

## Rev. Eric V. Swearingen

August 8, 1961 - January 18, 2020

Surrounded by his loving family and many friends, Rev. Eric V. Swearingen completed his early mission on January 18, 2020, having served as a Catholic Priest of the Diocese of Fresno for more than 32 years.

Eric Van Swearingen was born August 8, 1961 in Visalia, California. He was the second son of Richard and Connie (Goodreau) Swearingen. His early years were spent on the Westside of the San Joaquin Valley, where his family farmed in the Riverdale/Five Points area. Those early lessons of farming, working side-by-side with people of diverse cultures, languages and backgrounds would serve him well in his later life of ministry. He was blessed with the opportunity for a Catholic education first at Mary Immaculate Queen school in Lemoore and then George McCann Memorial Catholic School in Visalia. After completing his high school years at Redwood High School in Visalia, the realization that he might be called to the Catholic priesthood led him to St. John's Seminary College in Camarillo. Having earned his Bachelor Degree in Philosophy, he was sent to complete his theological studies at the Pontifical College Josephinum in Columbus, OH. On May 23, 1987 he was ordained a priest for service in the Diocese of Fresno.

Fr. Swearingen served in various parish assignments throughout his more than 32 years of priestly ministry, including: Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, Bakersfield; Our Lady of Victory, St. Alphonsus, St. Helen and Holy Spirit

Parishes, Fresno; St. Anthony Parish, Atwater; St. Jude Parish, Easton; St. Peter the Apostle Parish, Lemoore; and the united Catholic communities of Good Shepherd Parish, Visalia.

Fr. Eric was a gifted administrator and pastor who could relate to all age groups. He honed his people skills while serving in a traveling circus during the summers of his seminary training. There he helped train the dog performers, gave religious instruction to the children of the circus performers and learned how to be a real clown! This adaptable nature would serve him greatly during his military service as a USAF National Guard Chaplain (Major) and a volunteer Fresno police chaplain. He even found a way to merge his priestly ministry with his love of travel, serving as a Cruise Ship chaplain with the Apostleship of the Sea-USA, and accompanying scores of pilgrims to those holy sites which helped deepen their experience of the Faith.

Fr. Eric had a keen sense of humor and was fond of playing practical jokes. He enjoyed cooking and celebrating with friends his successes in the kitchen or at the grill. His home was a welcoming place and would often be a gathering spot for his priest brothers. And when some of those brother priests need a shoulder to lean on or an ear to listen in a time of difficulty, they could count on his openness and support. He also knew sorrow and suffering in this life; but his strong faith and unwillingness to give up saw him through and provided us all with a living image of Jesus.

Besides his loving parents, Fr. Eric will also be greatly missed by his brother Craig (Kristi) Swearingen of Visalia; his sister Stephanie (Robert) Twedt of Mount Vernon, WA; his nieces and nephews Ryan Swearingen (Amee), Lynsi (Brenden) Watson, Robert Twedt, Jr., Kristin Twedt, Hudson Swearingen, Harper Swearingen, Hadley Swearingen, Cameron Watson, Kase Watson and Grace Twedt.

A viewing and visitation will be held on Thursday, January 23, 2020 from 3:00  
◆ 6:00 p.m. at St. Mary's Church, Visalia. The Vigil/Rosary will follow at the  
church at 6:00 p.m. The funeral Mass will be celebrated at 12:00 p.m. on  
Friday, January 24, 2020 at St. Mary's Church, Visalia.

In lieu of flowers, friends may make a donation in memory of Fr. Eric  
Swearingen to The Bethlehem Center, Visalia; the Building Fund for St.  
Charles Borromeo Church in Visalia or their favorite charity.

Tributes and condolences may be offered by logging onto [www.salseranddillard.com](http://www.salseranddillard.com).

