

I want you to look at me and remember me not for who I am. Tonight, I am the voice of Alex's parents, Ralph and Kyoko. I speak for them, and for the Zaldivar Family, and this is a true honor you have given me. I am overwhelmed by this tragedy we are facing. The idea of not having Alex share our days with us causes affliction and this suffering drains us emotionally and physically. It is only through the power of Love and God that we can find the drive to look for ways to continuously live with Alex, although he is now in Heaven.

I will ask you for one more thing: Understand that energy is, many times, invisible to the naked eye. However, it is this way that souls communicate. Souls that are here on Earth, and souls that are in the Spiritual World. The energy you are bringing into this room tonight is so powerful, and I want you to understand that Alex can feel it. Never cease to communicate with him, just as we are doing now, and thank you, for doing so. We thank you, and Alex thanks you.

...And, especially Alex. I must say, before Alex was born on August 26th, 1993, this gentle soul could communicate in the most impressive ways. His Mommy would tell him daily to prepare for birth but to please spare her from any pain, and so he listened. Alex came into this world just as his Mommy had asked him to, and this calm baby slept and he was so good.

This was in Japan, more exactly in Uraiasu, a suburb of Tokyo. Alex was a big boy, just as he is now, weighing around 8pounds, and his parents knew what a special boy he was. Have you ever met a newborn who laughed on the day he was born? That was Alex. He laughed on the day he was born!

His older brother, just 2 years and 8 months older, Rafaelito (Raf) was also the cutest thing. You must imagine the handsomeness taking over this family of Cuban-Japanese descent. But the evident external beauty was utterly matched by an internal loveliness...

And at 11 months of age, Alex left Japan to move to Florida, where he, his brother and parents spent almost 10 years living close to their Cuban family over here. His parents called him one of the most obedient children. Well, of course obedience doesn't equal the natural curiosity of a young child, and when Alex was around 3 years old, he decided to eat a Christmas ornament. His Mom carefully cleaned up the mess, making sure young Alex wouldn't get hurt, but overall, Alex never got into trouble! Being such a good listener made him also a good piano player, and Alex started playing the piano when he was 4 years old. He also learned how to play golf when he was 4, but would, later on, find lots of joy in playing soccer and basketball.

His parents and older brother truly enjoyed having Alex in their lives, and so did his extended family and close friends. Since little, he was helpful and kind, compassionate and respectful. He was funny and joyous, yet calm and sensitive. His parents have a beautiful way to express Alex's caring heart; they say Alex feels our feelings! He never wanted to hurt or offend anyone, and

when asked which parents he preferred, he would always say "Both!". Alex would pick flowers from their garden, and after playing outside, he would gently give them to his Mom. In 3rd grade, Alex saved his money to buy his Mom a special birthday gift, and so it was, throughout the years. He insisted on giving from the heart, and his thoughtfulness was never overlooked. Alex's calm demeanor was a reflection of his highly emotional and sensitive character. He was always very close to their two dogs, Sophie and Katie (whom he named), and these two pets absolutely loved and trusted Alex. All beings benefited from being close to Alex.

Since very little, he was extremely close to his Mother Kyoko. He rarely separated from her, which triggered dedicated Mom Kyoko to home school Alex for his Pre-K year. It was a mutual wish, coming from Kyoko and Alex, and this early joy for learning she gave him and his brother, the many, many hours she spent teaching them about the love for learning and reading proved to be one of the biggest gifts that both boys were given by Mom Kyoko.

Alex started Kindergarten at St. Andrews catholic School, where he excelled, always making himself and his loved ones proud of always being an honor roll student! His parents remember "maybe a B" here and there, and Alex just knew that hard work and dedication could not be negotiated. Summers were spent having a lot of fun outside, and the boys appreciated the "Summer Education" afternoons their Mom prepared for them: They got books, they practiced reading, writing and learning new skills. His older brother was equally an exemplary student and his love for books and education guided Alex in understanding how valuable this was.

This encouragement for learning and excelling did pose a challenge for Dad Rafael, though: Well, boys still get in a bit of trouble, every now and then, thank goodness, nothing major, but punishments became a bit harder. "No TV!" dad would say. That wasn't a problem! The boys would just read their books! Ralph and Kyoko would scratch their heads, and then would say "No video games!". That wasn't a problem! The boys would just read their books! Ultimately, dad would have to say "No books!" ...and that was, indeed, the worst punishment for them. Dad Rafael jokes saying that "It was like we had to leave them with nothing in their room, not even books!" But this goes to show how balanced Alex and Rafaelito were.

In addition to books, Alex liked to cook! In 2nd grade he came home asking his Mom to cut vegetables. Surprised, she helped him, and Alex never ceased exploring his affection for cooking. When it was his time to choose what to eat, he loved food in general, but Udon, Japanese Noodles, were one of his favorites, and of course, he had to have at least a gallon of milk every single day!

