

The Rev. Dr. Robert Certain

Robert Certain was born in Savannah, Georgia in December 1947. He is an alumnus of Emory University, Atlanta Georgia, where he earned a BA in History in 1969. A distinguished graduate of the Air Force ROTC, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant and began his military career as a B-52 navigator-bombardier. Certain met and married Robbie Lee Wade while stationed in Blytheville, Arkansas. They have two grown children and two grandchildren.

On December 18, 1972, just seconds before reaching the bomb-release point over the Yen Vien rail yards in Hanoi, North Vietnam, Charcoal 01 was hit simultaneously by two SAMs. Less than a minute later, the aircraft nosed down, crashed, and exploded ten miles northwest of Hanoi. It was the first casualty of the LINEBACKER II operation, and its fate would be shared by fourteen other crews in the next eleven nights of combat. Captain Certain and the other two surviving crew members of Charcoal 01 ejected and were held captive until March 29, 1973.

After repatriation, Certain attended seminary at the University of the South before serving as a chaplain at Andrews AFB Maryland. He left active duty in 1977 but remained in the reserves and was eventually promoted to Colonel. Chaplain Certain retired in 1999.

As a parish priest, he served in Texas, Georgia, Tennessee, Mississippi, Arizona, and California. In California, he was pastor to former President Gerald and Betty Ford and officiated the President's funeral in early 2007. He is currently serving as interim rector of the Church of the Messiah in Gonzales, Texas.

He also serves as national commander of American Ex-Prisoners of War, on the boards of the Distinguished Flying Cross Society, the Order of Daedalians, the Vietnam former POW (NAMPOW) organization, and the advisory board of the National Cold War Center in Blytheville, Arkansas.