

Eulogy for Van Angello Keriakos July 19, 1929 – April 24, 2003

**Given at his Memorial Service
April 29, 2003**

Christos Anesti

Christ is risen indeed!

In this great moment in history, Christ escaped from the tomb, was seen by the Twelve, then by more than 500, before he ascended into heaven where he lives even now in the presence of his Father. Because of this, we can celebrate the life on earth of Van Keriakos, rejoicing in the promise of Christ that whosoever believes in Christ shall not perish, but have eternal life.

It is difficult to encapsulate a life such as Van's into a few short comments, but the traits of righteousness, service and love come to mind – all three empowered by an unquenchable faith in Jesus Christ.

Van Keriakos stood for righteousness.

Like so many men of his generation who served their country, he would say it was no big deal . . . but it was. His was the generation that held back the tide tyranny and evil during the Cold War. In the defense industry, he build training simulators for planes that sailors and airmen are flying in the conflicts of today, in a new set of battles between righteousness and terrorism. Those who worked with him can attest that he never cut corners. He never accepted second best.

Van Keriakos stood for his country. He stood for righteousness. Those who are serving our country today, fighting for righteousness, are standing on the shoulders of men like Van Keriakos.

Van Keriakos stood for service.

In a world in which we seem too busy to care for one another, Van never seemed too busy to help someone out or to stop to talk with you.

In his service in the Air Force Navigator Observer Association and his interest in seeing the construction of an Air Force Memorial, he sought to give something back . . . to honor . . . other great patriots who served with him.

Many of you know him for his service here at National Presbyterian Church. You may know him as a Stephen's Minister, an Elder, or a Deacon. Yet, you could also find him on bended knee, cheerfully helping a first grader draw a picture in Sunday school class.

Van Keriakos stood for service . . . he also stood for love. No, he did not just stand for love . . . he lived it!

We saw this first hand in his love for his family. With him having three beautiful daughters, the reason I am standing before you today is that he considered me his oldest son having had the privilege of marrying his eldest daughter. His love for me, for them, for his grandchildren, for his wife and so many others knew no bounds.

Van was an encourager. He enjoyed being with people, talking with people, eating with people. He spoke highly of everyone always accenting their strengths and their good qualities.

Van supported and encouraged the endeavors of his daughters. Whether academics, athletics or finances, he always made them feel like they could accomplish anything they set their hearts on.

He was always lending a hand to home improvement projects.

He took time with his grandchildren, doing those things parents didn't have time to do. He took them to the park. He drove them to school. He built them toy tables. He painted their toenails.

Van was a crier. He cried at weddings. He cried at family holidays. He cried at church services. Because of this, I don't think he would mind if a few of us would cry today.

His love was propelled by faith. I remember all of the times we would be hungrily eyeing our Christmas dinner, yet have to wait for Van's reading of the Christmas story.

Van could sometimes be a little disorganized, but that would never keep him from showing his love. He had a reputation for being late for Christmas dinner because he would stop on the way, at the only store that was open on Christmas, to buy presents for his niece and nephews.

It has been said that our lives as Christians may be the only Bible others will read. What exactly I say here today will be forgotten, but the memory of Van Keriakos, the testimony of his life . . . a life of righteousness, of service and of love . . . will live on.

If I could finish with one more thing . . .

Many months ago, at the urging of a speaker at our church who encouraged us to read just a little of the scripture each day, I began doing just that . . . reading at little bit each day. I began reading the Psalms some time ago, and got to the 139th Psalm on Thursday, the day Van died. Only later did I come to find out that the 139th Psalm is the Psalm of the Navigators. Some might call this a coincidence. In my house, we call it "a God thing."

Psalm 139 reads in part:

O Lord, you have searched me
and you know me.
You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.
You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.

Before a word is on my tongue
you know it completely, O Lord.

You hem me in – behind and before;
you have laid your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain.

Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
even there your hand will guide me,
Your right hand will hold me fast.

If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me
and the light become night around me,"
even the darkness will not be dark to you;
the night will shine like day,
for darkness is as light to you.

Van Keriakos, enjoy the light!