

First, I would like to offer a promise of prayers for Father Robinson to his brother and sister-in-law, and to his nephews, nieces and cousins. I am sure that I can make this offer in the name of Father Ritter, Bishop Donnelly and all Father Robinson's brother priests.

At the same time, we should hold in our hearts and minds the Sisters of Mercy, who still grieve the death of Sister Margaret Ann Pahl. May the Lord grant her eternal peace and happiness in His Kingdom.

We are gathered here not to accuse Father Robinson, or to excuse him. We are here to celebrate the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, in which we sacramentally make present today in this place the sacrifice Jesus offered on Golgotha for the forgiveness of our sins. Specifically, we gather here to beg God that Father Robinson may be given a share in the sacrifice that takes away the sins of the world. We believe that somehow our prayers can assist the final cleansing process that takes place in Purgatory, and so we offer them this morning in union with the great prayer of Jesus. The Catholic Church does no more, and no less for any of her children. When death comes for each of us, and the Catholic community gathers around us for the last time, you and I can expect no less and no more.

Father Robinson was washed in the waters of Baptism at Nativity Church; in the old Saint Hyacinth's Church, he received First Holy Communion from Father Lubiowski, and was confirmed by Bishop Alter. Fifty years ago, he was ordained a priest, and celebrated his first Mass in this very sanctuary. Father Robinson had several assignments as associate, some of them good assignments,

some of them in very strained circumstances. The parishes where he was pastor were parishes that were in their final struggle to survive. He probably did his best work in bringing Christ to the sick and dying. All the while, he labored with a very timid personality, which many people did not know how to interpret. Very few priests knew him well, and those who did have almost all passed away.

And then came the events of April 5, 1980. All we can say of that day is that whatever happened, happened under the eye of Almighty God, Who watches over all His children and demands that the life of each one be valued and revered. Whatever happened is being weighed by God Who is infinitely just, yet at the same time infinitely merciful. His ways are not ours. These events led Father Robinson either justly or unjustly to suspension from priestly ministry, conviction and incarceration.

One would think that at that point, Father Robinson's story was over, because all that was left was years of punishment. But God was not done with Gerald Robinson, the priest who could no longer minister. God gave him the grace to be present to prisoners young and old, to counsel them, to pray with them, and to be a support to the prison staff. He was "one of them," and in a unique position to bring the light of God's word to a living situation that was dark indeed. One can sense the prisoners' regard for him when you understand that the younger inmates called him "Pops."

And yet these were years of suffering, justly imposed or unjustly, I do not know. Once in the Easter card he sent me, he wrote about what it is like for a priest to be in prison on Holy Thursday with no Eucharist and no possibility of celebrating Mass. He described

how he found time to reflect – very slowly – over each part of the Mass of the Lord's Supper, moving from the three readings to the foot-washing, the Eucharistic prayer, Holy Communion and the procession, and how he sang out loud as many verses of *Pange lingua* as he could remember. So on that feast he did the best he could to be in communion with the rest of us.

When Father Robinson was told that his condition was terminal, he chose the readings for this Mass, and in the margin of the planning form, he wrote the words "Servant – Service." These are the ideals of priesthood, and none of us has lived them perfectly. We've all done the actions of the goats on the Lord's left hand, and must beg mercy. And when we've recognized Christ in the hungry, the sick and the imprisoned, we've done it not out of our natural goodness, but only by the grace of God. We recognize that all of us, just or unjust, are in the hands of God. We pray also that when each of us stands before the judgment seat of God, and like Father Jerry must give an accounting of ourselves to God, that we will be found worthy of the Kingdom.

*Wieczny odpoczynek racz mu dać, Panie.*

[to which the cognoscenti will reply]: *A światłość wiekuista niechaj mu świeci. Amen.*

Eternal rest grant unto him, o Lord.

And let perpetual light shine upon him.

*Fr. Robinson Homily  
7-11-14  
Fr. Thomas Extejt*