# Previous Events

## Viewing

JAN 23. 3:00 PM - 7:00 PM (PT)

St. Mary's Catholic Church - Visalia, CA  
608 N. Church Street  
Visalia, CA 93291

## Rosary

JAN 23. 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM (PT)

St. Mary's Catholic Church - Visalia, CA  
608 N. Church Street  
Visalia, CA 93291

## Mass of Christian Burial

JAN 24. 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM (PT)

St. Mary's Catholic Church - Visalia, CA  
608 N. Church Street  
Visalia, CA 93291

# Tribute Wall



“ *Salser & Dillard Funeral Chapel created a Tribute Video in memory of Rev. Eric V. Swearingen*



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**Salser & Dillard Funeral Chapel** - January 18, 2020 at 12:00 AM

MA

“ *Hoy alguna amiga me hizo recordar cuando era una chica de 18 o 19 años en Saltillo Coah. México, yo trabajaba los veranos en una escuela de idiomas que ofrecía cursos de español a norteamericanos, apoyándolos en sus tareas y acompañándolos a conocer la ciudad. Ese verano, me asignaron a un par de chicos seminaristas de 20 o 21 años procedentes de California, uno de ellos era Eric, así lo recuerdo como en la foto, muy alto, muy guapo y con una gran simpatía, muy bromista con su compañero, Dominique. Al final del curso de dos semanas, ellos se fueron hablando español. Con Eric pudimos entablar una bonita amistad, seguimos comunicándonos vía cartas, Incluso recibí una invitación para su ordenación sacerdotal, no pude asistir, pero me sentí muy contenta por el.*

*Hoy lo recordé y busque información de el en internet, desafortunadamente encontré esta lamentable noticia.*

*Pido a Dios por el eterno descanso de Eric y elevo para el una oración.*

*Envío mis saludo solidario para su familia*

*María Aguilar.*

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**María Aguilar** - June 15, 2021 at 12:41 AM

KS

“ In 2010 Father Eric lead a trip to Oberammergau, Germany. One evening prior to our trip to see the passion play, another Holy Spirit member and I took Father Eric to dinner in celebration of his birthday. None of us spoke German, so we had to rely on the judgment of our server to bring us a nice meal. While we laughed about being unfamiliar with the items that we ate, we were happy to have this new cuisine experience, Father Eric, we will always remember you and the joy you brought to members of Holy Spirit Church.

*Rest in peace in the abode of our Lord,  
Karen Scharnhorst*

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**Karen Scharnhorst** - March 29, 2020 at 09:52 AM

EL

“ Elizabeth lit a candle in memory of Rev. Eric V. Swearingen



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**Elizabeth** - March 28, 2020 at 07:27 PM

WG

“ Father Eric did the Funeral Mass for my first wife in Oct 2008. On August 2012 Fr Eric married my wife Judy and myself with just us and the couple that introduced us! We will never forget how great he was to us. May he rests in peace.

*Wayne and Judy Garvis*

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**Wayne and Judy Garvis** - February 28, 2020 at 06:07 PM

DA

“ I was shocked by hearing the news. I spent with Eric the last month of my vacation in California in 1998. I went to Fresno to my uncle house in order to learn English and to spend a good time abroad. My aunt made me meet Eric, the parson of St. Helen, her "boss" of the school where she worked. He was so happy to know me to the point that he wanted to spend lots of his spare time with me, driving around the city, going to the cinema (I had never gone to the cinema before, in California), going with his family to their cabin mountain, using a water jet in the lake near the cabin, driving his car (it was my first time driving ever)...I really had fun. I often remember those days with a smile on my face. He was such a fun man, he always made jokes. He used to laugh in a very funny way. He loved animals as I had never seen anybody...I remember his parrot often on his shoulders and Eric allowed it to peck at his teeth...funny! We had a good time, so he decided to fly to Rome with my uncle and aunt the following Christmas time in order to visit me and my family...nice days too.

That summer my grandma was very sick and he could understand my sorrow since confided to me that his loved grandma died some years before...Eric loved jokes but a sad twist of fate killed him just like his grandma.

Eric, I am sure that you are still laughing up in the Heaven, lucky the souls that are around you! Bye Bye my friend.

