



REV. THOMAS J. JENNINGS

August 12, 1944 - March 29, 2023

Called home by our Lord, Father Thomas J. Jennings, age 78, died peacefully on March 29, 2023, at his home surrounded by his family. He was born on August 12, 1944, in Caledonia, MN to Lloyd and Wilma (Ernster) Jennings. He was baptized and confirmed at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in Caledonia. Father Tom graduated from Loretto High School and studied philosophy at Immaculate Heart of Mary Seminary in Winona. He completed his theology degree at the North American College and the Gregorian University in Rome, Italy. On December 19, 1969, Father Tom Jennings was ordained to the priesthood in Rome at St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican.

Father Tom's assignments as parochial vicar were at St. John in Rochester and the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Winona. As a pastor, he served at St. John in Winona, Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Easton, Mater Dolorosa in Delavan, Queen of Angels in Austin, Our Lady of Loretto in Brownsdale, Sacred Heart in Owatonna, St. Catherine in Luverne, and St. Mary in Ellsworth. Additional assignments include instructor for Lourdes High School in Rochester and Cotter High School in Winona; diocesan director of education of priests; principal and administrator for Cotter High School in Winona; chaplain of Cabrini Home, Knights of Columbus MN State Council, and the Owatonna area Catholic Daughters; member of the Presbyteral Council, Clergy Assignments Committee, and College of Consultors; dean of the Austin/Albert Lea Deanery; faculty of Immaculate Heart of Mary Seminary

in Winona; and rural life co-director for the diocese. On October 8, 2018, Father Tom joined the rank of the senior priest of the diocese.

Father Tom was always a farm boy at heart. He enjoyed all of God's creations to the fullest. He was frequently seen taking pictures of all kinds. He loved hiking, gardening, photography, reading, and drives in the countryside. He loved holidays and getting together with his family, friends, and his "bible buddies". He was an active member of the Caledonia Lions Club. Father Tom had a passion for life. His presence will be dearly missed by all.

He will be dearly missed by two brothers: David (Kathy) Jennings and Jim (Pat) Jennings; nieces and nephews: Mike (Lisa) Jennings, Barb (Darren) Smith, Shannon Jennings, Mark (Sandy) Jennings, Stephanie (Curt) Mann, Joe (Ali) Jennings, Stacie (Phillip) Klug, Renee (Eric) Goetzinger, Rachel (Andy) Reining, Nick (Samantha) Jennings; great nieces and nephews: Brittney (Nathan), Kyle (Sierra), Haley, Tyler, Colby, Jenna, Noah, Lydia, Owen, Ella, Emersyn, August, Hunter, Lauren, Leo, Celia, Violet, Kendall, Aria, Grant; great-great nephew Maverick. Father Tom was preceded in death by his parents, nephews Daniel Jennings and Rick Jennings, great nephew Brandon Jennings.

The family would like to thank Father Matt Wagner, Sister Michaeline, and the staff at Mayo Clinic Health System for all the great care and support.

Mass of Christian burial will be at 11:00 am, Tuesday, April 4, at the Church of St. Mary in Caledonia, MN with the Most Reverend Robert E. Barron, Bishop of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester celebrating with the Priests of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester concelebrating. Visitation will be from 4 to 8 pm Monday and 10 to 10:45 am Tuesday at St. Mary's Holy Family Hall. The funeral will be livestreamed on St. Mary's Church, Caledonia, Facebook page.

Memorials are preferred to St. Mary's School, Caledonia, MN. Condolences in memory of Father Thomas Jennings may be sent to 707 North Hokah Street, Caledonia, MN.

