joined by more than one thousand people from sixty union locals in a march from the Labor Temple to the Alamo, Smith addressed the marchers at the rally in front of San Antonio's most iconic building. He affirmed that the strikers had a "moral right" for their action, but he exhorted them to be "peaceful and quiet" and declared "remember, the fighting is to be done over the bargaining table, not here in the streets." According to the *San Antonio Light* newspaper, Smith's words had "a tranquilizing effect on the strikers" that day. However, sporadic violence continued during the strike, although it lessened over time. In

November, Smith gave the invocation when the Texas chapter of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations held its annual state convention in San Antonio. Although the Tex-Son strike continued until January 1963, the plant's replacement of the strikers with non-union labor had ensured its failure.¹⁶

During the strike, Smith "tried in a very unsophisticated way to be a mediator." He later reflected that his unsuccessful efforts had been naive. Smith recalled, "within those very few first days following the strike itself – the beginning of the strike – I remember thinking in terms of mediation. How can I help? You know, the great white father going around, 'How can I be of help?'" Although the plant's management met with Smith, it was unbending and attempted to influence him by offering him some money for his vacation. He declined the offer.¹⁷

Lucey did not discuss the strike with Smith, an action that the priest correctly interpreted as tacit approval for his actions. The archbishop was a strict disciplinarian, who would not have tolerated any behavior by his priests that he disapproved of. Smith believed that Lucey felt "he had a priest that thought as he did and was ready to act on it, and I think he was delighted with that." In some respects, Smith was Lucey's surrogate: "I was doing what he would have done." In December 1957, Lucey appointed Smith to be archdiocesan moderator of social action, and, in June 1959, the archbishop transferred him to St. Joseph Church in downtown San Antonio.¹⁸

In 1960, San Antonio was the state's third largest city, with a population of nearly 588,000, which was approximately 53 percent Anglo, 40 percent Mexican American, and 7 percent African American. Although Mexican Americans experienced "social and economic discrimination," they were not segregated in public accommodations. By 1960, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) had pressured the city to end

segregation of African Americans in most public accommodations and in the public school system. However, the state's efforts to ban the NAACP from operating in Texas, combined with the city's "racial moderation and gradual progress," had also brought a rapid decline in the group's membership in San Antonio. Although some Mexican Americans in the city favored or were involved in the civil rights movement, most felt no affinity with African Americans and many even felt considerable antipathy toward them.¹⁹

Nevertheless, Mexican American San Antonians occasionally participated in local African American civil rights matters. Mexican Americans were among those who formed Students for Civil Liberties, a group drawn from six colleges in San Antonio that began a stand-in at the Majestic Theater, a venue which confined African American customers to the balcony. On February 12, 1961, a group of twenty-five Mexican American and White students teamed with African Americans as they attempted in vain to buy tickets for the stalls. The protest lasted three hours and was restaged occasionally over the following few months. Smith participated in the stand-ins, but they were led by Mexican Americans Leonel Jabier Castillo and Perfecto Villarreal. Smith neither initiated nor planned the protest, but he agreed to participate when asked. At first, much like his response to the Tex-Son strike, Smith was hesitant, but "I ended up standing in with them, just jumping in the line . . . it went on almost intermittently for almost a year." Smith also attempted to mediate. He tried to persuade the Majestic's manager to desegregate, and he also met with other theater managers, yet his efforts were unsuccessful. An interracial committee of prominent adult African Americans, Mexican Americans, and Whites, who were not affiliated with the civil rights movement, negotiated the trial desegregation of the Majestic Theater in December 1961. The city's other theaters followed suit on January 1, 1962.²⁰

Nonetheless, Smith's participation at the sit-in made him the first Catholic priest in the South to participate in a civil rights direct action protest. At its convention in San Antonio in February 1961, the Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Men expressed its approval of the stand-ins, which included students from Catholic colleges in the city, and declared, "We view as fiction the opinion of some that segregation is a local custom and a significant practice in the community."²¹

A decade later, Smith could not recall if he served on the interracial committee that negotiated desegregation, but he seems not to have. And, in any case, as he noted, "It wasn't long before I was to be excluded from all kinds of committees like that. They just knew where I stood, and . . . I was never in meetings or on [a] one-on-one basis with anyone." Smith joined the San Antonio NAACP, which favored direct action, while traditional black leaders, such as Valmo Bellinger, editor of the *San Antonio Register*, and the city's elite leadership preferred negotiations behind closed doors. Although Smith sat "in on some meetings with blacks and whites as we started to wrestle with this thing [desegregation] on a voluntary basis," in February 1963 he appeared along with Reverend Claude W. Black Jr. of the NAACP and Mexican American businessman Joseph Guerra when NAACP branch president Harry V. Burns proposed to the San Antonio City Council an ordinance to desegregate public accommodations and institute a maximum fine of \$200 for violators. Two weeks later, the council rebuffed the proposal and appointed a committee to make recommendations, which in May 1963 advocated voluntarism. In June, the council appointed a committee on desegregation, comprised of moderate Whites, Mexican Americans, and African Americans that persuaded the city's leaders publicly to support desegregation and brought reluctant businessmen into line. Although the NAACP picketed the city council in

support of an ordinance, by mid-July 1963 almost all of the city's public accommodations had desegregated.²²

Smith played a supportive role in desegregating San Antonio's public accommodations. He did not initiate any protests or play a determinative role in them or the decisive negotiations that virtually completed desegregation. Nevertheless, he publicly aligned himself behind desegregation, and he crossed denominational lines in establishing a working relationship with Reverend Black of the NAACP, pastor of Mount Zion First Baptist Church.

When 200,000 to 300,000 people, including an estimated 10,000 Catholic religious and laity, attended the March in Washington on August 28, 1963, where Martin Luther King Jr. gave his "I Have a Dream" speech, Smith participated in a march of 600 African Americans, Whites, and Mexican Americans in Austin. The demonstration at the state capital protested Texas governor John Connally's opposition to the federal civil rights bill desegregating public accommodations that President John F. Kennedy had proposed. African American pastors B. T. Alexander and Claude W. Black Jr. led the San Antonio contingent, in which Smith, Father Lawrence Murtagh, assistant pastor of St. Gregory Church, Father Joques Epplee, O.F.M., of St. Joseph Church, Southside, and Father Lawrence Stuebben, chaplain at Incarnate Word High School, represented the city's Catholic churches. The protesters marched two miles to the state capitol and held a rally in Woolridge Park, where Smith, appointed by Lucey as the assistant moderator of the Catholic Interracial Council of the Archdiocese of San Antonio, gave the invocation.²³

When President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the federal civil rights bill into law in July 1964, Smith wrote a statement issued by the Catholic Interracial Council of the Archdiocese of San Antonio, which welcomed the bill as "the will of the people" and reiterated Lucey's

admonition that “we must look beyond the passage of the bill to its compliance in the future; we (must) welcome in our minds and hearts what is right and just.” Lucey remained firmly behind Smith, gave him permission “to take part in peaceful demonstrations in behalf of civil rights for all citizens everywhere in our country with the approval of the local Bishop” and in January 1965 appointed him moderator of the Catholic Interracial Council.²⁴

