

**Homily April 25, 2015
Funeral Liturgy for The Right Reverend Rustin Ray Kimsey
For Rusty**

Let us pray

**“For Bread broken in glory of a common joy;
for truth living beyond the barriers of time;
for fellowship made out of an understanding of eternal things;
for humble circumstances and simple deed in which the miracle of love
is perfectly revealed;
for mysteries by which we have been exalted
and for knowledge by which we have been humbled;
for souls in whose living we have seen no death,
and for those who, having died, live forever ---
We give thee thanks with great rejoicing, O God our Lord.”
*(Prayers for Daily Use, Samuel H. Miller)***

“Jesus said, ‘I call you friends.’ ”

**Good Morning,
I am so deeply humbled that Rusty asked me to be one of the preachers
for his funeral liturgy. To be a friend of Rusty’s was pure gift, pure gift
from God.**

**I am so very aware of the hundreds and hundreds of stories that each of
you carries in your memories, in your hearts, this morning. Thousands
of Rusty stories – of his friendship with God ,
of his friendship with all creation
and especially his friendship with the human family,
and most particularly his friendship with each one of you...
those unique and treasured friendships that we each share with Rusty.**

**We just heard the powerful message of John’s Gospel chapter 15 when
Jesus said “I have called you friends” .**

**Rusty once wrote about this declaration ... it is “The lynchpin of how I
think about Jesus...about us, the Body of Christ...about life.”**

2.

So it is not surprising that Rusty and Gretchen picked this Gospel reading for today's celebration.

Rusty often began his sermon with a special prayer. It was always a prayer that captured the moment.

Living in to the Sacred Scriptures, Rusty's prayers were at the heart of his friendship with God...a conversation and trust with the Holy One.

I often wondered where Rusty found these opening prayers. I know he wrote some of them himself. I have always thought that there was a special book of prayers that he used. I never saw it, so I asked Gretchen about that last week. Indeed there is a book. Gretchen loaned it to me.

This is it. *Prayers for Daily Use* by Samuel H. Miller. I have spent some quiet time with the book in the past days...it has really been a way of spending time with Rusty. By reading through the prayers --especially the ones that he highlighted ,check or starred -- I drew closer to my friend and indeed closer to God.

Scotch taped and patched and worn by the years ... dog-eared pages , held by loving hands...

This morning, I want to use this treasured as a symbol to gather a few comments about Rusty as a friend of Christ and our friend.

When I first saw the book, I was amused by the purple rubber band which held its fragile binding together. I wondered about where the purple rubber band came from? Maybe one of you knows? Rusty was not big on miters or copes, or most traditional symbols of a bishop, But a purple rubber band??? There must be a story behind it. hmm

3.

The book is inscribed “For Rusty Kimsey –fellow worker in Christ Jesus – with admiration and appreciation, John E. Hines, Presiding Bishop 1970.”

It must have been given to Rusty by his friend and mentor at the Houston General Convention when Bishop Hines called the Episcopal Church to more deeply live out its commitments to the Gospel’s call to seek justice and peace.

On the title page, I learned that Samuel H, Miller was the author of the prayers. I googled the name and found that Samuel Miller was a Baptist and the Dean of Harvard Divinity School! A Baptist! The prayers were published in 1957... about the time that Rusty was at the Episcopal Theological Seminary across the way from Harvard. I wondered if Rusty and Samuel ever met?

And here we are in Calvary Baptist Church in The Dalles for Rusty’s funeral celebration. Rusty worked for the unity of the Church in so many ways. “I have called you friends. Dwell together in unity.” So, it is good that we are here in this place.

And I am certain that one of the first things that Jesus said to Rusty when he arrived in heaven was, “Thank you, Rusty, for your ecumenical heart and friendship. Especially, thank you for your labors in helping to bringing full communion between the Lutheran Church and the Episcopal Church . Well done, faithful friend.” And I think that God rewarded Rusty with a new Red Sox baseball cap.

This well- prayed book contains prayers for morning and evening, for seasons of joy and times of sorrow. It has prayers of wonder and awe, prayers of gratitude for the earth, for God’s incarnate love in friend and stranger. Prayers for times of darkness and struggle, and prayers of hope and joy offered by Easter People. Prayers of gratitude for the Image of God which we discover each moment, if our eyes are open and fresh to God’s surprises.

4.

These are some of the themes that Rusty prayed and lived in his life as God's friend.

And in the book in among those amazing prayers, and between the pages... I found photographs and handwritten notes, slips of paper and clippings.... Placed there by Rusty prayers all their own.

- **“Jesus Christ make yourself known through me.”**
- **a prayer note from a Roman Catholic priest friend – “I pray to God for answers, and he responds by sending someone to help me live with the questions.”**
- **A note: “Houston 1970, “Good Luck!! Love, Gretchen”,**

(this was the General Convention that first approved women deacons, elected the first African American Vice President of House of Deputies, Charles Willie, and it was the first Convention that allowed women to serve as Deputies.)

- **A card in Rusty's handwriting “Be open to the potential of God”**
- **a photograph of Ascension school and chapel at Cove-**
- **A photograph of Rusty holding a newly baptized baby . Joy and love in the faces of these two “Images of God”.**
- **And there is a 1983 postcard... showing Rusty's beloved Red Sox playing in Fenway Park, it was written to Rusty by a seminarian thanking him for her summer at Cove and thanking him for bringing Desmond Tutu to Ascension School ... “indeed a gift” the seminarian said. Indeed a gift.**
- **And among Rusty's handwritten notes, I found this note next to the Easter prayers: “To whom it may concern: If this book is ever lost, a \$5.00 reward will be paid for its safe return to...The Rev'd Rusty Kimsey” , 420 East 11th Street. The Dalles, Oregon**
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5.

Rusty's prayers will never be lost.

His prayers and his life speak to the heart of each one of us.

As a son, a brother, a husband, a father, a father in law, a relative in the human family, a grandfather, a cousin, a deacon, a priest, a bishop, a pastor, a Duck fan...just Rusty...

as a friend...

Bearing witness to God's love and friendship... Rusty accompanied us on this Holy Pilgrimage of life...

-Journeying with friends in mutual ministry in the blessed lands of eastern Oregon,

-walking together with friends across the globe , in interdependence and in partnership

-walking as friends in sacred places, in the sacred places of our lives.

- With him ,we have traveled as God's friends....

Rusty once said:

“There is no greater blessing than friends”

“thousands of images fill my heart with the quiet relentless voice of God whispering, ‘pay attention, be in awe and be well.’”

6.

Now held in God's closest embrace, Rusty is feasting at the heavenly Banquet with Angels, Archangels and the whole hosts of the Communion of Saints ...and probably several unexpected, surprise guests, too.

And there at the Table, Rustin Ray Kimsey, Rusty, continues our friendship, beyond time and space. I have called you friends.

**"Beloved, may we be blessed, because it is so. All is well."
(Julian)**

Amen

The Reverend David W. Perry – April 25, 2015 (with gratitude for the help of Rusty and Gretchen and God as I wrote down these thoughts)

7.

One of Rusty's oldest friends, David O'Connor, was also asked by Rusty to speak this morning. Classmates at the University of Oregon and both rabid Ducks , they shared a journey together ever since the 1950's.

David had lung cancer surgery this past week and is healing now in San Francisco. He was unable to travel here to The Dalles for this morning. He prepared his remarks before his surgery. David has had them printed and inserted in the service leaflet. As we pray for David's healing, let us give thanks for the friendship that and he Rusty lived so wonderfully.

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