Previous Events

Visitation

APR 3. 4:00 PM - 8:00 PM (CT)

St. Mary's Holy Family Hall
513 South Pine St.
Caledonia, MN 55921

Visitation

APR 4. 10:00 AM - 10:45 AM (CT)

St. Mary's Holy Family Hall
513 South Pine St.
Caledonia, MN 55921

Mass of Christian Burial

APR 4. 11:00 AM (CT)

Saint Mary's Catholic Church
513 S Pine St
Caledonia, MN 55921
(507) 725-3804

Tribute Wall

BB

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Brenda Boettcher-Bischel - April 15, 2023 at 08:34 PM

BB

“ I was saddened to have gone to the Winona Daily News website to see if anyone I know would have passed away to see Fr. Jennings no longer with us, Regardless of illness or age, it is never easy to lose a friend or a loved one. i was very fortunate to have been a part of the small knit family of the student body at Winona Cotter High School from 1977-1981 when he had been the principal. Fr. Jennings paid special attention to me as having been concerned when seeing marks on my chin and neck suspecting spousal abuse, His concern and sincerity were apparently very genuine and now, realizing he is now with the angels, saints, and Mother Mary and the Holy Trinity May God heal you as each day passes,

Sincerely,

Brenda Boettcher-Bischel {Perez}

Brenda Boettcher-Bischel - April 15, 2023 at 08:32 PM

PB

“ *Peoples State Bank purchased the Emerald Garden Basket for the family of REV. THOMAS J. JENNINGS.*



Peoples State Bank - April 03, 2023 at 09:52 AM

SV

“ I messed up the first time not used to posting. try try again ! In memory of Father Tom the kindest most loving man I have ever met an Immaculate Reception is the aura I felt and received the first time I met Father Tom and as I got to know him over the years it was the life-giving nourishment he shared with all his flock and sharing was the constant reoccurring theme with Father Tom. Everything he did to make the moment a festive occasion allowing refreshing charm with laughter to make people feel they were also a welcomed Immaculate Reception, he loved everybody graciously through him with him in him in unity with the Holy Spirit, is the inspiring love Tom shared with all. It was important to Father Tom to gently guide his flock to experienc a peaceful solace of comforting in prayer, it was quite a lovely Charming sensation as it brought extreme Delight for everyone and also Father Tom, to participate in adoration praying in front of the Holy Eucharist, this was his way of caressing if not gently nudging his flock in a polite way to inhale the aura of the Holy Spirit has Tom has known it to be his entire life. The gift of the Holy Spirit was infectious being near Father Tom with his plum cheeky smile, laughter through Witty charm and his seriously Vigor for life. Father Tom honored the path our Lord sent down to him on high for achievement in this world for there is no greater gift in this creation than the Holy Spirit and Father Tom live to help people receive the understanding of love sharing comforting peace tranquility through his genuine giving Spark of an Immaculate Reception to all. I once said to Father Tom as I shared in many a delightful moment with him in his Hobbies such as gardening driving in the country long walks appreciating the birds cats and dogs along the way, we had a connection a true friendship I mentioned to him I pray to our Lord Jesus Christ that he would take me into his humble abode His Holy Kingdom and Father Tom said enthusiastically I do too. Well I guess we all know Father Tom made it to the love of his life his Lord master and Savior Jesus Christ and I get goosebumps just knowing my dearest friend is safe and is loved as he's so much deserved through his endless work ethic night and day 365 days a year to do



his master's will. Tremendous job Father Tom you are most deserving but I know you will offer the slice of pie to a soul in need God bless you Father Tom thank you for everything you did for me your friend Scott Valnes. formerly of ST. Catherine's Luverne Minnesota.

Scott valnes - April 03, 2023 at 06:57 AM

LH

“*I knew this great priest since I was in high school, back from 1970-1974. After leaving high school, we tried to keep in touch even though it was only during the holiday season. He wad a priest in Winona when we met up again and my husband and I asked him if he would marry us. He agreed and he came to Rochester to marry Larry and I at St. John's parish June 28, 1980. Again keeping in touch, we asked him to renew our vows for our 25th anniversary. Again he agreed. We drove to Luverne where he resided and he renewed our vows. That would be the last time we saw him alive. He will be truly missed. My heart is breaking, but know that he is with the Lord, where he will be at peace. Without deepest heartfelt sympathy. Larry and Janeen Hamilton, Duluth, Mn⁸*