Early on March 8, 1965, Smith was watching the television news and saw the violent, brutal attack by Alabama state troopers on civil rights protesters that had occurred hours earlier at the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma. The demonstrators had assembled for a march to Montgomery to publicize the denial of voting rights to African Americans in Dallas County, Alabama, of which Selma is the seat. From Atlanta, Martin Luther King Jr., whose organization, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, had organized the march, appealed to “clergy of all faiths” across the country to come to Selma, where he would lead a second attempt to walk to Alabama’s state capital. Smith decided he had to go and talked with Father Murtagh, who had also reached the same decision. Like Smith, Murtagh was based in San Antonio and not a southerner. He had arrived from Ireland five years earlier. Smith secured Lucey’s permission for the two priests’ participation. They paid their own plane fares and did not go as representatives of the archdiocese. Once in Selma, they stayed in the crowded Edmundite rectory, along with Catholic priests mainly from the eastern United States.²⁵

On March 9, Smith and Murtagh were among 2,000 marchers who walked to the Edmund Pettus Bridge, where King led them to within fifty yards of the waiting troopers. Smith recalled, “as we were on the bridge coming down the other side, we saw the troopers. I remember Murtagh, he took ahold of my arm. He just, you know, took ahold of it and kind of tightened his hand on it. We weren’t sure what was going to happen. . . . I might get clubbed

or whatever.” After the protesters prayed and sang “We Shall Overcome,” King turned the marchers around, at which point the troopers parted, leaving the road to Montgomery temptingly open. King continued leading the bemused marchers back into Selma, having not told them of his intention to abide by a federal court injunction against the march. That evening, local hoodlums attacked three clergymen from Massachusetts who had marched. Two days later, one of the priests, the Reverend James J. Reeb, a Unitarian from Boston, died from his injuries. Smith and Murtagh flew back to San Antonio the same day.²⁶

On Friday March 13, both priests told the press that they planned to return to Selma to participate in the march to Montgomery, which they expected to be rescheduled for the weekend. Smith also invited San Antonio’s Catholic priests, Protestant clergy, and Jewish leaders to take part in the march. Murtagh and Smith had stayed with Father Maurice Ouellet, the pastor of St. Elizabeth, Selma’s African American Catholic church. The pastor of Assumption, Selma’s white Catholic church, had refused to meet with visiting priests and did not permit Blacks to enter his church. Archbishop Joseph Toolen of the Diocese of Mobile-Birmingham had forbidden Alabama priests from participating in civil rights protests. Optimistically, Murtagh and Smith believed that most Catholics in San Antonio approved of their participation in Selma. They had received a number of phone calls concerning their participation in the march, and Smith estimated that the calls were equally divided between approval and disapproval. Murtagh’s belief that virtually all of San Antonio’s Catholic priests were “tremendously interested” in supporting the civil rights movement received some support when donations from forty San Antonio priests exceeded the cost of the two priests’ visit to Selma. However, some priests declined to contribute.²⁷

Apart from the press, Smith and Murtagh also spoke to Lucey. Smith recalled, “When we came back . . . he was just aglow. He said we were heroes and all that. He was excited like

a boy almost. I think maybe he did it vicariously through us.” Like other Catholic clergy and sisters, Smith and Murtagh had gone to Selma without first observing the custom of asking permission for entering the diocese from its prelate, Archbishop Toolen. Lucey did not question them in that regard, even though he had made that request a condition for Smith’s civil rights activism in other dioceses months earlier. Smith reasoned later that Lucey gave him permission because “it wasn’t that close to home and besides the archbishop had a basically good mind and heart about this black thing.” However, Toolen criticized the Selma protests, while supporting equal voting rights.²⁸

The same day that Smith and Murtagh returned to San Antonio, the *Catholic Week*, the Diocese of Mobile-Birmingham’s newspaper, published a statement from Toolen that supported “recognition of the real needs of our Negro people and every legitimate effort in their struggle to exercise fully all their constitutional rights.” The archbishop also condemned “without reservation a harsh and brutal exercise of the police power” and, in reference to the protesters, “a complete disregard on the part of citizens for statutes legally enacted in the interest of the common good and public safety.” Toolen criticized both law enforcement and the demonstrators by denouncing violence “used to perpetuate existing injustice or deliberately provoked for the sake of influencing public opinion, especially where other means exist.”²⁹

On March 14, Smith, Murtagh, and Charles Watkins of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) led a march of four hundred people from the San Antonio City Hall to the Alamo, where they held a memorial service for the Reverend Reeb. The marchers included twenty Catholic priests, twenty sisters from five religious orders, some Catholic seminarians, and many Catholic laity. Richard L. Dockery, president of the San Antonio NAACP, presented Smith and Murtagh with citations from the NAACP and said they had “placed their

lives on the line in Selma for human rights.” In response, Smith admitted that he had been frightened and declared, “The people in Selma are the real heroes because they are struggling daily for their rights.”³⁰

When King and the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice (NCCIJ), an unofficial group on whose board Smith served, asked Lucey and other bishops to attend services for Reeb in Selma on March 15, the archbishop instructed Smith to attend as his official representative, reasoning, Smith believed, “that was a safe enough thing to be officially identified with.” On his return to Selma, Smith learned that the federal injunction on the Selma to Montgomery march had been lifted, and the march would proceed. He telephoned his archdiocese’s chancery and received permission to remain in Selma for the march, staying once again at the Edmundite rectory.³¹

As hundreds of Catholic sisters and clergy from different faiths converged on Selma and participated in local demonstrations, Toolen denounced their involvement, remarking that “their place is at home, doing God’s work.” Although he asserted that “all citizens are entitled to equal rights and privileges under the constitution,” the archbishop argued that the protests “are not helping things at all.” He claimed that King was “hurting the cause of the Negro rather than helping it,” “trying to divide our people,” and “taking children out of school to demonstrate on the streets.”³²

Although Lucey refrained from criticizing Toolen directly, two days later, the *Alamo Messenger*, the newspaper of the Archdiocese of San Antonio, published a front-page article in which Lucey praised African Americans for marching peacefully in Selma and condemned Alabama state troopers for “rioting” in response. He argued that the “Protestant ministers, Jewish Rabbis and Catholic priests” and sisters who marched in Selma were “giving testimony to the charity of Christ in deed and in truth.” Alluding to King’s argument that

people should not obey unjust laws, Lucey concluded that “if it wrong to defy an unjust law the leaders of the American Revolution were traitors to the crown and Benedict Arnold was a saint.”³³

Far more people wanted to participate in the Selma to Montgomery march than could be safely accommodated on the narrow two-lane highway that formed most of the route. Anxious to ensure that the march was largely composed of African Americans, its organizers invited outsiders to apply for thirty-six places among the three hundred available for the march’s duration. Smith’s successful application detailed his civil rights activities and role in the Catholic Interracial Council of the Archdiocese of San Antonio. Despite Smith’s belief that he was the only Catholic priest on the march, Father Rene Guesnier, O.S.B., of St. Aloysius Church, Kansas City, Missouri, was also selected. Unlike Guesnier, however, Smith slept at the march’s makeshift campsites each night along the route.³⁴

The fifty-four-mile march took place between March 21 and 25. King led the march, but Smith did not get an opportunity to meet him. Nevertheless, Smith’s clerical collar and evident commitment drew attention from African American and White reporters. Simeon Booker reported in *Ebony* magazine that Smith “stood out as a giant because of his devotion to the cause.” Smith told Booker, “It is tragic to think we have to walk like this, that such a demonstration must be carried out to dramatize the plight of these people. One must sacrifice himself to help others.” Asked by the *Saturday Evening Post* why he marched, Smith explained, “as a priest I represent the church, and I’ve felt great anguish about the silence of the church in the South. We’ve made enough high-sounding statements, and it just seemed to me that the time had come when we should see eyeball to eyeball. All I know is that I just had to put my feet on this highway, and I just had to walk.”³⁵ .

