

All Saints Day

Kaiulani Lee

Kaiulani Lee has been performing her play, "A Sense of Wonder", based on the life of Rachel Carson for over 16 years. Prior to this she worked on and off Broadway, in feature films and television, including starring in the Pulitzer Prize winning "A Midwife's Tale" and Bill Moyer's Journal. She is the recipient of an Honorary Doctorate and serves on the faculty at George Mason University. She and her husband Andrew Kimbrell have been students of Thomas' for nearly 30 years and Thomas is their children's Godfather.



It is fitting that I sit down to write you today, All Saints Day. Saints used to make me think of hard work and unimaginable faith. They seemed wholly other. But because of you, Father Thomas, I now see sainthood very differently. First, it is living and vital. It requires us to challenge systems that foster division and injustice, a community of subjects not objects. And this thinking goes of course beyond the human realm to include all of creation, the entire living planet, animals and trees, oceans, and wind, and stars. And there is much more than work and faith...there is joy and hope and thanks and laughter and song ...“oh my...”

Eighteen years ago I started focusing my life on Rachel Carson. She articulated a great deal of what I knew to be true and I wanted to help to keep her words alive. But long before there was Carson for me, there was Thomas Berry, the first religious elder I had ever met who spoke to the song in my heart. Here was a Catholic priest who honored the whole of creation not just humankind, who was even more influenced than I by the Native American reverence for all living things. He was this and so much more. And I gobbled his books and listened like an orphan. These were whole new worlds of thought for me.

Andrew and I first heard you, Thomas, at Finley Schaefer's church, across from our home in Brooklyn in 1981. Neither of us will ever forget it. Andrew decided he wanted to study with you and become a Catholic. I wanted to show you my amazing and improbable garden. Looking back, Andrew obviously made the wiser choice...all those months of instruction and reflection with you. But we learn differently: he richly intellectual, I tactilely sensate, both of us—thank heaven—deeply intuitive. You, of course, all three.

Many times I've asked you if I should become a Catholic and your answer has always been the same: "You are fine the way you are." After our children were born and Andrew wanted them baptized into the Catholic Church, I went to you for advice. As a lapsed Episcopalian, I was worried by some of the limits and judgments in The Church. You told me not to be afraid of Catholicism, the mother church; it would give the children a rich perspective as long as we as parents continued to fill in the rest. I asked if you would be their godfather, and you so generously agreed. With Andrew as their father and you their godfather, I have never again worried. Quite to the contrary, I am so grateful for the beautiful, historical, mystical and grace-filled values the church has given our family.

So my dear Mentor, Shaman, Priest, Friend,
I thank you with all my heart,
for your ideas, your being, and your care.

You are for me a living Saint,
and as such, the life blood of The Church.

You have helped carry Her into this new century, and further than we
will ever know.

Thank you dear one, and God bless you.

With all my love,
Kaiulani