



## Father McElroy, ss.cc

October 6, 2017

Father Thomas McElroy, ss.cc., an ordained member of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary-United States Province, passed away on Friday, October 6, 2017, at his home at Damien Residence, in Fairhaven, Massachusetts. Fr. Tom, who had valiantly battled cancer for the past four years, was born to Thomas and Margaret (O'Loughlin) McElro, on February 12, 1940, in Providence, Rhode Island. In addition to his SSCC family, he is survived by his sister, Maureen Habershaw and her husband Joe, and his twin brother Robert McElroy and his wife Ellen, as well as many nieces, nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews. He was pre-deceased by his two brothers, William McElroy and Paul McElroy. Fr. Tom, who recently celebrated his 50th Anniversary of Ordination, has been a member of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts for over 57 years, having entered the novitiate in Fairhaven in 1960 at the age of 20. He professed his first vows on September 14, 1960, in Fairhaven, and was ordained to the priesthood, on June 7, 1967, at Queen of Peace Seminary, in Jaffrey, New Hampshire. During his more than fifty years as a priest, Fr. Tom served his community in a wide range of ministries. After beginning his career in an inner-city parish, in Rochester, New York, in 1967, he was assigned to Queen of Peace Church, in Harlingen, Texas, in 1970. A mission parish founded by his community in the Diocese of Brownsville, TX, he served the people along the Mexican/American border there for five years. From 1975 to 1983, Fr. Tom was assigned to the Formation Team at the Sacred Hearts House of Theology, in Washington, D.C. During his ministry there, he did extensive work with military families in the DC/Virginia area where he formed life-long friendships, continuing to give a retreat to a group there every year for over 35 consecutive years. In 1983, he became pastor at Our Lady of the Assumption, in New Bedford. He later served as pastor at St. Francis Xavier, in Acushnet, and St. Joseph, in Fairhaven. A respected retreat master, in 1987 he was twice appointed Director of the Sacred Hearts Retreat Center in Wareham, Massachusetts. During the 10 years he spent there, he also continued to travel in his Preaching Ministry spreading the "Word of God" locally, nationally and internationally. In 1991, seeing a great need in Wareham and the surrounding communities, he and Fr. Gabriel Healy, ss.cc., founded the Family Pantry-Damien's Place as an outreach of the Retreat Center. Today, more than 25 years later, Damien's Pantry feeds over 2,500 people

each month. Fr. Tom remained active in the pantry until only several weeks ago when he passed the responsibility on to one of his SSCC brothers. When illness finally forced him to step down as pastor of St. Joseph's in, 2014, that did not stop Fr. Tom from continuing to find a way to stay involved with the poor and marginalized, part of the Congregation's mission in which he so strongly believed. He began a Prison Ministry at Dartmouth House of Corrections going there every week to offer Mass and "walk a spiritual journey" with the men and women incarcerated there. The Congregation of the Sacred Hearts and Fr. Tom's family wishes to extend sincere thanks to the staff at Damien Residence and the Fairhaven Community Nurse and Hospice for the love and care given to Fr. Tom and to the personnel at Fairhaven Funeral Home ([www.hathawayfunerals.com](http://www.hathawayfunerals.com)) for their kindness in assisting with final arrangements.

# Comments

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“ I remember Fr. Tom's hospitality and thoughtfulness when another ss.cc. associate and I stayed overnight at the rectory when we had traveled to attend my godchild's (Fr. Richard Lifrak) ordination to priesthood on June 18th, 1995.

**Diane C. Hayes** - April 21, 2018 at 08:13 PM

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“ Fr. Tom always told me to call him dad and he deserved that title in my life because was more of a father to me than my biological father. I will never stop hearing these words "I give you a big hug and kiss and know I love you and pray for you always"\r\nI will miss our talks and I am sure his family will also\r\nMy condolences to the family and those in his order. Rest in peace dad. I will never forget how you showed me true charity. I love you\r\n\r\nGreg Robinson

**Greg Robinson and family** - October 10, 2017 at 11:53 PM