Smith made an impression on other marchers. Shirley Frison, a non-Catholic African American from Selma, walked the route with Smith. She recalled, “Meeting Father Smith was one of the best things that has ever happened to me. At 18 I had never met a person like him who treated me as an equal. His genuine kindness impressed me. We corresponded for some time after the march.”³⁶

Smith recalled only one good night’s sleep during the march, which came at the end of the second day, when the cold of the first night had been replaced by balmy weather. He remembered, “As the days passed there was more sunburn. I ended up just as red, red, red and burned.” He was otherwise untroubled when walking until the day of the approach to Montgomery when he was soaked through. Smith later wryly observed, “the Lord sent a wondrous rain upon us. We had suffered from the cold and the heat and the dust, and it seemed that he wanted to finally wash us off, baptize us perhaps in some fashion, because I have never been in such a hard rain in my life, on that highway.”³⁷

Surprisingly, given his recent criticism of the Selma demonstrations and the priests and sisters from out of state who had participated in them, Toolen gave permission for the marchers to camp on the grounds of the City of St. Jude, a Catholic school and hospital on the outskirts of Montgomery. The next day, King led the march, which swelled to 25,000 people, including one hundred Catholic priests and brothers, twenty-five sisters, and hundreds of Catholic laity, to the state capitol for its final rally. Smith was pleased that only one White person was on the platform, making it “truly a black event.” He noted that “in most other happenings sometimes the whites dominate.”³⁸

Participation in the Selma protests, which he regarded as “one of the highlights in my life as a man and as an American citizen and as a priest,” radicalized Smith, who returned impatient for action and ever more critical of social and economic injustice wherever he

found it.³⁹ Lucey thanked Smith upon his return for “the great work which you have done in recent weeks for the ignorant people of Alabama.” The archbishop created a Social Action Department, directed by Smith, to launch Project Equality, part of a projected national program devised by the NCCIJ. Project Equality, which the archdiocese began in August 1965, required all firms doing business with Catholic institutions to provide equal employment opportunities and affirmative action in hiring and promotion for “Mexican-Americans, Negroes and persons of other minority groups at all job levels.” The project also required such firms to provide the archdiocese on request with “a breakdown of their total labor force by ethnic group, race and job category” for evaluation purposes. Smith told a meeting of the NAACP in San Antonio that cooperating firms would be added to “a list of preferred suppliers,” while those that did not would be denied contacts. He argued that it was necessary to press “the pocket book to help a moral problem” because “moral preaching is not enough.”⁴⁰

Project Equality eventually involved 450 firms in the archdiocese. Lucey and Smith also created a review board to examine hiring practices in Catholic institutions in the archdiocese as well. Aside from monitoring businesses’ employment practices, Project Equality distributed charitable donations from businesses to the needy, operated youth programs primarily for Mexican Americans, tutored children in English, and developed a voter education program for adults. Many of San Antonio’s business people opposed and resented Project Equality, and they also disliked Smith for his labor and civil rights activism. Lucey also eventually became exasperated by Smith’s increasing outspokenness and militancy.⁴¹

In September 1965, Smith urged Mexican Americans at a meeting of the Political Association of Spanish-Speaking Organizations to emulate African American protests.

Borrowing from the lexicon of black activists, he condemned conservative Mexican Americans as “Tio Tomas,” echoing the charge of “Uncle Tom” leveled at accommodationist Blacks. In spring 1966, he participated for a few days in part of a march from Delano to Sacramento, California, by grape workers seeking higher wages under the leadership of César Chávez of the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA). In April, Smith testified before the San Antonio City Council in support of a union’s demand for a fifty cent an hour pay rise for city employees. When challenged by the mayor about low wages paid by Santa Rosa Hospital, a Catholic institution, Smith agreed its wages were too low and said the Church should be taxed. Lucey wrote to Smith defending the hospital and warning him to keep to the subject when addressing public bodies.⁴² Their relationship endured this disruption, but it foreshadowed their later clashes.

With the archbishop’s permission, on June 6, Smith and another archdiocesan priest, William Killian, traveled to Rio Grande City in South Texas to attend a rally in support of a strike by Mexican American and Mexican agricultural workers for a \$1.25 hourly state minimum wage and union recognition. The two priests returned the following week with Father Henry Casso, executive secretary of the Bishops’ Committee for the Spanish Speaking, who had arranged for grocery shipments to the strikers. Between these two visits to the Diocese of Brownsville, which had been without a prelate since the death of Bishop Adolph Marx in November 1965, Humberto Medeiros was consecrated as the new bishop on June 9, and his installation was scheduled for June 29. Lucey defended Smith and Killian against criticism from Monsignor Dan Laning of St. Paul’s Catholic Church in Mission, Texas, who said they “do not speak for the church” and had “overstepped their bounds.” To Laning’s fury, Lucey also expressed support for Smith and Killian when he spoke at Medeiros’s installation.⁴³

In the midst of the controversy, Smith was temporarily absent in Mississippi, where Martin Luther King Jr., Stokely Carmichael of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and Floyd McKissick of CORE were leading the March against Fear from Memphis to Jackson, which James Meredith had begun as a solo effort before being shot and injured on its second day. On June 12, Smith joined S. L. Deckard, president of the San Antonio NAACP and Maury Maverick Jr., a counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union, in leading an interracial march of sixty-one people from San Antonio City Hall to the Alamo to protest Meredith's shooting. In an indication of his growing radicalism, Smith tore into President Johnson, a friend of Archbishop Lucey. Smith told the marchers that "it's not enough for President Johnson to come down here and put his arm around a Mexican-American and say, 'I love you Mexican-Americans, I understand you.' This is his (President Johnson's) backyard, and it's a pretty shabby one." Returning to a recurrent theme in his speeches since returning from Selma, Smith declared, "It's time to do something," he and added, "we've had enough patience: we need impatience to get things done." Smith linked the strike in the Rio Grande Valley and Meredith's shooting together. He argued, "as long as a man like Meredith can be shot in Mississippi, as long as the grower can put sweet melons and sweet strawberries on our breakfast tables, and at the same time squeeze out the sour sweat of the cheap labor they exploit down there, as long as they do that down there, we have something to do."⁴⁴

On June 23, Mississippi Highway Patrolmen beat and tear gassed the Meredith march demonstrators when they attempted to pitch their tents at a Black public school in defiance of Canton city authorities. The same day, the NCCIJ attempted to contact fifteen Catholic priests from outside Mississippi to mediate. Smith, one of the few who responded, arrived in Canton with Lucey's permission the next day. With march leaders undecided whether to

return to the school, a Catholic mediating team of Smith; Jim McGuire, associate director of the NCCIJ's Southern Field Service; and Father William Lewers, C.S.C., a law professor at the University of Notre Dame, suggested a compromise to federal mediators whereby the marchers would return to the school for a rally but not camp there. The compromise became the basis of a settlement agreed by march leaders and city authorities that avoided further violence. Afterwards, Smith told reporters that he agreed with the call for Black Power, a slogan and philosophy popularized by Carmichael during the march. Demonstrating an understanding of the concept that many Whites and some Blacks condemned as implying Black domination, Smith declared, "it makes sense, because they weren't talking about black supremacy," but the pursuit of political, economic, and social power.⁴⁵