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**Daniele** - February 28, 2020 at 06:59 AM

EL

“ I had the honor of meeting Fr.Eric when I went to life teen club as a student at Clovis West high school.Fr.Eric would always come and give a talk at Life teen club.then I saw him when I became a parish member at holy spirit church. I will miss Fr.Eric 😭😭 from Elizabeth

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**Elizabeth** - February 08, 2020 at 09:32 PM

RL

*My wife and I had the pleasure of meeting Fr. Swearingen when we traveled to Rome and other places on our pilgrimage several years ago. Pleasant memories which we will cherish. He was a very pleasant and funny priest who will be missed.*

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**Reuben Lucero** - March 24, 2020 at 05:27 PM

PA

“ *God blessed us by giving us Father Eric. Now he is back with you Lord, no more pain. I will always remember him who brought me closer to God. Rest in Piece*

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**Pat** - January 31, 2020 at 02:57 AM

KJ

“ *I was raised Catholic but stopped practicing my faith for about a decade, during the 80s. When I returned to a life of faith, I worshipped for 23 years in Protestant churches. When I felt the Holy Spirit prompting me to return to the Catholic Church, I visited Holy Spirit Church in north Fresno. Father Eric's presentation of the Gospel and his homilies convinced me that I was "home" again and that a Catholic setting is where the good Lord wants me to be. I am forever grateful for his love and leadership.*

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**Ken Johnson** - January 27, 2020 at 04:24 PM

WW

*One reason I love to attend the mass every Sunday because of Fr. Eric, he was exceptionally priest with full of joys. He filled the church with love ❤️ and laughter. He went to Shaemar Residential Care for the elderly to bless the house and my mother with liver cancer (she joined our dear Creator last 2013). He will always be remembered and loved.*

*Thank you, Father Eric, for love and joy.*

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**Wilma Worthley** - February 23, 2020 at 02:59 PM

TH

“ Fr. Eric brought me and my family into the Catholic Church, Easter Vigil 1994, at St. Helens. His pastoral care passed my test at the death of our little daughter. God's grace has been mediated to us through his priestly ministry. I will always love him and I'm committed to pray for the repose of his soul for the rest of my life. Deum Adora, Timothy Holly.

Tim Holly - January 25, 2020 at 01:55 PM

SC

“ Father Eric was pastor at Holy spirit when I came to Fresno to minister at St. Agnes Medical Center I attended Holy Spirit and was always so impressed with Father Eric's Homilies i always said "father's homilies set me up for the week He touched many hearts of all ages with his Homilies.and his entire ministry Father Eric was also very generous if one of his parishiners was a patient at St. Agnes and wanted to see him when we called he came right over. I thank God for his life although short he touched many many lives. I extend my most sincere sympathy to his mother and father and to all of his family members.May Father ERic's soul rest in peace. Sister Emily C.S.C

Sister Emily Demuth, C.S - January 25, 2020 at 02:41 AM

CS

“ We 1st met Father Eric at St. Helens Church in Fresno. My fallen away from church ex husband really admired him and returned to the church. We always loved when he was the priest and thereafter talking/greeting him. May his soul Rest In Peace



Cynthia M Sigala - January 24, 2020 at 09:39 PM

NP

“ I loved listening to Fr Eric's dynamic homilies .  
Many times I shared his ideas, theme, lessons about relationship  
with God, or his hilarious jokes with my 8th grade classes at St  
Joachim school. More times than not those sharings fit right into my  
Religion lessons.

Nancy Palmer - January 24, 2020 at 04:07 PM

CC

“ Cynthia E Chandler lit a candle in memory of  
Rev. Eric V. Swearingen



Cynthia E Chandler - January 24, 2020 at 08:54 AM

CC

“ Several years ago my step daughter, Bev and great grandson,  
Jerimiah, were visiting and attended daily Mass with me at St.  
Mary's. Before his homily, Fr. Eric asked if there were any visitors. I  
pointed to Bev and Jerimiah. He then asked where they were from.  
When they responded, "Aromas", he enthusiastically replied, "  
That's a beautiful place." After Mass I introduced them to each  
other, and his warmth and charm left a lasting impression on them.  
They send their condolences to his family along with mine, and  
prayers for his eternal rest.  
Cindy Chandler

Cynthia E Chandler - January 24, 2020 at 08:46 AM

JB

“ I was an altar server at Holy Spirit for 10 years as a young man, serving many of those years with Father Eric. He was kind, understanding, always ready with a joke, and overall a true man of God. He opened the door to allow for so many new ideas to help get us youth interested and involved in the church and that changed and saved young lives giving many of us a place to belong. Rest In Peace Father Eric.

Jared Blair - January 23, 2020 at 10:42 PM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Rev. Eric V. Swearingen.



January 23, 2020 at 08:08 PM

JP

“ Father Eric was a wonderful man of God, he and Father Michael use to have so much fun together. His smile was contagious. I got to know him through Father Michael and I am so glad he is at peace now with our lord. May he rest in peace with our lord.

