

Fr. John Morris's Homily for Aaron Spicher (*June 15, 2016*)

There is nothing that would please Aaron Spicher more than what we do on this day. To gather in the house of the Lord singing praises to God, offering prayers of thanksgiving, breaking bread together as brothers and sisters in Christ. Here in God's house we are all God's family and Aaron's family as well – priests and deacons, neighbors and friends – gathered to remember and give thanks for the life and ministry of Aaron Spicher in the way that thrilled Aaron's heart with pomp and procession, with music and incense, with love and with reverence for the Lord our God and for Aaron. An ambassador for the Gospel, a servant of God's servants, a shepherd of God's sheep.

In the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, we hear, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news." Aaron was among God's anointed, chosen by God to be a vessel of God's grace, most especially to the oppressed and broken hearted.

Every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon, Aaron would man what he called the Door Ministry. Standing by the front door of the Becker House, Aaron would offer boxes of groceries collected by the congregation to any and all who came to the door – no questions asked. Simply their presence was a demonstration of their need.

Most importantly, it was the way in which he offered them this service – with respect and compassion, responding not only to their need but to who they were, our neighbors.

Aaron was the embodiment of our Jubilee ministries. More than something he did, it was the way that Aaron was. He was an agent of outreach. Whether riding about Lancaster on the bus, or walking down town to Central Market, Aaron befriended all, without distinction, personally representing our motto, "The Episcopal Church Welcomes You."

Aaron walked among us as one of the saints in light. His life was truly dedicated to serving before the throne of God. At St. John's, he held the title, Verger. A title he wore proudly. Specifically, it meant that Aaron was the chief lay liturgical leader of the congregation, but for Aaron, it meant a whole lot more. It was who he was, Aaron the Verger, his vocation, his identity. Serving those who served before the altar of the Lord.

I recently asked Aaron, "Just how many clergy did you serve as Verger at St. John's?" and he quickly rattled off a list of 10 bishops, 8 rectors, 11 assistant priests, plus a host of deacons, seminarians, dignitaries, and guests. Serving God's servants was the love of Aaron's life.

Among these loved most were the acolytes, the children. Aaron not only knew the name of every child in the parish, he followed their lives with great interest. The schools they attended and their graduations. The careers they pursued and the love interests in their lives. And when they were married at St. John's, Aaron tended to them with the same heartfelt affection that he held for his own niece and nephew, Natalie and Alex.

When it came to his own personal delight, well, that was reserved for the Music for Everyone Community Chorus. You were Aaron's people. Singing with you was the light of his life. He beamed every time he described singing the National Anthem before the Phillies game. His last trip to Baltimore meant so much to him. Your presence today is the finest tribute you could offer him.

It was Aaron's gift to be a servant of others. It was Aaron's passion to serve before the throne of God. I can't help but imagine Aaron now, in that great multitude no one can number, from every nation tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, and Aaron advising Saint Peter how to line up the patriarchs, matriarchs, prophets, and martyrs into a proper procession. Aaron is now where he was always meant to be, doing what Aaron was always meant to do. Serving before the throne of God and before the Lamb.

For Aaron truly was a Lamb of God, a follower of the Good Shepherd. Like a lamb, he was innocent to a fault. And like a lamb, he could sometimes wander. But always like a lamb, he was following the Good Shepherd, ever trusting, ever faithful to the one who knows our hearts and the heart of Aaron Spicher.

Now we must do what Aaron did and entrust his life into the care of our Good Shepherd, thankful for his ministry to those neighbors in need, grateful for the service he rendered to each and all of us, blessed to have known him as God's very own, and our faithful brother in Christ, Aaron Spicher.

Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever.

Amen.