After joining the Meredith march for its final day, Smith returned to Texas, where the Rio Grande Valley strike continued despite harassment from Texas Rangers. On July 4, a contingent of strike leaders and strikers began a four-hundred-mile march from Rio Grande City to Austin, where they planned to ask Governor Connally to back a bill for a state minimum hourly wage of \$1.25. Smith walked with the marchers for two days and then rejoined them when they reached San Antonio for the remaining eighty miles to Austin. Lucey publicly endorsed the protest. Connally declined to meet the marchers in Austin and instead met with their leaders, including Smith, near New Braunfels. The governor did not yield. Five days later, the march reached Austin on Labor Day where, joined by African Americans who had marched from Huntsville, in East Texas, in protest against continued segregation and lack of economic opportunity, its ranks had swelled to 10,000. However, neither the march nor the strike, which continued for a year, achieved a minimum wage.⁴⁶

When the march was still in progress, Smith joined a picket line around the Steves Sash and Door Company, which had fired workers engaged in a unionization effort. Owner

Marshall Steves, a member of a prominent San Antonio family and president of the HemisFair '68 international exposition, personally complained to Lucey that Smith was the only obstacle to a resolution. In response, Lucey wrote to Smith accusing him of acting “as a union representative” in talks with the company and complaining that “you have hurt the Archbishop of San Antonio by throwing yourself too passionately into labor controversies.” A month later, Smith replied denying the accusation. Justifiably, he argued that his involvement was no different than in other labor disputes that Lucey had supported, and he accused the archbishop of making “many bold gestures followed too quickly by meek retreat into the security of papal encyclicals.”⁴⁷

On the same day, NFWA president César Chávez sent Lucey a telegram requesting that the archbishop send Smith and Killian back to Rio Grande City to assist the strikers. Despite his clash with Smith, Lucey asked Medeiros for permission to send them, but he declined, claiming that “they would do more harm than good.” Unwilling to clash with a prelate in Texas, Lucey refused to send Smith and Killian, and they accepted his judgment.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, Smith continued publicly to support the Steves plant strike, leading Catholic business leaders in San Antonio to apply further pressure on the archbishop, which increased after Smith participated in a March for Justice in San Antonio against the company in December. Lucey responded in January by transferring Smith to St. Lawrence Church on the outskirts of the city of San Antonio. Rather than containing Smith, as he had intended, Lucey’s action only emboldened the priest, who openly defied his archbishop. While Lucey was at an annual clergy retreat, Smith, Killian, and three more Catholic priests from San Antonio went to Rio Grande City to support the strikers. The priests and some strikers were arrested for disturbing the peace after going to the fields to ask farmworkers to join the strike. They were released on their personal recognizance. Lucey responded by informing Smith and

Killian that he was sending them to Via Coeli Monastery, a retreat in Jemez Springs, New Mexico, for Catholic priests with personal problems.⁴⁹

Against Smith's advice, the Valley Farm Workers Assistance Committee responded by picketing both the chancery of the archdiocese and Lucey's home. Upset by their archbishop's actions, a group of ten priests met with Lucey, who soon "either suspended or transferred" most of them outside the city of San Antonio. About one hundred sympathizers saw Smith and Killian off at the airport when they flew to New Mexico, and still more welcomed them back five days later, much to Smith's delight. On his return, Smith angered Lucey by saying that, while he did not approve of the picketing Lucey's residence, the farm workers had a right to do so.⁵⁰

His fire undiminished, two weeks later, Smith made his most radical statement. Recalling the meeting of the Minimum Wage March leaders with Governor Connally, Smith told a meeting of the Democratic Study Group in San Antonio that "Governor Connally is the symbol of gringo paternalism. He was the tall Texan looking down and patting the Mexican on the head." Smith added, "The gringo will continue to pat the Mexican-American on the head, and we must keep yelling and shouting and attempt to stir up the right kind of nationalism in these [Mexican American] people." Ten days later, Lucey removed Smith as head of the Social Action Department, thereby ending his role in Project Equality, which had upset many San Antonio business people. In April, Father James M. Boyle replaced Smith as moderator of the Catholic Interracial Council of the Archdiocese of San Antonio.⁵¹

In a show of support for Smith, the executive board of the San Antonio NAACP adopted a resolution in April that expressed "its firm support and appreciation . . . for your long devotion and work for Civil Rights' causes; your service as a member of the local NAACP and its Board; and comme[n]dation for all your efforts toward gaining social justice

for all men.” Smith received further appreciation later that month, when Fathers Joseph Deane, Lawrence Murtagh, and Donald Heffernan criticized Lucey’s treatment of him and Killian in the *San Antonio Express-News*. Lucey responded by suspending the three critics and then Smith after he had supported their right to speak out. By May 12, Lucey, acting in part under pressure from other priests, had lifted all of the suspensions. Although the episode demonstrated a growing willingness among some San Antonio priests to criticize their archbishop, the *San Antonio Express-News* reported in August, when Smith received the John F. Kennedy Freedom Award from the archdiocese’s Catholic Interracial Council, that he had been “conspicuously silent following his suspension.”⁵²

Under pressure from Lucey and the chancery, Smith curbed his public outspokenness, but, when he accepted the award, he also noted changed circumstances in which the nonviolent public protests that had characterized the civil rights movement in the 1960s had largely ceased. “We are,” he confessed, “confused and not sure where we can go from here and what we shou[l]d do.” None of the strikes that Smith supported succeeded. The Rio Grande Valley strike failed because agribusiness had a ready supply of non-unionized cheap labor from nearby Mexico. The Steves plant strike also ended. Smith was not involved in any labor strikes between 1968 and 1971 “because there just wasn’t that much going on.”⁵³

That Smith’s courage to stand by his convictions remained undimmed was demonstrated by his leading role in efforts to secure Lucey’s retirement. Among its reforms, the Second Vatican Council envisaged ordinaries relaxing their often authoritarian approach and including priests in the governing of dioceses through the creation of a Senate of Priests. However, Lucey had refused even to meet with the Senate of Priests for a year after its establishment in his archdiocese and he rejected its suggestions, bypassed it, and disregarded it on matters of importance, while continuing to discipline priests who displeased him. As a

result, in March 1968 a group of concerned priests, including Smith, formed an independent Priests' Association of the Archdiocese of San Antonio, which included 166 of 441 of the Catholic clergy in the archdiocese. Lucey rejected its efforts to work with him.⁵⁴

In September, fifty-one of the members of the Priests' Association of the Archdiocese of San Antonio signed a letter, co-written by Smith and Father Roy Rihn, to Pope Paul VI and high-ranking church officials calling for Lucey to resign. The letter noted that at seventy-seven, he exceeded the retirement age of seventy-five set by the Second Vatican Council and claimed that he was aloof, repressive, paternalistic, and unwilling "to share any real responsibility" with his priests. The signatories maintained that they did "not seek to destroy authority in the church," but they argued that Lucey had not observed the council's call for prelates to listen to their priests and accept their "effective assistance in the government of the diocese." In accordance with Vatican II, they maintained, he needed to be the kind of bishop who will "stand in the midst of his people as one who serves. Let him be a good shepherd who knows his sheep and whose sheep know him. Let him be a true father who excels in the spirit of love and solicitude for all." Their letter stipulated the need for positive action within thirty days. When no action followed, the signatories fulfilled their promise to release it to the press.⁵⁵

