

Funeral service for Rev. Creighton Evans, Jr.

May 21, 2018 at 10:00 a.m.
All Souls Church, Chatan

O LORD, my rock and my redeemer. Let the words of my mouth and the medication of my heart be acceptable in your sight. Amen

We were gathered by God today to pray for the peace of the soul of Rev. Creighton Evans, who was called to his home in heaven and also to comfort his wife, Nina and their family.

Let me begin with a profile of Fr. Evans as we know little about his background due to language barrier although we have been together for as long as five years.

Fr. Creighton Evans, Jr. was born in June 17, 1953 in the United States, and graduated from the University of Charleston with a degree in psychology in 1977 at age 24. About four and half years between 1978 and 1982, he worked for a trucking company.

During which time, he worked for three other companies as well.

Later, about four and half years between 1982 and 1987, he worked for an insurance company that offers life, accident, vehicle and house insurances.

Between 1987 and 1993, he worked for the social service department of the government of Charleston in South Carolina as an official to evaluate eligibility of families to receive welfare public assistance and child protection services.

In his resume, it was stated that he had worked as a social worker after graduating the University of Charleston. This means that he worked for the trucking company, not as a driver but as welfare staff for drivers and other employees, and likewise, for the insurance company, he was in charge of welfare and benefits of clients and employees of the insurance company.

He later went to the Episcopal Trinity Seminary in 1991 and graduated there in 1994 with a Master of Divinity. In Episcopal Church of the United States, those who graduated from a divinity school, his or her ordination of deacon takes place right away. For Fr. Creighton, therefore, he was ordained as a deacon in June 18, 1994, and in January 4, 1995, he was ordained as a priest and continued to serve God as a clergy ever since.

After he became a clergy, he served for St. Matthias Episcopal Church in Summerton, South Carolina for four years, starting in 1994. From 1998, he served for All Souls Episcopal Church in North Fort Myers, Florida for 12 years. From 2010, he served for Church of the Epiphany for two years, before coming to Okinawa in November 2012 as the priest of All Souls Church Chatan of the Diocese of Okinawa of Nippon Seiko-kai.

His hobbies were reading, watching movies and sports, according to his resume.

His family was his wife, Nina, daughter Deidre and son Creighton III. His son Creighton flew into Okinawa last Wednesday and said good-bye to his father. It was unfortunate that Deidre could not come. It is our wish that she will be able to see this service through the technology of streaming.

He had troubles with his heart, knees and lungs. Although it is not known if he developed these troubles after he came to Okinawa, he became ill and had been hospitalized couple times. Every time I visited him at the hospital, however, Fr. Creighton, the patient, always greeted me with smiles.

Worrying about him and visited him at the hospital, but most of the time, I ended up leaving there with a great sense of assurance. It was Fr. Creighton's faith in God. God is with him all the time, whether in good time or in bad time, God is always with him, and this assurance had supported Fr. Creighton throughout his life.

He was about to celebrate his 65th birthday in June 17 this year. The retirement age of the Nippon Seiko-kai is 70, but it is 65 for Episcopal Church in the United States. Because of his health, he was planning to retire in this June. I am sure he looked forward to a retirement life with Nina to do many things that were not possible while working as a clergy.

Today is a sad day for the Diocese of Okinawa, as we all have to bid farewell to Fr. Creighton. But for him, it is the day of victory. It is the day he triumphantly returned to God by leaving all the burden in this world behind.

We all came from God and return to God. There is no any other place we go.

However, unless we have a faith, it is not possible for us to know where we came from and where we are going to, because a faith begins with believing God who is not seen. There is God who is not seen, and unseen God's kingdom is where our souls return when our body becomes unseen. This is our faith in God.

Therefore, today's farewell is not an ultimate farewell with Fr. Creighton, but a farewell for a brief while until we meet him again in God's home. I would like to see him off saying "Thank you" and see you again as we are coming later."

What Fr. Creighton taught us was God who is an absolute being. In today's reading of Epistle, it is said in 1 Peter 1:8 **"Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, 1:9 obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.**

Every time when he spoke at a monthly clergy meeting, this was a message from Fr. Creighton to us. I am most certain that those who visited him at the hospital learned through him and Nina that God is alive and God always loves us, and witnessed both Fr. Creighton and Nina letting God take over everything.

I am a Christian and we Christians are optimistic and we may be seen as a strange group, slightly different from a norm because we believe resurrection of the dead.

Resurrection means to reunite in God's home with our friends who died, therefore, death in this world is not eternal farewell. The life in this world is not the end. Eternal life filled with joy and gratitude in God's home is waiting for us.

Because we all go to God's home, even our life in this world may not make sense to the eyes of others, life of Christians are rich life. Jesus Christ redeemed our sins by his death on the cross,

and we are loved by him. Therefore, we can be kind to others. Because God's home is waiting for us, we can be compassionate to others and without discriminating or looking down on others, we care for other people. We can live in a simple and honest fashion, all because God is with us.

Fr. Creighton who has been already in God's home will wait for us to join him some day. Let's move on our life so that when we meet him again, we can tell him that we were able to be a witness of God like Fr. Creighton, and that the life we received from God was a wonderful one.

The Rt.Rev.David Eisho Uehara