

DAVID KENNEDY--A MAN IN ALL PLACES

“Perhaps no one in Southern California has done more for Catholic Lesbian and Gay Persons or their parents than David Kennedy,” said Joe Maffucci, former president of Comunidad and current newsletter editor. “He was a brilliant man who knew Church teaching better than anyone, but also could be the tender voice for those that thought the Church had condemned and rejected them.”

During any given month, you could find him—well, everywhere: on the Saint Camillus for Spiritual Care Council, the Catholic Ministry Regional Board for Lesbian and Gay Persons (CMLGP), Comunidad/St. Matthew LGBTQIA+ Committee, and a host of other parish ministries and boards. Who could keep count? Still, one could count on David who always was there to explain how a person can be both gay and Catholic.

That is the message he also gave at different Pride events: “Welcome Home, Catholics.” Each year you could find him in a wide brim hat at the Long Beach Pride Booth explaining this to amazed attendees. He did the same at Los Angeles Pride and at many other Pride events.

David was indeed a man in all places, who had the energy, graciousness and spirit to devote himself to the Catholic Church in so many different ways. In his quiet way, David could be seen at any meeting listening carefully and writing down everything. In addition, David was an avid historian. After his death, it took a huge bin to clear reams of saved materials from his 25 years in Long Beach. [It was not like him to throw anything away thinking it could be used eventually for something.]

Father Bruno, the Vicar of Archdiocesan Pastoral Council said David had been on the council since 2016. He was the secretary. “It was an honor to serve with him,” Father Bruno said, adding “He was so meticulous in his notes.”

“David was tireless in his work,” said Bill Chapman who served with him on CMLGP. At Religious Ed Regional Congress booth, he was first to arrive and the last to leave.” Bill described how David was always available to speak at any parish who wished to start a ministry to LGBTQIA+ persons or their parents. “Because of him, many persons grew to understand the church as a welcoming place,” Bill commented.

David’s outreach to persons with HIV/Aids was another significant part of his ministry. David was part of the Archdiocesan Ministry Council and the San Pedro Region Council for HIV/AIDS. From the early years of AIDS, he frequently went to the Bay area where he and his life partner, Josef Prochnow, provided care for people with AIDS, often taking them on outings to the Catholic Worker House farm to spend time in the fresh country air.

“David’s service included outreach to youth,” said Father Christ Ponnet. “He often was asked to speak with youth groups in parishes.” In addition, David spoke to deacons in

formation and priests who were transferred to LA from around the world. "I would love seeing his little white car with his portable office inside," said Father Chris. "David had a great love for the Church and it was he who gave voice to the pain of so many who felt that the Church had disenfranchised them.

"Welcome Home Catholics" was the banner hung at every Pride Event. Here David and others would explain to anyone who would stop by that, "Yes, the Church is a welcoming place. You are not abandoned. You belong. Indeed by your Baptism you have entered into a friendship with a God that would never leave you. God loves you!"

That was how Myra found her way home to the Church she once loved, but felt she had been rejected. Here is her story: "My first ever Comunidad meeting was in May of 2022. At this meeting I shared that I had seen the "Welcome Home Catholics" sign at Long Beach Pride over 15 years ago. At the end of the meeting David approached me and said that he was probably at the booth 15 years ago because he'd been with Comunidad for so long. And we had a nice talk. At the end of our conversation, he said to me, 'Well, welcome home. It meant so much to me because I didn't realize how much I needed to hear it. After several meetings, I decided to finish my remaining sacraments and David was so excited for me. He was very encouraging about my faith journey. He was so pleased to see me preparing to receive my sacraments. I was saddened by his passing, but I know he was there on Easter Vigil watching me receive my First Communion and Confirmation."

Life was not all work for David. No one knew better how to have a glass of fine wine. He had his Monday morning breakfast group that went out after Mass. He also had his regular Friday night dinner group. "David and I talked on the phone every night," said Josef, his partner. "I was so impressed with all the he did for different groups in Southern California. Yet David loved going out—to the theater, the opera, ballet, and plays. He also enjoyed square dancing and we frequently joined a group when I came down to Southern California. His loss to me is beyond explainable. Yet I know he was and is always where God wanted him."

David died on Palm Sunday morning preparing for the 7am Mass, He fell and his roommate Gregg Oreo ran up to see what happened. He put David in his bed and David's last words were asking Gregg to check on him. When he checked, David had died.