Lucey responded with indignation and reprisals against some of the signatories, but sixteen more priests added their names to a second letter, and more than 7,000 lay people signed a petition calling for his retirement. Lucey submitted a resignation letter in December, which the pope accepted in May. Lucey formally retired in June and, in a last punitive act, transferred Smith 135 miles away from San Antonio to El Campo, where he was to serve as an assistant pastor at St. Philip the Apostle Catholic Church, a predominantly Anglo congregation.⁵⁶

Smith had fewer opportunities for activism in subsequent years as a result of his postings and the decline of the African American and Mexican American civil rights movements and labor protests, but he never lost his commitment to social justice. Characteristically, Smith spent much of his free time in El Campo in the Black community and sought to foster interracial dialogue. In 1971, he spent three months as a missionary in Guatemala. Back in El Campo, he asked Archbishop Francis J. Furey, Lucey's replacement, for a return to San Antonio. Having rejected several pastorates and keen to work among Mexican Americans, in 1972 he accepted a parish ninety-five miles from San Antonio at Sacred Heart in Crystal City, where he occasionally worked with the La Raza Unida Party. Once more, he became involved in a Mexican American labor strike and was arrested for trespassing, although the charge was subsequently dropped. In February 1983, Smith returned to San Antonio to serve as pastor of St. Stephen. In March 1984, he became archdiocesan director for pro-life activities and began participating in anti-abortion activism, including praying outside abortion clinics. Smith was arrested four times in San Antonio and once each in Austin and Lubbock. He was jailed three times, for periods ranging from ten to twenty-two days. A few months after his reappointment as pastor of St. Stephen in May 1989, Smith was named monsignor. He retired in June 1997 and died in October 2012.⁵⁷

In retirement, Smith observed, "All my activities have been consistent. Whenever I've become aware of a social injustice, I've spoken out for those in need. Unlike the others, the unborn have no voice – and abortion is an issue that involves not just a decent wage or the right to vote but life itself." For many years, Smith's activism was made possible by the support and tolerance of Archbishop Lucey. Although Smith participated in labor and civil rights protests, he did not initiate them. Often, especially during his early years as a clergyman, his involvement resulted from invitation. Smith was cautious, even hesitant,

during his first forays into activism. His involvement in the Selma protests proved transformative for him, but, unlike many Catholic religious who participated in the civil rights movement for the first time in Selma, Smith was already an activist. After his return to Texas, he became increasingly radical in his words and actions. His self-described traits as “a maverick, a loner, not a joiner” helped protect him psychologically when faced with opposition and disapproval, whether for his labor and civil rights protests or his later anti-abortion activities. Smith pioneered Catholic clergy civil rights direct action in the South, which, like his labor activism, began before the Second Vatican Council.⁵⁸

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¹ “Oral Memoirs of Sherrill J. Smith: A Series of Interviews Conducted by Lyle Clarence Brown, June 9, 1972–August 17, 1972,” Religion and Culture Project (Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, Texas), 163–168, 200 (quotation).

² “Smith, Sherrill Joseph,” Bio: cv & Misc folder, Sherrill Smith Papers (Archives of the Archdiocese of San Antonio, San Antonio, Texas; cited hereafter as AASA); “Oral Memoirs of Sherrill J. Smith,” 181–184, 191–215; Charles E. Fager, *Selma, 1965: The March that Changed the South* (2d ed.; Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), 97–98, 145–146; “Alabama Archbishop Opposes Selma Vote Demonstrations,” *Catholic Virginian*, Mar. 26, 1965; *The New York Times*, Mar. 21, 1965; Amy L. Koehlinger, *The New Nuns: Racial Justice and*

Religious Reform in the 1960s (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007), 3–4, 53;

“Mississippi Riot Averted,” *Alamo Messenger*, July 1, 1966.

³ “Oral Memoirs of Sherrill J. Smith,” 145–157, 200, 225–241, 355–356.

⁴ Martin Herman Kuhlman, “The Civil Rights Movement in Texas: Desegregation of Public Accommodations, 1950–1964” (Ph.D. diss., Texas Tech University, 1994); Robert A. Goldberg, “Racial Change on the Southern Periphery: The Case of San Antonio, Texas, 1960–1965,” *Journal of Southern History* 49 (August 1983): 365; Saul E. Bronder, *Social Justice and Church Authority: The Public Life of Archbishop of Robert E. Lucey* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982), 100–104, 110–112, 117–129, 138, 145, 153, 163; Brian D. Behnken, *Fighting Their Own Battles: Mexican Americans, African Americans, and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Texas* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 95, 106, 107–109, 118, 128–129, 131, 137–142, 150, 152, 177, 275n3, 277n49; Max Krochmal, *Blue Texas: The Making of a Multiracial Democratic Coalition in the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 171, 191, 400. Smith is not mentioned in histories and memoirs published about the Selma protests or in studies of the civil rights movement in Mississippi. See David J. Garrow, *Protest at Selma: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Voting Rights Act of 1965* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1978); Bernard LaFayette Jr. and Kathryn Lee Johnson, *In Peace and Freedom: My Journey in Selma* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2013); Bruce Hartford, *The Selma Voting Rights Struggle and the March to Montgomery* (San Francisco: Westwind Writers, 2014); Craig Swanson, *The Selma Campaign: Martin Luther King Jr., Jimmie Lee Jackson, and the Defining Struggle of the Civil Rights Era* (Bloomington, Ind.: Archway Publishing, 2014); Robert A. Pratt, *Selma’s Bloody Sunday: Protest, Voting Rights,*

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and the Struggle for Racial Equality (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016); Joe Street and Henry Knight Lozano (eds.), *The Shadow of Selma* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2018); John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Aram Goudsouzian, *Down to the Crossroads: Civil Rights, Black Power, and the Meredith March Against Fear* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014). Smith is also not acknowledged in the documentary *Sisters of Selma* (Arlington, Va.: PBS 2007), although he can be seen briefly, unnamed, in the crowd at the march's rally in Montgomery.

⁵ Koehlinger, *New Nuns*, 4, 9–10, 43, 45–47; John T. McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth-Century Urban North* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 152, 155–173; “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes* Promulgated By His Holiness, Pope Paul VI on December 7, 1965” <http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html> [Accessed Mar. 7, 2019].

⁶ “Oral Memoirs of Sherrill J. Smith,” 2, 3, 10 (third quotation), 18 (first quotation), 40–47, 61 (fourth quotation), 98 (second quotation); Sherrill Smith to Marilyn Kuehler, May 3, 1973, interview, part I, 15, 18, 19, Sherrill Smith folder, AASA. In later years, Smith gave interviewers different dates for the same events or was uncertain about when they occurred. Based on a press clipping from the 1950s, it seems likely that he graduated in 1944. “Fr. S. J. Smith is Assigned as Assistant Pastor,” press clipping, no date, Bio: cv & Misc folder, Sherrill Smith Papers, AASA.

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⁷ “Oral Memoirs of Sherrill J. Smith,” 3, 41, 47–48 (first quotation on p. 47), 61 (second quotation); Smith to Kuehler, May 3, 1973, part I, 18, 19. Smith gave a slightly different account to Marilyn Kuehler. See Smith to Kuehler, May 3, 1973, part I, 20–21.

