

+Kaz Oshiki+

Eulogy by the Community of St. Martin

So you have had a little talk with +Jean+. It must have been a very special talk, the kind she and you used to have in the late afternoons with a martini. I know you have wanted to talk with her for a long time. And you connected, again, like you always connected.

I never knew the two of you when you were in D.C. But I know you were “connected.” Connected to each other. Connected to the pulse of this nation as it struggled to guarantee human and civil rights. Connected to the people of this nation as you fought to end an unjust war in Southeast Asia. You were connected to the culture of those movements and you shared it with the youth of Central City Lutheran Mission. You taught us to sing “We Shall Overcome.”

So you and +Jean+ reconnected earlier this week. Your son told me that she wants you to come home. She says it is time for the two of you to be together again, to be connected for eternity. She, like you, is a special lady. She, like you, knew the pains of those left out of society. She, like you, left a footprint in the sand of this world that will not be erased.

+Kaz+ and +Jean+ Oshiki. Known by so many for so many different reasons. Dad and Mom. Grandpa and Grandma. Brother and sister. Friend. For many, you were bedrock in the struggle for inclusion and recognition. The Japanese-American community will never forget you for your tireless and quiet work on their behalf to have their enslavement during WWII remembered so it could never be repeated again, for any people. Because you were a Japanese-American in WWII you suffered. You bore the pain of racism and xenophobia. Perhaps because you experienced it, +Kaz+, you dedicated your life to eliminate it for all people. I don't know the reason, but you did it. And the world is a better place because of it.

+Kaz+ and +Jean+, you reconnected! As you are now in each other's arms once again, you will have so much to talk about. You will of course remember your family, your wonderful sons, their wives and grandchildren. You know you have meant so much for them. They are so very glad you reconnected for eternity. Yes, they are sad because of their loss. Yes, they are mourning and will need to mourn because you have meant so much to them. But soon, as the Psalmist says, their mourning will turn into dancing because of their love for you. They know, +Kaz+, that you talked with +Jean+ and that +Jean+ has called you home. They understood that. Their eyes are filled with tears knowing you reconnected, glad you reconnected and sad you made this journey. They will join you some day. But for now, they still have more seeds of love to sow here on this earth. You taught them well. They are tending the seeds of love you have sown together.

You will remember as you gather and review your life together, as we will remember, your tireless efforts to change your church so that all people could be accepted. You worked to create and sustain a ministry in San Bernardino, Central City Lutheran Mission, where all people could be welcome. You helped African and Latin American children discover their artistic skills. You helped feed, clothe and house them. You are proud to know them now as students and accomplished artists. Some are simple

and proud parents having broken cycles of addictions and violence because of your patience and love for humanity. Raquel, Edwin, Laquinetta, Enrique and Nate and countless others thank you for what you have given them, the doors you have opened for them, the patience you showed them as they struggled to grow up in a city not friendly to youth, in a church which does not yet speak their language, in a new project where all were welcomed.

Your church did change after decades of homophobia. Your hard work helped create a space within the ELCA for gay and lesbian clergy. While still not there yet, you helped push open a door that will let the GLBT community in and feel welcome. You helped lead a process of Exodus determined not to deny reality, but to embrace reality by believing in a God whose name is "I am who I am." What a wonderful God you followed so that an Exodus could be led for people whose very existence has been denied and brutalized. Yes, you paid the price with your GLBT brothers and sisters as they and their churches were excluded. But now together you can reminisce and share the joy that people like Rev. Jenny Mason, Rev. Barbara Lundblad, Patrick Shebeck and Rev. Karen Bolton share. You helped create a space where the excluded were included, where the stranger is welcomed. I too share this joy.

Yes, +Kaz+, it is good that you are with +Jean+ sharing the many wonderful things you did to help so many. Your marriage certainly took seriously the vow of being for others and you spent your life together being there for others. Your children. Children from the streets of D.C. and all across America whom you helped. The list goes on and on of those whose lives you have touched. Thank you.

+Jean+ invited you to be with her. It is now time to rest together, to eternally embrace one another, to make all things anew as you are now on the other side of the River of Life as we know it. Now we gather around your coffin, as we did around hers, to sing. Remember, +Kaz+, how we gathered around her coffin singing "We Shall Overcome"? Now we gather around your coffin singing "We Shall Overcome," with the full faith that indeed we shall overcome. You have taught us well. Thank you.

Yes, we will miss you. Yes, we know you are together and we will join you one day. Yes, our lives are better because of what you have given us and what you have been for us. But, +Kaz+, we are glad you talked with +Jean+. We let you go to be with her. We entrust your future to our common God who will take our tears for mourning and soon turn them into tears of laughter as we remember...as we remember...as we remember. +Kaz+, may you rest in Peace.

The Rev. David J. Kalke
Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico
March 19, 2010.

From: David Kalke [mailto:cd000161@earthlink.net]

Sent: Tuesday, May 18, 2010 7:36 PM

To: cd000161@earthlink.net

Subject: +Kaz Oshiki+ funeral

Today the ground opened up

Sort of

To receive one of the saints

That Mother Earth called home to embrace

With a soft green cape

The kind that covers the earth to keep it warm

And the kind that the Virgin of Guadalupe wore

When she met Juan Diego

When she marched with Miguel Hidalgo

When she reached out and touched the Chapel of St. Martin

And began to call it home.

Today the ground opened up

Sort of

To receive a tender man

Whose kindness covered the earth

As he too marched for freedom and independence

For the poor and for people of color in the USA.

Kaz Oshiki met the woman of his life

Who called him home to be with her

Today as his ashes arrived to be with hers

In a place they loved

The Chapel of St. Martin at CCLM.

Not many gathered.

Not many do when people of faith who wore the armor of justice, peace and love

Pass to be embraced by Angels of God waiting on the other side.

Those who gathered remembered.

Those who gathered matter like +Kaz+ and +Jean+ mattered.

Many lives were changed because of this man and his wife.

Lives came to know the love of Jesus through their acts of love, justice and mercy.

Lives came to know the power of a united community struggling for justice and re-formation.

Lives came to know the hope that +Kaz+ and +Jean+ instilled by never giving up

Lives of the powerful in government and church were held accountable

By continuing to sing the song they loved: WE SHALL OVERCOME.

And so wars were ended.

A monument to Japanese-Americans built in D.C.

Civil rights advanced.

Immigration reform advanced.

And a homophobic church's policies changed.

A life well lived.

An embrace by Mother Earth so deserved.

Tonight

Resting in peace.

Together.

In a place they loved.

Surrounded by

The homeless

Immigrants

HIV+ persons

Youth.

A Holy Space

For a Holy People.

Today the earth opened up.

Sort of.

To receive one of its own.

