

## *Father Thomas Hickey*

During the overnight hours from Thursday to Friday morning, March 13. Father Thomas Hickey was called home to his beloved Savior. These few words state the simple reality, but in no way capture the full significance of what has transpired.

Over the years, our parish has experienced the passing of many of her long-time, deeply faithful parishioners. The familiar faces of those who were always present, of those who were always ready to lend a hand, of those whose faith gleamed as a beacon to all of us, of those who struggled despite physical limitations to be present here for worship... the faces of those we had grown to know and to love are no longer seen. Their passing leaves an emptiness in our hearts that can never be filled. Our parish community is not quite the same without them.

And now we have come to know the greatest loss that a community of faith can experience – the death of our pastor. Father Tom is gone.

Father Tom was unique among priests. He was a former Baptist minister, a man with a family – three daughters and five grandchildren, a convert to Catholicism about twenty years ago, a priest approaching the tenth anniversary of his ordination. He was a man of unwavering moral integrity. He was a scholar; his knowledge of our faith was full. His understanding of the Scriptures was seemingly limitless. In the matters of Liturgy and Sacraments, his perspective was traditional. He led us in worship always with great reverence and a unique awareness of the awesome mysteries of our faith. Father Tom was a sincerely compassionate man. Those among us who were sick, particularly those who were seriously ill, were his greatest concern... his first priority. He is gone now, but his witness to our faith will always inspire us.

Just a few weeks ago, on February 02, on the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, Father Tom offered a reflection on the Cantic of Simeon. St. Luke, in his gospel account, gives us the beautiful story of Simeon. He is described as a righteous and a devout man, who was inspired to believe that he would not die until he had seen the Savior, the anointed one of the Lord. Simeon was in the temple when Mary and Joseph brought their son, Jesus, just a few weeks old, into the temple according to the traditions of the Jewish faith.

Upon taking the child into his arms, Simeon says,

“Now, Master, you can let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in the sight of all the peoples. A light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel.”

In his homily, Father Tom remarked, “Imagine being able to say those words...*Lord, now you may let your servant go...* as Simeon did.” Imagine having that level of confidence in faith that Jesus is waiting, even at this very moment, to receive us in Paradise. Perhaps these words of Simeon’s prayer were on Father Tom’s lips as his death drew near. Perhaps...

In this, our moment of loss, our time of uncertainty, we remember Father Tom, and pray as we always do: Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and let the perpetual light shine upon him. May he rest in peace. May his soul and all the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

(This is a personal reflection from Deacon George Pettinico )