⁸ “Oral Memoirs of Sherrill J. Smith,” 60 (first quotation), 61 (second quotation).

⁹ “Oral Memoirs of Sherrill J. Smith,” 3–4, 66, 72–77, 80–81; Smith to Kuehler, May 3, 1973, part I, 5–6, 17; Maura Ciarrocchi, “A ‘Marching’ Priest Reflects on a Fulfilling Career and Shares Some ‘Cake,’” *Today’s Catholic*, Aug. 15, 1997; Cherie Ortmann, “Msgr. Sherrill Smith ‘Read His Way into Priesthood,’” *Today’s Catholic*, Sept. 25, 1998. Smith recalled that most prospective priests entered seminary at age fourteen. Enrolling in a seminary at twice that age, he was considered a delayed vocation. See Smith to Kuehler, May 3, 1973, part I, 2, 17; Roy B. Campbell, “The School of Saint Philip Neri,” *Jesuit Educational Quarterly* 10 (January 1948): 182–184.

¹⁰ Bronder, *Social Justice and Church Authority*, 3, 9–15, 19, 21–23, 25–31, 33–36, 39, 41–42, 53–55, 63–69, 75–77; “Golden Sacerdotal Jubilee Most Rev. Emmanuel B. Ledvina D.D., L.L.D. Bishop of Corpus Christi Sermon by the Most Rev. Robert E. Lucey, S.T.D. Archbishop of San Antonio March 18, 1943,” and **Error! Main Document Only.** Robert E. Lucey, “Who is My Neighbor?,” Oct. 19, 1947, 3–9, Lucey Social Problems folder 1, AASA; **Error! Main Document Only.** “Inter-racial Committee is Headed by Brother Schnepf,” *Alamo Register*, Oct. 29, 1943; **Error! Main Document Only.** *Interracial Justice* (San Antonio: San Antonio Archdiocesan Committee on Interracial Relations, 1945); “*Mystici Corporis Christi*,” *Catholic Mind* 41 (November 1943): 1–44. The doctrine influenced the development of the Catholic interracialism in the 1930s and 1940s seen in the founding of the first Catholic Interracial Council in New York in 1934 followed later by councils in several other cities, including New Orleans, but mainly in the North and Midwest. Councils relied

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primarily on interracial meetings of Catholics to promote mutual understanding, and they called for equal opportunities and the elimination of racial discrimination in the Catholic Church and society. On Catholic interracialism, see David W. Southern, *Error! Main Document Only. John LaFarge and the Limits of Catholic Interracialism, 1911–1963* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996) and R. Bentley *Error! Main Document Only. Anderson, Black, White, and Catholic: New Orleans Interracialism, 1947–1956* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University, 2005).

¹¹ *Error! Main Document Only.* Robert E. Lucey to Reverend Mother M. Angelique, Reverend Mother M. Laserian, Reverend Mother M. Rose Kallus, Reverend Mother M. Paz, June 12, 1953, Lucey, Robert E. [Archbishop] Social Problems: Race Relations folder # 2 (1951–1965), AASA; Robert E. Lucey, pastoral letter Apr. 5, 1964, *Alamo Register*, Apr. 9, 1954. Lucey announced his school desegregation decision six weeks before the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* that segregation in public schools was unconstitutional.

¹² Smith to Kuehler, May 3, 1973, part I, 1 (first and second quotations); “Oral Memoirs of Sherrill J. Smith,” 81 (third quotation). Although his home city of Chicago had a particularly active Catholic Interracial Council, founded in 1945, Smith seems not to have been influenced by it. On the Chicago Catholic Interracial Council and Catholic interracialism in the city, see Karen J. Johnson, *One in Christ: Chicago Catholics and the Quest for Interracial Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

¹³ “Oral Memoirs of Sherrill J. Smith,” 1, 83, 86, 92–95 (quotation on p. 93); Smith to Kuehler, May 3, 1973, part I, 1, 6. In 1952, the seminary moved to a new location in San Antonio and was renamed Assumption Seminary. “History – Assumption Seminary,” <<http://assumptionseminary.org/about/history/>> [Accessed Mar. 13 2019].

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¹⁴ Smith to Kuehler, May 3, 1973, part I, 7–9 (first quotation on p. 8); “Oral Memoirs of Sherrill J. Smith,” 97–99 (second quotation on p. 97), 102 (third quotation), 104–105, 106–107, 113–114.

¹⁵ “Fr. S. J. Smith is Assigned as Assistant Pastor,” press clipping, no date, Bio: cv & Misc folder, Sherrill Smith Papers, AASA; “Oral Memoirs of Sherrill J. Smith,” 107, 113–114, 120–121, 141, 142, 145–148, 163; “Smith, Sherrill Joseph,” Bio: cv & Misc folder, Sherrill Smith Papers, AASA; Lori A. Flores, “An Unladylike Strike Fashionably Clothed: Mexicana and Anglo Women Garment Workers Against Tex-Son, 1959–1963,” *Pacific Historical Review* 78 (August 2009): 367–370, 376, 378–379, 388–390; Irene Ledesma, “Unlikely Strikers: Mexican-American Women in Strike Activity in Texas, 1919–1974” (Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1992), 157–265, 169; Jessica Cantú, “Tex-Son Garment Workers’ Strike,” *The Handbook of Texas Online*, <<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/oet04>> [Accessed Sept. 7, 2019]. In an oral history with Lyle Clarence Brown, Smith, who was often unsure or mistaken regarding details, refers erroneously to Father John McGowan of the NCWC. “Oral Memoirs of Sherrill J. Smith,” 147.

¹⁶ Krochmal, *Blue Texas*, 171 (first quotation), 191; Flores, “An Unladylike Strike Fashionably Clothed,” 381–383, 388–389 (second, third and fourth quotations on p. 389), 395–396, 399; Ledesma, “Unlikely Strikers,” 162, 165–166, 170.

¹⁷ “Oral Memoirs of Sherrill J. Smith,” 154–156 (first quotation on p. 154; second quotation on p. 155).

¹⁸ Bronder, *Social Justice and Church Authority*, 3–4; “Oral Memoirs of Sherrill J. Smith,” 149–150 (quotations on p. 150); “Smith, Sherrill Joseph,” Bio: cv & Misc folder, Sherrill Smith Papers, AASA.

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¹⁹ Goldberg, “Racial Change on the Southern Periphery,” 350, 352 (first quotation), 353–362 (second quotation on p. 359); Ramona Hudson, “The NAACP State Conference in Texas: Intermediary and Catalyst for Change, 1937–1957,” *Journal of African American History* 94 (Fall 2009): 523.

²⁰ Smith to Kuehler, May 3, 1973, part II, tape 1, 47–48 (quotation on p. 47), Sherrill Smith folder, AASA; “Oral Memoirs of Sherrill J. Smith,” 163–166; Goldberg, “Racial Change on the Southern Periphery,” 363–364. The protesters included students from the city’s three Catholic higher education institutions: Incarnate Word College, Our Lady of the Lake College, and St. Mary’s University, which had all desegregated by January 1954. Kuhlman, “Civil Rights Movement in Texas,” 204; Mark Newman, *Desegregating Dixie: The Catholic Church in the South and Desegregation, 1945–1992* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2018), 142.

²¹ Kuhlman, “Civil Rights Movement in Texas,” 204.

²² “Oral Memoirs of Sherrill J. Smith,” 167 (quotations); Goldberg, “Racial Change on the Southern Periphery,” 361, 363–371.

