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## Crispin Butz, 1923-2011: Beloved priest remembered as 'kind, loving and generous'

Staci Matlock The New Mexican Nov 9, 2011

Staci Matlock When the Rev. Crispin Butz died on Monday, Anna Mae Vigil lost not only a beloved priest but a dear friend.

She thinks many parishioners from the Cathedral Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi feel the same. "He was just a kind man," said Vigil, 83. "He treated everybody equally. When I talked to him, I thought he was my best friend. Everyone felt that way."

Vigil came to know Butz when he first arrived in Santa Fe in 1984. For a decade, Butz served in the cathedral's rectory. He oversaw a major, and difficult, remodeling of the Blessed Sacrament Chapel and construction of a building to house the archdiocese historical records. The parish honored him in 1988 by naming a main meeting place at the cathedral Father Crispin Hall.

In 1986, then-archbishop Robert F. Sanchez called Butz "the ramrod behind this whole project. I consider him the driving force."

Butz was born Nov. 27, 1923, in Lafayette, Ind., one of seven children. He completed his first year with the Franciscan order in 1942 and earned his college degree in 1946 from Duns Scotus College in Detroit. He was ordained in 1950 and served in parishes in Batesville, Ind., and Louisville before coming to New Mexico in 1954. Butz served in parishes around New Mexico — St. Francis Parish in Gallup, Immaculate Conception Church in Cuba, Holy Family Parish in Albuquerque, St. Theresa Catholic Church in Grants and St. Mary's Parish in Bloomfield — before being recruited to head the rectory at the cathedral in Santa Fe

Although he retired in 1997, Butz continued to serve, celebrating Mass at the Christian Brothers at St. Michael's High School and at the Carmelite Monastery until last year.

"I must have performed over 30,000 Masses in New Mexico, and I never [get] tired of my religious duties," Butz told Ana Pacheco, publisher of *La Herencia*, in 2009.

Christian Brother Ben Sulzer, a friend of Butz' since 1989, remembers him as a warm, caring person and priest. "To me, he was the true embodiment of the spirit of St. Francis," he said, "so kind and generous and loving."

Sulzer said Butz enjoyed working with computers and gardening.

He also remembers Butz as a pretty tough guy. About five years ago, when Butz was in his mid-80s, "he was still climbing on the roof to shovel off the snow," Sulzer said. "If it had to be done, he did it."

Vigil remembers scolding him just last Christmas when she found him leaning on a cane, trying to string Christmas lights around a porch at the St. Paschal Friary, where he lived until a couple of months ago. "I told him to let my grandson put up the lights for him," she said.

Vigil took classes from Butz as a member of the Third Order of St. Francis de Assisi. Through the years, he was there for many important occasions in her life. When she underwent surgery, he visited her at the hospital. In the last few years, she called him about once a week to make sure he was well. When she and her husband, Ernesto Vigil, celebrated their 50th anniversary, Butz helped celebrate the Mass.

But her 60th anniversary in 2009 was the most special. She wanted to renew her vows in the Carmelite Chapel and asked Butz to seek permission for her from the nuns. Butz agreed to celebrate the Mass for her. On the big day, Vigil was surprised and delighted when Archbishop Michael J. Sheehan joined Butz to celebrate the Mass. "I don't know if Father Crispin asked him, but it was wonderful," she said.

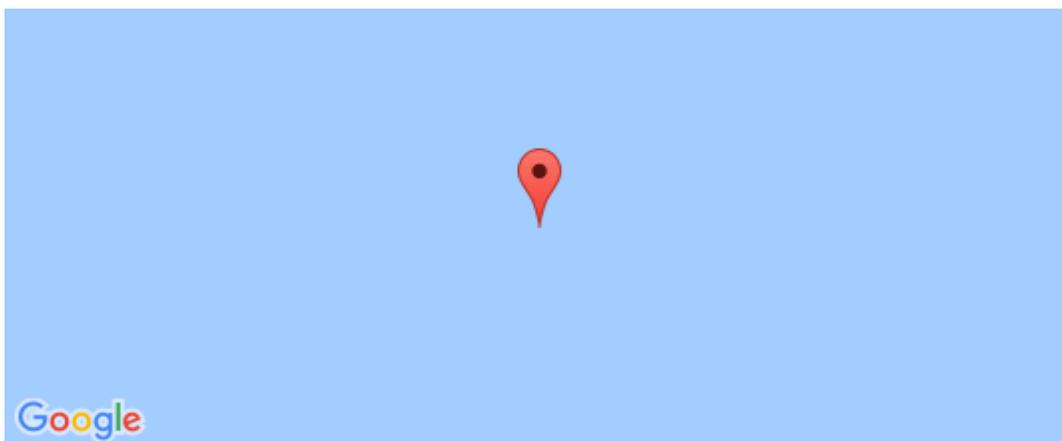
When he moved to Albuquerque recently, she and her family made sure he had dishes, linens and other things to make his new home comfortable. He gave her a framed picture of himself as a young, newly ordained priest.

Vigil spoke to Butz a couple of days before he died. He had been in ill health. "I know he is comfortable now," she said, her voice breaking on the phone. "Everyone will miss him."

Butz was preceded death by three brothers: Fr. Berno Butz, O.F.M., Walter Butz and Robert Butz. He is survived by siblings Ann Dykheuzen of Fort Wayne, Ind.; Alberta Rose Warwick of Lafayette, Ind.; and Fred Butz of Lafayette, Ind.

Visitation is scheduled for 9 a.m. Thursday, Nov. 10, at Holy Family church, 562 Atrisco Drive, SW, Albuquerque. Funeral Mass will be celebrated at 10:30 a.m. Burial will be at Rosario Cemetery in Santa Fe at 3 p.m.

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