

The Rev. Frederick B. ‘Ted’ Howden

Priest--Soldier--Martyr, d. December 11, 1942

(Day of Commemoration, December 11)

Frederick Bingham Howden, known to his family as Ted, was born January 27, 1902 in Cumberland, Maryland, one of seven children of the Rev. Frederick B. Howden, Sr. and Angelica Constance Faber Howden. He was twelve years old when his father was consecrated Bishop of the Missionary District of New Mexico and Southwest Texas, and the family moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico. He attended preparatory school at the Kent School in Kent, Connecticut, graduated in 1925 from Yale University, and then completed three years of seminary training at General Theological Seminary in New York City. His father ordained him Deacon at St. Clement’s Church in El Paso, Texas on June 10, 1928 and Priest, also at St. Clement’s, on January 13, 1929.

Immediately thereafter, Fr. Howden was called to serve as the Rector of St. Andrew’s Church in Roswell, New Mexico. During his tenure at St. Andrew’s he served as Vicar to Lincoln County Episcopalians from 1929 through 1941, and as a supply priest to St. Paul’s Church in Artesia, New Mexico. He also held occasional services in the developing towns of Hobbs and Lovington, and served as the Chaplain at the New Mexico Military Institute. On April 21, 1932 he married Elizabeth Fegan in St. Mark’s Church in San Antonio, Texas.

Beginning in 1929 Fr. Howden led services of Evening Prayer in the schoolhouse in Glencoe and frequently celebrated Holy Communion at the Church of the Transfiguration which met in the Navajo Lodge in Ruidoso, New Mexico. He began a fund-raising drive to build an Episcopal chapel in Lincoln County, the result of which was St. Anne’s Chapel in Glencoe. It is now the oldest Episcopal Church in Lincoln County, and at the time of its consecration on June 3, 1934 was the only protestant church of any denomination within the 150 miles between Roswell and Alamogordo.

When World War II broke out Fr. Howden held the rank of Captain in the New Mexico State Guard, and was the Chaplain to the 200th Coast Artillery when it was federalized and sent to the Philippine Islands early in 1942. A friend who was with him daily said he was always walking over the hills of Bataan holding open air services here and there and doing everything possible to help the men who affectionately called him “Chappy”. He was, however, a real soldier as well as a chaplain which all the more gained him admiration and respect as he moved from battery to battery, holding services and distributing candy, soap, and cigarettes he had foraged for the troops. He was a spiritual presence to his men, and in him they saw demonstrated love, goodness of life, and joy in serving others in the Lord’s name and for His sake.

At the Fall of Bataan and Corregidor to Japanese forces in April 1942, Fr. Howden and his fellow soldiers were made prisoners of war and were forced to endure the Bataan Death March during which some 18,000 died. During imprisonment in several prison camps including Camp O’Donnell and Cabanatuan and finally at Davao Prison Colony on Mindanao, his heroism and faith were always apparent through the humanitarian care he gave to those he served. At great cost to himself he often gave his own portion of food to others whom he insisted needed it more than he.

Fr. Howden died of dysentery and starvation-induced pellagra on December 11, 1942, but his family were not notified until June 1943. He was buried by his men in a small cemetery in the

shadow of the Mindanao jungle a mile or so from the camp at Davao. After the war, in 1948, his remains were reinterred in an Albuquerque, New Mexico cemetery.

The prayer that Fr. Howden wrote for the cadets at New Mexico Military Institute was printed for many years in the cadet handbook.

Our Father in heaven, inspire, we beseech Thee, all members of this School with directness of purpose in the training of body, mind and spirit that we may better serve Thee, our country, and our fellowmen. Give us the vision to know the right, and the courage to follow after it. Strengthen us with might by Thy Spirit for the duties of life before us. And grant that we may so lay to heart the lessons of training and discipline here that we may always continue Thy faithful soldiers and servants unto life's end. Amen.

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Collect (traditional) Almighty God our strength and sustenance, Thou gavest Thy servant Frederick Howden the grace and courage to put the need and hunger of others before his own life and health. Inspire us with directness of purpose in the training of body, mind, and spirit that we may better serve Thee, our country, and our fellowmen. Give us the vision to know what is right, and the courage to follow after it. Strengthen us with Thy Spirit for the duties of life that we may continue Thy faithful servants unto our life’s end, and at the last enter into Thy heavenly kingdom: through Jesus Christ our Lord who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Collect (contemporary) Almighty God our strength and sustenance, you gave your servant Frederick Howden the grace and courage to put the need and hunger of others before his own life and health. Inspire us with directness of purpose in the training of body, mind, and spirit that we may better serve you, our country, and our others. Give us the vision to know what is right and the courage to pursue it. Strengthen us with your Spirit for the duties of life before us, that we may continue your faithful servants to our life’s end, and at the last enter into your heavenly kingdom: through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Psalm

18:1-6, 18-20

Lessons

Isaiah 40:25-31

Matthew 25:34-40

Preface of a Saint (2)

