

Funeral Homily

Fr. Paul Arthur Casper
April 29, 1930—December 9, 2019



For all that has been, I say “thank you God.”
For all that will be, I say “Yes God.”
JOYFULLY!

Dear Friends,

That prayer was beside Fr. Paul’s bed, a prayer he probably prayed every night and a prayer that truly sums up Fr. Paul’s life.

We gather to remember in gratitude the life of Fr. Paul Arthur Casper, but more so to remember the promise he proclaimed every time he stood at the Altar: **the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the promise of eternal life to those who believe.** How important a proclamation it is for every person Fr. Paul encountered throughout his long life; how essential a message for every person struggling with some difficulty; for every person who has lost hope in love or lost sight in the darkness of doubt! How important it is for us, today, as we mourn the loss of our brother and friend.

At this time of celebration and farewell, we tell the story, proclaim the message and validate that truth in the liturgy. The promise and hope of God’s mercy proclaimed in this Mass of Christian Burial is the most important story ever to be told and the only one, in the end, that must be remembered.

These are times when we must remember what we do at this Altar, what Fr. Paul did countless times as he presided, what the church does day after day, week after week, year after year: we proclaim the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is our hope; this is our promise; this is our faith.

This Mass today, for Fr. Paul, is one such act of faith. Through this celebration, we place our trust in God and in God's loving mercy; we trust in the welcome which God will extend to those who love Him. We trust that God has extended that welcome to Fr. Paul. In the past couple of years, Fr. Paul was ready to go home, and even longed for it. He was tired but also ready to meet his savior and our Blessed Mother.

So, we gather in this chapel to entrust Fr. Paul Casper into the "hand of God" (Wisdom 3:1). Yet, as we do so, we find comfort because it is the Lord's hand into which we commend him.

Fr. Paul lived a long life: 89 years. He lived a long religious life as a Priest of the Sacred Heart of Jesus: 70 years; and served God as a priest for 62 years.

Fr. Paul was a **gentleman**. He was loved by so many because of his willingness to listen and his simple, kind and brief insights helped many in their struggles. He was courteous to everyone. He maintained the air of the true gentleman that he was.

Fr. Paul was also a **gentle soul**. There are countless individuals whom he baptized, anointed, counseled or visited – either in church, their homes or the hospital or nursing home – who spoke of his gentleness and kindness when visiting. He took the time to

listen to them, be empathetic with them, and confidently shared the faith with them.

Fr. Paul was **dedicated and dependable**. There is nothing he wouldn't do when asked. These sentiments were certainly mentioned on Facebook, for example, one noted: "*Fr. Paul was our neighbor, friend and big brother. He was truly present whenever you were with him—he knew the power of being in the now*". Another wrote: "*What a wonderful, compassionate, caring priest—we will miss him.*" And another: "*He helped our family so much.*"

When Fr. Paul retired from St. Joseph's in Holly Springs, Mississippi; many were pleasantly surprised when he offered to take on many new duties after he moved to Villa Maria and entered into a new phase in his life.

In February, 2017, a number of our men, including Fr. Paul, accompanied Mark Peters to visit the then Speaker of the House, Paul Ryan, to discuss their concerns about the new policies on immigration.

In **Our Rule of Life #95** we read: *This primacy of love [Sint unum] calls for constant conversion and must bring the person to availability for service of God and of his brothers and sisters, above all the poorest and weakest, in the spirit of the Ecce venio (behold I come to do your will).*

Fr. Paul served and ministered to the best of his ability wherever he was sent. I have no doubt if asked he'd say his work with the Native Americans in South Dakota, and among the people of

Northern Mississippi were his favorites. But whatever assignment he was given, it was done in a quiet and gracious manner respectful of others.

In Father Dehon's own words: *our whole vocation, our purpose, our duty, our promises, are found in these words: Ecce venio, ... Ecce ancilla ... (Spiritual Directory, I, 3).*

Fr. Paul lived these words as a son of Fr. Dehon. He had a special devotion and love of our Blessed Mother and spoke of that love often.

Let us then commend Fr. Paul into the hand of God. May the Lord honor his servant and welcome him into the mansions of his glory, that, having taken his hand, Fr. Paul might see his Savior face to face.

As we mourn our loss, we pray in gratitude for the life and legacy of Fr. Paul. We ask our Lord through the intercession of his mother that, he who lived his life as a faithful shepherd of the Good Shepherd, might be led to the rich pastures of his well-deserved heavenly reward.

For all that has been, I say "thank you God."

For all that will be, I say "Yes God."

JOYFULLY!

Amen!