Jodell S Pishione - January 23, 2020 at 01:59 PM

KC

“ Kay Chase sent a virtual gift in memory of Rev. Eric V. Swearingen



kay chase - January 23, 2020 at 12:55 AM

KK

“ I enjoyed Father Eric during his time at Holy Spirit. He had a wonderful sense of humor and enjoyed listening to him each week at church. He married both of my daughters and baptized 4 of my 5 grandchildren. I will think of him when I see my daughters in their wonderful marriages and my grandchildren that he brought into the church. I am sad about his passing, but happy that he is in pain no more. God bless you.

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**Kathy Kegel** - January 22, 2020 at 09:49 PM

DD

“ Fr.Eric and I met and became friends when he was Pastor at St. Alphonsus parish. He talked me into becoming a Liturgical minister,being very active in the parish. His sermons were excellent, speaking about real problems in the world. I will miss him and his sense of humor ,his compassion for others and his kindness and understanding of the human condition. Rest my friend in the light and love of God whom you served excellently. Your friend Debbie DeBenedetto

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**Debra DeBenedetto** - January 22, 2020 at 02:28 PM

RP

*I had the privileged of caring for Fr. Eric shortly, when he came back from Stanford hospital. He was the most obedient patients I ever had! Just give him the remote control and some food, he was set to go for few hours. He never failed to say “thank you”. Father, I will never forget your appreciation and kindness. Now, it’s my turn to say, thanks for being YOU!  
Rosalie*

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**Rosalie Padilla** - January 22, 2020 at 04:23 PM

MW

“ *Such an amazing priest. I enjoyed him giving masses at Holy Spirit. He will be deeply missed.*

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**Melissa Woodley** - January 22, 2020 at 01:32 PM

JW

“ *Father Eric married my husband and I back in 1993 he baptized my children also my mom used to cut his hair every time in Fresno when he lived at Saint Helens, he will be missed! God be with you Father Eric from the Wright family and the Morales family.*

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**janice wright** - January 22, 2020 at 12:18 PM

KC

“ *When my Vickie was diagnosed with the same tumor on her brain stem Father Eric sat with me for an hour comforting and praying. My Vickie has a different outcome and had a complete success. I am so sorry Father Eric did not. Kay Chase*

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**kay chasd** - January 22, 2020 at 11:57 AM

WG

“ A great priest. I feel fortunate to have had him as a friend. First meeting him as a seminarian and then later at all the parishes in Fresno that he served in brings back many wonderful memories. His sense of humor and warm personality will be missed by many.. Our trip to Greece together was a delightful time seeing the historic sights and traveling to the different islands. We had planned on keeping our occupations quiet but somehow everyone on board the ship found out and when we would come into the dining room the European vacationers would want to meet the Catholic Priest and the American Funeral Director. Over the years I witnessed his compassion for families on the many funeral services I had with him. Whenever he left a parish for a new assignment the parishioners were always disappointed to not have close by. May his memory be eternal.

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**Wayne Gomes** - January 22, 2020 at 11:02 AM

PA

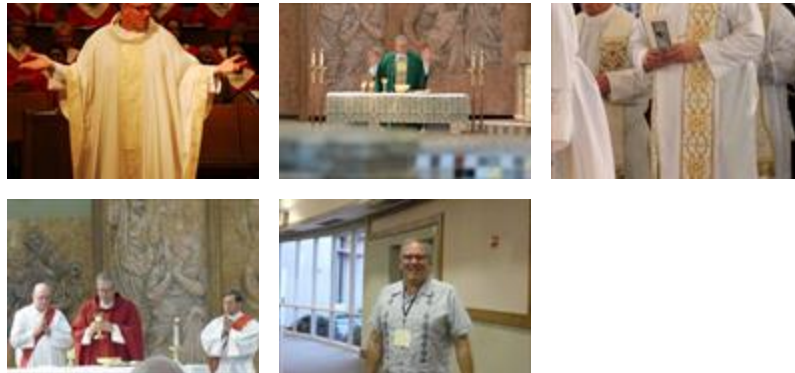
“ You were my first priest. You gave me my first communion. I was an altar server with you. I am saddened to hear of your passing but hopeful that you are now at peace and no longer in pain. Thank you, Fr. Eric, for all the wonderful memories you gave me and so many others. We love you.

