

Funeral for Brother Thomas Wright, CSSR

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Brother Thomas Wright 4-5-1946 to 4 -25-2022 Luke 10- 38-42 As they continued their journey he entered a village where a woman whose name was Martha welcomed him. She had a sister named Mary [who] sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak. Martha, burdened with much serving, came to him and said, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving? Tell her to help me.” The Lord said to her in reply, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her.” The Gospel that I chose for Brother Tom’s funeral mass is the story of Martha and Mary. For me Brother Tom was a Martha, but before I get to that I must give you some background. We Redemptorists are a clerical Congregation, we have both ordained priests and deacons and non-ordained members brothers. I find that all too often people don’t understand the vocation of a brother, and they define it in relationship to a priest and what they can’t do. Actually, to understand the Redemptorist vocation is better to begin

with the fact that we are all brothers and then try to understand priests by what they can do. Too often people ask, why isn't brother so and so a priest? Or when will he be ordained a priest. Or they might ask, "Why didn't he want to be priest?" The truth is that it is not a brother's choice to not be a priest. But rather it is God who choose a man to be a religious brother. Brother Tom was a brother because that was his vocation, that is what God called him to be. In our house, the rectory, their lived 10 of us: 9 clerics and 1 brother. For six years Brother Tom served as administrator for St. Mary's. He took over when Becky Mafucci retired, even though Tom was several years older than Becky. He took care of the physical aspects of all the buildings. He took care of the collection, paid our bills, but his least favorite task was dealing with Wilshire Blvd. where the Archdiocese of Los Angeles has their offices. Tom had salty language and his saltiest was used to describe Wilshire Blvd. At the same time Brother Tom did many of the same things for our Redemptorist community. He paid all our bills, he did our banking, saw to the upkeep of the house. The title we have for Brother's Tom role was minister of the community. He saw to all our temporal needs. In a word Brother Tom was a Martha who took care of the 9 of us. The rectory is our home. The ten of us lived together as a family. We eat our meals together, we recreate together, we pray together, we live together. We have one kitchen, one TV room, one chapel and one bathroom. We all have our own rooms, but we shared everything in common. Tom just didn't do his job; he went out his way to take care of us. He knew that Fr. Bill loved pies from Marie Callenders so he would regular buy pies there. He knew that Fr. Paul liked cookies from Amy's so he would shop there. He knew Fr. Mark didn't eat red meat, so he made sure that there was something for him in the box. He knew where to buy the best meats and the freshest produce. Brother Tom not only stocked our fridge he was also the one who cleaned it out. I noticed last night that the milk was expired. Mostly like Tom bought that milk, and if he was still here, he probably would have noticed, and it would have been tossed in the bin. I have no doubt that if things were different, and one of us clerics had died that Tom would not be here on the Altar with us, but he would be in the background making sure that the coffee was made and that only the best pastries would be served. Yes, that is why I say that Tom was a Martha, and we priests are Marys. But the thing about Tom is that he was redeemed Martha. Tom like Martha spent his 56 years of religious life burdened with much serving. Taking care of us clerics but unlike Martha Tom wasn't a complainer. Tom wouldn't have said, "Tell those priests to get off their butts and help me." No, he quietly went about doing the serving taking care of us. Taking care of so many people. Brother Tom worked for many years in our seminaries. Two of my classmates wrote me this week after Tom's death and said that if it wasn't for him, they wouldn't be Redemptorists today. They said that their families couldn't afford the tuition that was being charged and the bills mysteriously disappeared. No word was ever said about the back unpaid tuition. Yes, Tom was our Martha and he was generous to a fault. Now a question you might have is why? Why would a man spend 56 years of his life taking care of other men? Men who many times forgot to say thank you or simply took for granted the things that Tom did for them. Now I have no doubt that Tom enjoyed shopping, cooking, and taking care of things. Tom was never cheap, and he enjoyed buying good things. But I don't think that is what kept Tom going these 56 years. Tom, even though he would never say it, loved us. He showed his care for us not with words but with deeds. Tom enjoyed doing things for the community. But I don't think that

is what kept Tom going for 56 years. Tom also had a great love of his Redemptorist vocation. He grew up in our Redemptorist parish of St. Michael's in Chicago. From the time he was a small boy he could be found in the rectory with the other brothers, especially Brother Columban taking care of the community. Yes, Tom had a deep love of his Redemptorist vocation. But I don't think that that was the only thing that kept him going for these 56 years. Tom, and this is why I say he was a redeemed Martha; Tom had a great love of Jesus. And it was his love of Jesus that kept him going for these 56 years. Yes, Tom like Martha was anxious and concerned about many things, but he knew that one thing only was required of him. Tom knew that one thing only was required and that was his love of Jesus, and this was never taken from him.