In loving memory of our Alex Zaldivar 09.13.2012

In 2003, Alex and his family moved back to Tokyo. It was time for a new adventure to begin! Alex was about to start 5th grade at the prestigious Nishimatchi International School in Tokyo. This was a very rigorous school, but there was no doubt that Alex adapted very well! Alex and his brother Raf loved Tokyo life.

As young teenagers, they enjoyed being with friends, and together, they explored Tokyo, which allowed Alex to learn and live his Japanese culture. The years in Tokyo presented the boys with opportunities to go snowboarding, water rafting, to play basketball and soccer with friends, much more traveling and, which was something so cool for the boys, experience the latest in Japanese electronics! It was a little joke in our family, when we knew the Zaldivars from Tokyo were visiting for the Holidays, we would try to guess how much smaller their cell phones could get, or how many more pixels they added to their latest digital cameras! The cousins Jorgie, Brittany and Richie here in Florida were always excited to meet with Alex and Rafaelito and have them show off their new video games and electronic gadgets!

Alex's parents fondly remember how Alex took part in a rice planting project on a Japanese rice field, and how his heart filled with joy when he later donated rice bowls to the homeless. It was always a kind heart that guided Alex's interactions with anybody who crossed paths with him.

After 4 years at the Niishimatchi International School in Tokyo, Alex and his brother Raf came back to Florida and attended Mount Verde Academy in preparation for their soon to come college years. Alex completed 9th grade at this well structure boarding school, where he made great friends and learned a lot. He then finished his High School years at Ocoee High School, being, once again, close to friends he grew up with, and spending a very special time with his Tia Libby, Uncle George and Cuban Grandparents, especially.

When asking Alex what he wanted to be, what he wanted to study one day, he was smart. He knew the world we live in nowadays is very competitive and hard work, dedication and a non-nonsense approach to our studies is necessary. I am certain he thanks his Mom for all the years she coached him and his brother in learning to love education. Alex started his College years last year, at Valencia. Still young, and in need of exploring what career choices were going to present themselves, he opted for a Business degree, at first. He was taking classes in Finance and other business subjects. Eventually, Alex wanted to start out in the corporate world, maybe in banking...but, ultimately, he didn't want to work for anybody. He wanted to be a leader and be free to make his own decisions.

Again, at Valencia, friends were captivated by his funny, loving sense of humor. Did you know Alex was a marvelous impersonator? He would impersonate his Mom and Dad, all the time, and it gives me great joy to share this with you, as we actually have quite a few GREAT impersonators in the family. Alex, his Dad Ralph and his Uncle Rich could have gone into

the “Impersonation Business” together!

This year, Alex started his first job, at Texas Roadhouse! He was bussing tables and his Dad picked him up from his first day of work and asked: “How was your first day?!” Alex looked at him and said: “What kind of question is that?! It was horrible!” Alex’s naïve perception of the extremely hard and unglamorous work in the restaurant industry didn’t stop him, though! He stayed to save money, he stayed to work close to his friends, but he was then ready for a change!

In July, his Uncle Rich and I took him and his Dad out to lunch, where we brainstormed together a way of getting Alex into some serious modeling. This very handsome young men was truly too handsome and he was very excited about the possibility of having a side career as a model. Alex had everything in his favor. And he did have some modeling and acting experience in Japan! He appeared in a TV production of the “Secret Garden”, and that was the time he asked his parents to try out some acing and modeling.

Just 2 weeks ago, Alex started his new job. This time, he was a server at Ginza Japanese Restaurant. When his Dad asked him about his 1st day, Alex was happy to report, smiling at him, giving his the thumbs up: “\$70!” he often laughed with his dad, about jokes or silly stories, and his smiling face is how his parents want to always picture Alex.

I can share more beautiful things with you, as I am sure each of his family members, such as his Tia Libby, Uncle Rich, Uncle George, big cousins and little cousins would love to, but it is time for Alex’s best friends to express their love for him. Alex had many friends, and his life was not complete without Kimberly, Will, Devon, Brandon, Raymond, Jacob, Wesley and Casey, just to mention a few very important people. It is now your turn to come here and share with us your love for your friend Alex.



Closing Words

Thank you, everybody, for being here with our family tonight. This means so much to Alex and to us. Through us, Alex’s voice will be heard. You will choose how you want to remember him. To us, Alex is a hero. He and his friends who were shot on Monday saved lives, actually. When his Uncle asked if he was scared after the 1st home invasion, Alex said “No.” We guarantee you this gentle, loving, kind, courageous soul was not scared and did not shed one tear for those who did this to him. Every Christmas, Alex’s family bought one new, special ornament for their Christmas tree. This was a family tradition. At our home, this year, we are starting a new tradition: We call it “Alex’s Tree”. Each year, we will add one very special ornament to “Alex’s Tree”, and will never, ever forget life’s most important ingredient: Love.

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Please join us Saturday for mass from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. at St. John Vianney, immediately followed by an escort to Woodlawn for the Burial where we will assure Alex he is free and safe in the spirit world, where we will certainly see him again.

Denise Zaldivar