

**Memorial Mass for Deceased Priests
February 4, 2019**

Psalm 31 speaks very comforting words: “Let your hearts take comfort, all who hope in the Lord.” In this Mass we commemorate the lives of 5 our deceased brother priests, holy priests who worked hard and gave their lives for service to you, God’s holy people. It is a beautiful thing we get to do today, remembering lives lived in God’s will, and giving thanks to God for the impact they had on the Church and the world.

The Letter to the Hebrews makes a very strong claim today, looking back on the lives of so many great heroes of the faith: “Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets.” These people “who by faith conquered kingdoms, did what was righteous, obtained the promises... escaped the devouring sword... were tortured... endured mockery, scourging, even chains and imprisonment... were stoned, sawed in two, put to death at sword's point... wandered about in deserts and on mountains, in caves and in crevices in the earth.” They did all these amazing things, as did so many great men and women of the faith in times past, but these were not the greatest things done in faith. Those things came with the resurrection of Jesus. “God had foreseen something better for us.” He gave this to us when Jesus opened heaven to receive all God’s children who seek him with a loving heart.

These later days have been filled with new heroes of the faith who give their lives in this world trusting in the promise of the world to come. They trust in the God who banishes darkness. The God who

– as we see in the Gospel passage – speaks a word and puts demons to flight. This is the all-powerful God in whom we put our trust. The God of the living.

Recently, we have been remembering clergy who have not lived faithfully to our God and have hurt the most vulnerable among us. But today, we gather instead to remember brother priests who were faithful to their calling. Fr. Jeremiah McCarthy, Fr. Eugene Nee, Msgr. Alois Goertz, Msgr. John Wagner, and Fr. Jim Barlow lived as Jesus' holy priests in the midst of his people. They trusted in the power of God and their ministry built up the Church. This does not mean perfect, of course. So with faith we remember them at this Mass and offer our prayers for their sanctification. We asking the God of the living to bring them home to the place he has prepared for them from the beginning. With our prayers we give thanks to God for our brothers. Their work for the kingdom beautifully adds to the story of all those who lived their lives for the glory of God in sure and certain hope of the resurrection.

My brothers and sisters, may we take their example and recommit ourselves to living heroic Christian lives. May we trust in the God of power, the God of life who loves us and walks with us and leads us to life eternal. May the faithful who have gone before us inspire us to be always people of faith, hope, and love.

So, “let your hearts take comfort, all who hope in the Lord.” Let us pray along with our beautiful Psalm: “How great is the goodness, O Lord, which you have in store for those who fear you, and which, toward those who take refuge in you, you show in the sight of the children of men” (Psalm 31).