Larry & Janeen Hamilton - April 02, 2023 at 07:08 PM

SV

In memory of Father Tom the kindest most loving man I have ever met. An immaculate Reception is the aura I felt and received the first time I met Father Tom and as I got to know him over the years the years it was the life-giving nourishment he shared with all his flock and sharing was a constant reoccurring theme with Father Tom and everything he did to make the moment a festive occasion allowing a refreshing charm with laughter to make people feel they were also a welcomed Immaculate Reception, he loved everybody graciously. Through him with him in him in unity with the Holy Spirit is all inspiring love he shared to all, . It was important two Father Tom to gently guide his flock to experience and find the Solace of peaceful comforting in prayer, It was quite a lovely Charming sensation has it brought extreme Delight to everyone and also Father Tom to participate in adoration praying in front of the Holy Eucharist, this was his way of caressing if not gently nudging people in a polite way to inhale the aura of the Holy Spirit as he has known it his entire life. The gift of the Holy Spirit was infectious being near Father Tom with his bright smile laughter witty charm and fever vigor for life, Father Tom valiantly honored the path of Our Lord God set out for him there is no greater gift in this world than the Holy Spirit and Father Tom lived to help people receive the understanding of love sharing comforting peace tranquility and understanding through his genuine Spark of Immaculate Reception to all, once I said to Father Tom as I shared in many a delightful moment with him in his Hobbies walking in his garden going for drives in the country and appreciating Birds cats dogs animals, we had a true friend ship connection and I mentioned to him once that I prayed to our Lord Jesus Christ that he would take me into his humble abode in His Holy Kingdom and Father Tom said I do too enthusiastically, well I guess we all know that Father Tom made it he made it to the love of his life his Lord master and Savior Jesus Christ and I get goosebumps just knowing my dearest friend is safe and is loved as he's so much deserved through his endless work ethic night and day 365 days a year to do his master's will, tremendous job father tom, you are most deserving but I know you will offer the slice of pie to someone in need God bless you Father Tom thank you your freind Scott valnes. St. Catherine's !

Scott valnes - April 03, 2023 at 04:44 AM

RC

So nice to read awesome tributes! He always greeted me with kind words. Amazing. May he rest in peace.

Rev. Michael Cronin - April 03, 2023 at 11:21 PM

CA

“ *Father Jennings was a wonderful priest in many ways. We had him at St. John's in Winona for several years. I saw him last year at the church fall festival, in Caledonia. He came & sat to visit & have lunch with me & my friend, Mary Ann. It was so great to catch up on folks from our parish & hear about his retirement, etc. Rest in Peace, Fr. Tom. Chris & Harley Antoff*

Chris Antoff - April 02, 2023 at 05:28 PM

SS

“ *I knew Father Jennings when I was in college back in 1977. I lived 2 blocks from the Cathedral of The Sacred Heart! I grew up on a farm and the farm girl in me related to the simple stories he told to relate the gospels to us so we would understand. He helped me to feel like I had a community to be with at the church there ! A kind gentle man who influenced me greatly and helped support me to join the convent. He once asked us in one of his simple homilies what 3 words we would like to be remembered by. After pondering this with the congregation he gave us his answer which I've carried and emulated from him into my life. How do I want to be remembered in 3 words for my grave stone. I now say the same answer he gave to us that Sunday. “. Someone who cared”. And I hope to continue to live by that standard he set. Thank you Father Jennings for the significant role you played in this farm girls life! Be with Jesus now! Sandi Shetka*

Sandi Shetka - April 02, 2023 at 12:11 AM

TM

“ *What a wonderful dear kind man. Father Tom will be greatly missed. He touched so many lives. I feel so blessed to have known him. God bless you, his family and friends.*



Teresa MacLeod - March 31, 2023 at 08:59 PM

MN

“ *Feel so blessed to have known him and was able to go on church trips with him! God Bless!*

Marguerite Natg - March 31, 2023 at 01:20 PM

RC

“ *The parish community of St. Mary's in Winona, extends its prayerful sympathy to Fr. Tom's family and friends. May he rest comfortably in God's loving embrace. Fr. Michael Cronin, Pastor*

Rev. Michael Cronin - March 30, 2023 at 11:08 PM

FS

“ *Tom was an IHM WunonaSeminary classmate, 1966. The most gentle and caring man. Served Diocese well in many ministries. Remembering his green thumb with flowers. He's buried with them now waiting to bud and bloom. Rest in peace.
Fr. Don J Schmitz*