²³ Newman, *Desegregating Dixie*, 38; “S.A. Rights Group to Austin,” *San Antonio Light*, Aug. 28, 1963, and “Four Local Priests Take Part in March,” *Alamo Messenger*, Sept. 12, 1963.

²⁴ “Interracial Group Hails Passage of Rights Bill,” *Alamo Messenger*, July 10, 1964 (first and second quotations); Robert E. Lucey to Sherrill Smith, May 27, 1964 (third quotation), Robert E. Lucey to Sherrill Smith, Jan. 11, 1965, Lucey Social Problems folder #2, AASA; Sherrill Smith to Robert E. Lucey, Jan. 30, 1965, Sherrill Smith Personal Files, Sherrill Smith Papers, AASA.

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²⁵ “Oral Memoirs of Sherrill J. Smith,” 171–172, 193, 215; Smith to Kuehler, May 3, 1973, part II, tape 1, 53–55; David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York: William Morrow, 1986), 395–400 (quotation on p. 400); “March Spurring ‘New Alabama’ Local Rights Leader Declares,” *Alamo Messenger*, Apr. 2, 1965; Ed Foster, “Priests Plan Return to Selma,” *San Antonio Light*, Mar. 12, 1965; “Local Priests Join Marchers in Alabama Rights Protest,” *Alamo Messenger*, Mar. 12, 1965. On Catholics and Selma see Gregory Nelson Hite, “The Hottest Places in Hell: The Catholic Church and Civil Rights in Selma, Alabama, 1937–1965” (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 2002).

²⁶ “Oral Memoirs of Sherrill J. Smith,” 195–196 (first quotation on p. 196); “Localites Respond to Call of Race Trouble in Selma,” *Alamo Messenger*, Mar. 19, 1965; Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, 403–407 (second quotation on p. 404). Smith thought there were between fifty and sixty Catholic priests in the march, whereas the *Catholic Week* estimated that between thirty-five and forty were present. See “Local Priests Join Marchers in Alabama Rights Protest,” *Alamo Messenger*, Mar. 12, 1965; “Between 35–40 Priests at Selma,” *Catholic Week*, Mar. 12, 1965.

²⁷ Foster, “Priests Plan Return to Selma” (quotation); Robert E. Lucey to Sherrill Smith, Mar. 29, 1965, William A. Killian to Robert E. Lucey, Mar. 29, 1965, Lucey Social Problems folder #2; Father William A. Killian to Marilyn Kuehler, May 8, 1973, 43–46, AASA.

²⁸ Smith to Kuehler, May 3, 1973, part II, tape 2, 2 (first quotation), 3 (second quotation), Sherrill Smith folder, AASA. On Father Maurice Ouellet and the civil rights movement in Selma, see Paul T. Murray, “‘The Most Righteous White Man in Selma’: Father Maurice Ouellet and the Struggle for Voting Rights,” *Alabama Review* 68 (January 2015): 31–73.

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²⁹ “Thomas J. Toolen, “Archbishop’s Statement on Selma Racial Tensions,” *Catholic Week*, Mar. 12, 1965.

³⁰ “Localites Respond to Call of Race Trouble in Selma,” *Alamo Messenger*, Mar. 19, 1965 (quotations); John A. Wagner, “Commitment to Justice,” *Alamo Messenger*, Mar. 26, 1965.

³¹ “Southern Field Service Report for November 1963 through September, 1964 – A Survey of Activities; and General Observations,” 4, folder 8, box 4, series 30, National Catholic Council for Interracial Justice Records (Special Collections and University Archives, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin; cited hereafter as NCCIJR); Sherrill Smith to Robert E. Lucey, Aug. 3, 1961, Sherrill Smith Personal File, Sherrill Smith Papers, AASA; “Localites Respond to Call of Race Trouble in Selma,” *Alamo Messenger*, Mar. 19, 1965; “Archbishop Lucey Lauds Priests, Sisters in Selma,” *Texas Catholic Herald*, Mar. 25, 1965; “Oral Memoirs of Sherrill J. Smith,” 197–198 (quotation on p. 197); Smith to Kuehler, May 3, 1973, part II, tape 1, 55. On March 15, 1965, in a televised address to a joint session of Congress, President Lyndon B. Johnson urged passage of a voting rights bill. Enacted in August, it led to a massive increase in African American voter registration in the South. See Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, 408–409, 435.

³² *Birmingham News*, Mar. 18, 1965.

³³ Robert E. Lucey, “Murder in Alabama,” *Alamo Messenger*, Mar. 19, 1965.

³⁴ “Oral Memoirs of Sherrill J. Smith,” 201–202; Smith to Kuehler, May 3, 1973, part II, tape 1, 55–56; John L. Wright Jr., “Priest-Selma Marchers Protest the Inhumanity of the Past 100 Years,” *Clarion Herald*, Apr. 1, 1965; “March Spurring ‘New Alabama,’ Local Rights Leader Declares,” *Alamo Messenger*, Apr. 2, 1965; “Priests, Nuns in Alabama March,” *Catholic Virginian*, Apr. 2, 1965; “Selma Marchers Deny Charges of Immorality,” *Catholic Week*, May 7, 1965; Fager, *Selma, 1965*, 145–146, 153.

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³⁵ Simeon Booker, “50,000 March on Montgomery,” *Ebony* 20 (May 1965): 56 (first quotation), 58 (second quotation); Maura Ciarrocchi, “Encounter in Selma Provides a Memory and a Meeting for Two Who Marched,” *Today’s Catholic*, Feb. 14, 1997 (third quotation).

³⁶ Ciarrocchi, “Encounter in Selma Provides a Memory and a Meeting for Two Who Marched,” *Today’s Catholic*, Feb. 14, 1997.

³⁷ “Oral Memoirs of Sherrill J. Smith,” 206–207 (first quotation on p. 207; second quotation on p. 206); “Priest Protests South Injustices,” *Alamo Messenger*, Apr. 2, 1965.

³⁸ Wright, “Priest - Selma Marchers Protest the Inhumanity of the Past 100 Years,” *Clarion Herald*, Apr. 1, 1965; Daniel Flaherty, “They Reached the Capitol,” *Mississippi Register*, Apr. 2, 1965; Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, 412; “Oral Memoirs of Sherrill J. Smith,” 208–210 (first quotation on p. 210; second quotation on p. 209).

³⁹ “Oral Memoirs of Sherrill J. Smith,” 200.

⁴⁰ Robert E. Lucey to Sherrill Smith, Mar. 29, 1965 (first quotation), Lucey Social Problems folder #2, AASA; “Project to Make Positive Contribution,” *Alamo Messenger*, Aug. 20, 1965 (subsequent quotations); “Oral Memoirs of Sherrill J. Smith,” 216–219; Smith to Kuehler, May 3, 1973, part II, tape 1, 52.

⁴¹ “Oral Memoirs of Sherrill J. Smith,” 220; Behnken, *Fighting Their Own Battles*, 139–141; Bronder, *Social Justice and Church Authority*, 118–119.

⁴² “Oral Memoirs of Sherrill J. Smith,” 226, 228; Behnken, *Fighting Their Own Battles*, 138–139 (quotation on p. 138); Robert E. Lucey to Sherrill Smith, Apr. 25, 1966, Folder To/From Archbishop/Chancery, Jack E. Coughlin to Robert E. Lucey, Apr. 22, 1966, Sherrill Smith to Jack E. Coughlin, Apr. 25, 1966, Corresp: Santa Rosa folder, Sherrill Smith Papers, AASA.

