

THE REV. DAYLE CASEY

1937-2023

The Rev. Dayle Casey, who served 23 years as rector of the Chapel of Our Saviour Episcopal parish in Colorado Springs, died Sunday, October 1. He was 86.

Casey was called to Our Saviour in 1986 following nine years at a parish in Wisconsin, and served until his retirement in 2009. He graduated from Nashotah House seminary in Nashotah, Wisconsin in 1977. Before seminary he taught at private schools in New England, Texas, and Wisconsin. In addition to his Master of Divinity from Nashotah House, Casey held graduate degrees from Duke and Brandeis universities and a Bachelor of Arts from Texas Christian University.

He was born September 27, 1937, in Dallas, Texas, the first in his family to attend college. He starred at shortstop on the Highland Park High School baseball team that was runner-up for the Texas state championship in 1954, his junior year. He attended TCU on a baseball scholarship. In 1959 he married Judith Ann Rominger, his high school sweetheart. “He was a very good baseball player,” she recalls, “and that was really appealing to me.” They were married 64 years and together 70.

His lifelong interest in travel was spurred by a generous curiosity and openness to the wider world modeled by his parents, who took their family on long road trips during his father’s

annual two-week vacation. In the 1940s and 1950s the Caseys drove deep into Mexico, to San Francisco, and to New York City, where Dayle fulfilled his dream of seeing his favorite major league baseball team, the Cleveland Indians, play at Yankee Stadium. (The big leagues were “a million miles away in the forties and fifties in Texas,” he remembered — his local team was the Dallas



Eagles of the Texas League.) The New York trip was the first time he saw a black professional baseball player: Elston Howard, who played left field for the Yankees that day. As an adult Casey relished travel even further afield, including to Haiti, to Thailand and Burma to visit his son Ethan, and nine trips to different parts of Mexico in later years with his son Aaron. In his sixties he made a personal project of learn-

ing to speak and read Spanish.

His first visit to Colorado was in 1947 at age nine, when he won a summer bus trip around the West as the prize in a YMCA-sponsored contest. It was at a diner in Pueblo that he learned a lesson about financial prudence: He put a nickel in a slot machine and immediately won a jackpot of two dollars’ worth of nickels, then proceeded to insert 39 of his 40 fresh nickels with no further luck. He left aside one nickel to buy a Coca-Cola. When his sons were young in the 1970s, he taught them to slip a \$500 bill under the Monopoly board and forget about it, in case they

had to pay rent on another player's property later in the game.

His work as rector at Our Saviour included leading the resettlement of two large families from the former Soviet Union and helping establish the Pikes Peak chapter of Habitat for Humanity. In 1989 Casey was one of three co-founders of the Colorado Haiti Project, initially a project of the Episcopal Diocese of Colorado and now a 501(c)3 nonprofit renamed Locally Haiti (www.locallyhaiti.org). He pointed out that these groups thrived in their work only after hiring a full-time paid executive director. He led many group trips to Haiti, and he believed that such trips had two purposes: to provide medical and material aid to poor Haitians, and to educate affluent Americans.

Casey was well regarded for his preaching, and many of his best sermons were collected in a book compiled by parishioners on the occasion of his retirement in 2009. He liked to cite the celebrated preacher John Claypool's dictum that sermons should be written with the Bible in one hand and the daily newspaper in the other. In his sermon delivered July 3, 2005, Casey pointed out that American patriotism and Christianity are not the same thing: "One way to define freedom is to say that freedom is 'being free to do what I want to do.' That's what children think of as freedom." Following September 11, 2001, he said, "Instead of being free to live our lives the way we would really like to live them, we have become captive to the perceived need to spend billions of dollars on war, with no end in sight, and many are even afraid to exercise their freedom to travel."

He delivered his last sermon on January 7, 2023, at the funeral of his longtime close friend and Colorado Haiti Project co-founder the Rev. Ed Morgan, at St. John's Cathedral in Denver.

"Ed and I did not begin that work with the idea of solving Haiti's problems," he said that

day. "We knew, as Mother Teresa once said, that God does not call us to be successful, but to be faithful. So being faithful in two ways is what we wanted to be. First, we wanted to be faithfully present to brothers and sisters in Haiti who could use some help from their more fortunate friends in the United States. Second, we hoped to provide opportunities for our parishes in Colorado, which run the risk of parochialism in every sense of the word, to see that there is indeed life outside Estes Park and the Broadmoor, and that a catholic Church calls us to be aware of and available to that larger world."

In the same sermon, he reflected on death. "None of us has a clue where the person has gone when the earthly tent he inhabits dies, but the person's faith and love and hope do not pass away with the death of the body. ... Faith provides the confidence we need to move from the present into the future. Faith is what leads one to tell another that she loves him in the hope that her trust will not be rejected. Faith is what leads us to leave home as young adults, risking to make a home of our own. It is by faith in the future that we start a new business and build schools for our children and their future. It is by faith that we die."

The day he died, Casey's former parishioner and longtime friend Jerry Hurst commented: "Not for the first time, he showed the rest of us how it's done."

The Rev. Dayle Casey is survived by his wife of 64 years, Judith, sons Aaron (and his wife Terry), of Washington, DC, and Ethan (and his wife Jennifer), of Seattle, and Judith's niece Cynthia Haralson and nephew Kelly Rominger and their families. The funeral will be held at Grace and St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 601 N. Tejon Street, Colorado Springs, on Saturday, October 14 at 10:00 a.m. In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made to Locally Haiti (www.locallyhaiti.org), 908 Main Street, Louisville, CO 80027, (303) 938-5021.