Fr. Don J Schmitz - March 30, 2023 at 07:35 PM

AC

*Fr. Tom was just taking Edward Sri's "No Greater Love" class on Jesus' Passion with us. He has been a part of our Adult Faith Formation programs for years along with Lee Grippen. They have been a blessing to our programs! Fr. Jennings always had something he would share that was so simple, yet so profound. He had a gentle way of helping you to love Jesus and to see Jesus in those around you. I am so sad that I didn't spend more time sitting at his feet learning from him. He lived what he believed, a well-lived Christian life. I will miss him greatly!
Eternal rest grant onto Fr. Tom, O Lord!
Amy Capelli*

Amy Capelli - March 30, 2023 at 08:52 PM

MM

He was interested in every person he ever met. He just loved people. He loved all of creation. But first of all he loved Jesus Christ and tried his best to pass on that love.

He was blessed with a great sense of humor. He smiled a lot and passed that around, too. We were all blessed to have known him. He made a difference. May he rest in peace, job well done.

Mary Lou Mulligan - March 31, 2023 at 09:24 AM

BE

What a privilege it was to have known him and to have been mentored by him. He opened many doors for many people. Let perpetual light shine on him. Rest in peace, Father Tom.

Betsy - March 31, 2023 at 06:10 PM

DD

My sympathy to his family. He was a people person. He enjoyed visiting and always made everyone feel included. It was a privilege to call him friend.

Donna Deutsch - March 31, 2023 at 07:09 PM

SS

He was wonderful to everyone in the Owatonna Community and greatly loved by his parishioners at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Owatonna MN. He was blessed with a gift of love and will always be remembered by me for his love that he shared with all of us. May he rest in the loving arms of Jesus and Mary and enjoy celebrating Easter in heaven now.

sharon stiles - March 31, 2023 at 10:00 PM

JJ

I am so terribly saddened upon hearing of the passing of Father Tom. I think that he was one of my favorite priest that ever served in Owatonna. I always felt that as a priest he did as much to strengthen my faith as much as any priest that I got to know. RIP Father Tom you touched an awful lot of people as a priest over the years

Jim Joachim

Jim Joachim - April 01, 2023 at 12:54 AM

LG

I was so blessed to have the friendship of my brother in Christ, Father Tom Jennings..Eternal rest grant to Tom and may the perpetual light shine on him. May he rest in peace.

Lee Grippen - April 01, 2023 at 01:14 AM

RS

Our family farms were less than one mile apart. Tom and I rode the school bus together. When I was a junior and Tom was a senior at Loretto high school my dad would not let me take the car to town by myself. So I came up with a plan. I asked Tom if he would like to go to a movie in Caledonia with me if my dad would let me take the car. Tom said yes. Than I asked my dad and he said, "If Tom is going with you that's fine with me."

Ron Strub - April 01, 2023 at 11:14 AM

CR

So blessed to have known Fr. Tom. He came to the ER in Luverne the morning my husband got sick and anointed him.. So, So beautiful and so, so thankful!!!

Carol M Rupp - April 01, 2023 at 02:12 PM

PE

When Fr. Tom was the pastor of St.John in Winona,the company that I worked for was hired to demolish the old school bldg. I was operating a large excavator and after I took a couple of swipes on the front of the school, Father came waving his arms to stop. He approached and said, WE CHANGED OUR MIND!! There was a pause and then, HA,HA!!

Paul Evanson - April 01, 2023 at 09:33 PM

SL

Father Tom was a blessing to all of us in Luverne. We were so lucky to have him lead our parish and the lives he touched are so many. He was a true shepherd of our Lord.

Sharon Lais - April 02, 2023 at 04:29 PM

PO

Tom and I were classmates at IHM years ago. Each of us gradually moved on in separate ways. He contributed many fine gifts to his family, the diocese, the parishes he worked with and the communities he lived and worked in.

Tom was always a joy to see and mingle with. He is truly an inspiration and a much better fellow than I ever was or will ever be. God Bless to all of us. Patrick O'Leary

Patrick O'Leary - April 02, 2023 at 06:00 PM

BB

Father Tom , I remember your story about your cat - when you two sat on the porch at the end of the day and everything "was good". Thankyou for your kindness and your encouragement and the opportunity to share the ministry in Peru.

Birgit Bardy - April 03, 2023 at 11:42 PM