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⁴³ “Oral Memoirs of Sherrill J. Smith,” 225–238; “Cleric Says Clergymen ‘Over Bounds’” (quotations), press clipping, no date, Lucey Scrapbook #10, AASA; memorandum, Tom [Gibbons] to Matt [Ahmann], “Subject: Diocese of Brownsville,” Dec. 12, 1966, folder 10, box 15, series 33, NCCIJR; Bronder, *Social Justice and Church Authority*, 109–114.

⁴⁴ Leo Cardenas, “Meredith Marchers Recall Alamo Slave,” June 13, 1966 (quotations), press clipping, and Federal Bureau of Investigation, “Demonstrations Protesting the Shooting of James E. Meredith,” June 13, 1966, Oral History – Selma March folder, Sherrill Smith Papers, AASA.

⁴⁵ Luke Mikschl, “Holy Childhood Mission and the Mississippi Freedom March,” *Divine Word Messenger* 43 (July–August 1966): 107; memorandum, Jim McGuire to Matt [Ahmann], “Southern Field Service and the Meredith Freedom March,” June 29, 1966, 1–8; memorandum, Matt Ahmann to NCCIJ Board of Directors, “Conference Involvement in Meredith Mississippi March,” June 30, 1966, 2, folder 11, box 8, series 34, NCCIJR; memorandum, Jim [McGuire] to Matt [Ahmann], “Group Dynamics of the March Leaders’ Meeting on Friday, June 24, Canton, Mississippi,” June 30, 1966, folder 7, box 16, series 20, NCCIJR; *The New York Times*, June 25, 1966, May 5, 1997; “Mississippi Riot Averted,” *Alamo Messenger*, July 1, 1966 (quotation); James J. McGuire to Robert E. Lucey, July 2, 1966, Folder To/From Archbishop/Chancery, Sherrill Smith Papers, AASA. Meredith march historian Aram Goudsouzian mistakenly attributes the compromise idea to city authorities, and he makes no mention of Smith or the Catholic mediating team to which he belonged. Goudsouzian, *Down to the Crossroads*, 204, 212–213.

⁴⁶ Memorandum, McGuire to Matt [Ahmann], “Southern Field Service and the Meredith Freedom March,” June 29, 1966, 6; “Priest Says Red Support in Farm March is Moral,” *Morning Advocate*, Aug. 11, 1966, press clipping, folder 6, box 17, series 33, NCCIJR; “Oral

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Memoirs of Sherrill J. Smith,” 245–250; Behnken, *Fighting Their Own Battles*, 106–109; Krochmal, *Blue Texas*, 398–402.

⁴⁷ “Oral Memoirs of Sherrill J. Smith,” 240–241; Smith to Kuehler, May 3, 1973, part II, tape 2, 4–5; Bronder, *Social Justice and Church Authority*, 119–122 (first and second quotations on p. 120; third quotation on p. 122). According to Harry V. Burns of the San Antonio NAACP, Marshall Steves was also one of Archbishop Lucey’s financial advisers. Sylvia Springer, “Rev. Sherrill Smith Receives Kennedy Freedom Award,” press clipping, no date, Bio: Honors/Awards Recognition folder, Sherrill Smith Papers, AASA.

⁴⁸ Robert E. Lucey to John P. Sisson, Feb. 14, 1967, folder 6, box 17, series 33, NCCIJR.

⁴⁹ Robert E. Lucey to Sherrill Smith, Jan. 4, Feb. 2, 1967, Folder To/From Archbishop/Chancery, Sherrill Smith Papers, AASA; Lucey to Sisson, Feb. 14, 1967; Robert E. Lucey to Mathew Ahmann, Mar. 6, 1967, folder 6, box 17, series 33, NCCIJR; “Oral Memoirs of Sherrill J. Smith,” 240–41, 253–261; Bronder, *Social Justice and Church Authority*, 123. Smith heard no more about the charge against him, which seems to have been dropped after he left. “Oral Memoirs of Sherrill J. Smith,” 256.

⁵⁰ Lucey to Ahmann, Mar. 6, 1967; *The New York Times*, Dec. 15, 1968; “Oral Memoirs of Sherrill J. Smith,” 261–262; Bronder, *Social Justice and Church Authority*, 127–128 (quotation on p. 128).

⁵¹ *San Antonio News*, Feb. 28, 1967 (quotations); Bronder, *Social Justice and Church Authority*, 128–129; memorandum, James M. Boyle to Bishop [Stephen A.] Leven, “Interracial Committee,” spring 1967, Organizations and Societies Catholic Interracial Council folder (1945–1969), AASA.

⁵² S. L. Deckard to Sherrill Smith, Apr. 10, 1967 (first quotation), Lucey, Robert E. (Archbishop) Social Problems: Race Relations folder #3, AASA; “4 Suspended Texas Priests

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Reinstated,” *National Catholic Reporter*, May 24, 1967, 6; *San Antonio Express-News*, Aug. 20, 1967 (second quotation).

⁵³ *San Antonio Express-News*, Aug. 20, 1967 (quotation); “Oral Memoirs of Sherrill J. Smith,” 158, 233, 264 (second quotation); Sherrill Smith to Robert E. Lucey, Mar. 7, 1968, J. L. Manning to Sherrill Smith, Mar. 8, 1968, Folder To/From Archbishop/Chancery, Sherrill Smith Papers, AASA.

⁵⁴ *San Antonio News*, Oct. 25, 1968; *The New York Times*, Dec. 15, 1968; “Beleaguered Lucey Retires: Furey In,” *National Catholic Reporter*, June 11, 1969, 1, 4; “Oral Memoirs of Sherrill J. Smith,” 279–280.

⁵⁵ *San Antonio News*, Oct. 25, 1968 (quotations); “Oral Memoirs of Sherrill J. Smith,” 279–280, 283–284, 293.

⁵⁶ *The New York Times*, Dec. 15, 1968, June 8, 1969; “Beleaguered Lucey Retires: Furey In,” *National Catholic Reporter*, June 11, 1969; “Oral Memoirs of Sherrill J. Smith,” 286–288, 291–293, 296–297.

⁵⁷ *San Antonio News*, June 19, 1969; “Smith, Sherrill Joseph,” Bio: cv & Misc folder, Sherrill Smith Papers, AASA “Oral Memoirs of Sherrill J. Smith,” 297–299, 300, 303–305, 310–311, 319–323, 333–338, 341; Kemper Diehl, “Sherrill Smith: Back from Limbo,” press clipping dated Jan. 21, 1972, “Monsignor Sherrill Smith,” press clipping dated Mar. 1, 1990, Bio: cv & Misc folder, Sherrill Smith Papers, AASA; Ciarrocchi, “A ‘Marching’ Priest Reflects on a Fulfilling Career and Shares Some ‘Cake,’” *Today’s Catholic*, Aug. 15, 1997; Tom Curtis, “Raza Desunida,” *Texas Monthly*, February 1977, 102, 107, 132.

⁵⁸ *San Antonio Express-News*, Jan. 17, 2004 (first quotation); Ciarrocchi, “A ‘Marching’ Priest Reflects on a Fulfilling Career and Shares Some ‘Cake,’” *Today’s Catholic*, Aug. 15, 1997 (second quotation).