

## Clifton, NJ Family Church: Honoring the Life of Dr. Gonzalo "Zal" Velez

Crescentia DeGoede

May 5, 2021

### A Tribute to Dr. Gonzalo "Zal" Velez

With sadness, we say farewell to our beloved brother Dr. Gonzalo "Zal" Velez.

Dr. Velez, who has been a faithful friend and associate of the Unification Movement since the mid-1990s, has passed on to his eternal home after a fierce fight against COVID-19. Dr. Velez spent the last two and a half months in the ICU and succumbed to the virus April 28, 2021.

Dr. Velez' career has been legendary with regard to his leadership in the field of Education and Administration, particularly in bridging overseas and American education disciplines. With a Doctorate in Education, Dr. Velez at one time served as an Education Commissioner during the Reagan Administration. Most recently he spearheaded the efforts of the International Cultural and Educational Association.

Dr. Velez met our movement at a Washington Times Political Leaders Conference in 1995 in responding to a mailed invitation. Since that time, he and his beloved wife Josie have been actively involved and supportive of our True Parents' work as Ambassadors for Peace and as a supportive political leader couple. Dr. and Mrs. Velez were among the first Ambassadors for Peace appointed in New Jersey, as well as the first National Parents of the Year recipients. They also hosted Parents Day events in West Orange. They have attended numerous conferences held by UPF as well as FFWPU both nationally and internationally. The Velez couple were one of the first to receive the Blessing of our True Parents here in New Jersey, and were the representative couple for many Blessing events following that.

Dr. Velez, who has held the title of "Deputy Mayor of West Orange," an honor bestowed upon him by then-Mayors Sam Spina and John McKeon, and by current Mayor Rob Parisi, has on many occasions honored our True Parents with Proclamations from the City of West Orange as well as the Key to the City. Dr. Velez has never been shy to invite his colleagues from the political arena to our Unification events. A devout Catholic, Dr. Velez twice attended the Mid-East Peace Initiative two times. Most recently, he and his wife took part in the 2020 World Summit and Centennial Celebration of our True Father, as well as in the events following the World Summit, which were held by UPF/ACLC just before the pandemic hit our country. It is truly a loss to see Dr. Velez leave us. He will be remembered by us all with fondness and gratitude.

**If you would like to send any donations, that can be made to Josie Velez during the service.**

**For More info, please contact Alan Tamelessio (973-997-3661) or Joy Theriot (917-485-3093)**

"It's hard to forget someone who gave us so much to remember."



### **Dr. Gonzalo "Zal" Velez**

Our family is deeply saddened to inform you that our beloved husband, father and grandfather Dr. Gonzalo "Zal" Velez, Deputy Mayor of the Township of West Orange, returned to his heavenly home on April 28, 2021, due to respiratory failure.

He is survived by his loving wife Josie and daughter Mary Jo, son-in-law Luca, their children Alessia, Paolo & Matteo Gonzalo, as well as, his daughter-in-law Vicky and her children Nicole and Anthony Jr. Zal is also survived by his brother Alberto, his wife Cora and their children Carol & Leonard. He will be embraced at Heaven's gate by his son Anthony (predeceased August 1, 2020) and his brother Teodoro.

A mass to celebrate and honor his grand life and his selfless contributions to many communities and causes, will be held on Friday, May 7 at 10am, at Our Lady of Lourdes Roman Catholic Church, 1 Eagle Rock Ave, West Orange, NJ .

Following the mass, the interment will be at the Gate of Heaven Cemetery & Mausoleum, 225 Ridgedale Ave, East Hanover, NJ.