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**paulette** - January 22, 2020 at 12:26 AM

BR

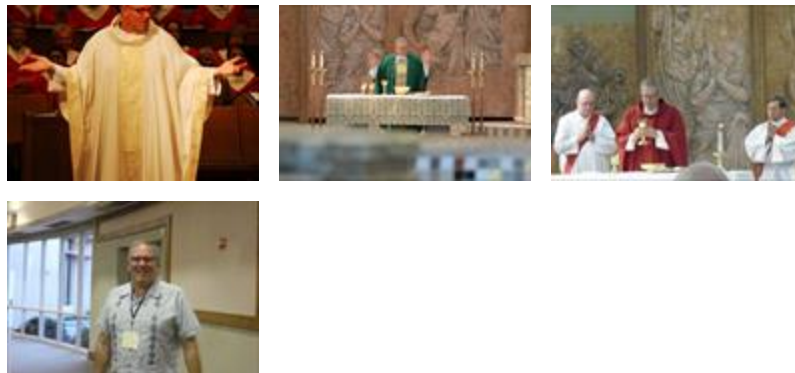
“ 5 files added to the album *Fr Eric Photos*



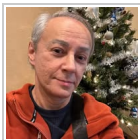
Bev Robinson - January 21, 2020 at 11:59 PM

BR

“ 4 files added to the album *Memories Album*



Bev Robinson - January 21, 2020 at 11:56 PM



“ *Fr Eric Swearengin was one of my longest and dearest friends in the priesthood. We will be missing an amazing man and priest. My heart goes out to his parents, Richard and Connie, and his whole family. The world is a better place because of his ministry, his kindness and his love.*

*Fr Timothy N Cardoso*

Timothy Cardoso - January 21, 2020 at 09:27 PM

TC

“ He will greatly be missed .Father Eric had a way of making you feeling special. It was special to attend his Mass. My thoughts and prayers are with the family .God bless you and comfort you. Tedi Cocagne

Tedi Cocagne - January 21, 2020 at 09:01 PM

KE

“ He will certainly be missed

Keira - January 21, 2020 at 06:23 PM

RO

“ Your Humor and Pastorship will be remembered forever. We love you Fr. Eric.

Raquel Ompad - January 21, 2020 at 04:56 PM

GZ

“ Fr.Eric was a wonderful shepherd easy going and funny. I was bless to service mass with him. And how he said sorry to hear your hubby passing. Always be in my prayers. God be with him mom and Dad brother and sister and the Ehole family.

Glira M. Zamora - January 21, 2020 at 04:45 PM

LP

*In God's Precious Time, Eric left the Earth world to enter Heaven with unconditional love for God, Jesus Christ. Eric was and is an example of inspiration, a beacon of His hope, His love and His everlasting life. May the family take comfort knowing Eric is home. Life on earth is finite. His soul in heaven will live in eternity. May God bless the family, heal this wound, unite them in celebration that Eric is in heaven; and to not lose faith or our way due to sadness. Let's not lose our way. Let's continue walking each other 'home.' My sincere condolences. ~Laura Pankratz.*



Laura Pankratz - January 22, 2020 at 06:17 AM



*Fr Eric was an incredibly gifted priest. We are very saddened by his death, but know that he is in a better place now. He had a way with people and reached out to the troubled and people in need. Witnessing his love for others touched me in a way that I will never forget. He had a wonderful personality and concern for others. His gift of charity, humility and grace was what touched me the most. I learned so much from him during the time he was our priest at our parish and we are so blessed to have had him celebrate the Eucharist daily. To know the true presence of Christ in that Holy Host radiated from him to others in the congregation. What a blessing and grace that is! Thank you Fr Eric for your "yes" to your vocation and sharing your beautiful love with all of us. Mother Mary pray for him and wrap your beautiful Mantle around him and his entire family during this time of grief, in the name of Jesus Christ.-Brenda Abrames*

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**B** - January 22, 2020 at 02:01 PM



*Fr Eric and I were classmates at St John's Seminary College 1979-1983. He was always kind and we had so much fun with our class. Great days. I pray for him and wish his family well. Sincerely, Damian Gennette*

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**Damian Gennette** - January 25, 2020 at 01:23 AM