

Father Smith To Again Utilize Vietnam Era Mass Kit For Special Veterans Day Service

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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JERSEYVILLE - Father Marty Smith, the pastor of the Catholic Churches in Jersey County, is set to bring out his Vietnam War Era Mass Kit once again for a special Mass set for 4 p.m., Saturday, Nov. 11, 2023, at St. Francis Xavier Parish Church in Jerseyville.



The Veteran's Day Mass is to honor local veterans. All veterans and families will be recognized with special patriotic music provided by the St. Francis Xavier Chancel Choir and St. Francis/Holy Ghost School Youth Chorus.

On Saturday, Veterans Day, Father Marty will use a Vietnam Era Mass Kit used during the Vietnam War to Celebrate Holy Mass, Alex Foster, one of the coordinators, said.

Foster said Father Marty always does a wonderful job during this service and it is especially gripping because he uses the Vietnam Era Mass Kit. He also said this particular Mass is something attendees look forward to each year and it is now an engrained tradition in the historic Catholic Church in Jerseyville.

"The Veterans Day Mass has been very well attended in the past," Foster said. "Father Marty is very dedicated to the priesthood and was also the same as a veteran. It is a very special service with the Vietnam Mass Kit."

Father Smith said this Veterans Mass means a lot to him.

"It is a time when we honor the local veterans," Smith said. "Some we didn't even know were veterans show up and share their stories with other veterans."

Smith said when fall arrives, parishioners start asking questions about the Veteran's Day Mass. He said his Mass kit is one of his "most cherished possessions."

"I put it into use and it means a lot to me, what it represents and where it has been," he said. "I was very honored to have received it."

Father Smith's saga with the Vietnam Mass Kit began when he was in the Army and had returned from Iraq for surgery on his knee at Fort Bragg, N.C. He said Father Michael Langston was at the base at that time and they became friends. In 2017, Father Smith said Father Langston gave him the Mass kit.

Father Smith was injured when he was coming down a tower and there was a mortar explosion in Iraq. He twisted his knee and did severe damage that had to be operated on at that time.

He said he is thankful to pull out the Vietnam Mass kit each year and this time he will again want to recognize the veterans in the different services.

"Every single one of the veterans has a story," Father Smith said. "We always try to stress the importance of the gift of freedom and try to focus on what is most important in recognizing those who helped give us that gift of freedom."



