

I want the congregation to commemorate Art+ by walking the talk of their faith with “no pious claptrap.”

**A Celebration of the Life of
The Rev. H. Arthur Doersam
April 4, 1928- December 2, 2011**

**Trinity Memorial Church, Binghamton, NY
Tuesday, December 6, 2011**

HOMILY

by

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In the name of one God: Father Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN.

“I’m ready.” That’s Art’s paraphrase of the Gospel of John which Dorothy just proclaimed. He said it right after his beloved wife Marilyn told him the bad news a week ago Sunday. He said it to clergy, his family, friends and the bishop.

“I’m ready.” That’s so Art+: short and sweet—no “pious claptrap.” He probably knew by heart Jesus’ words:

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father house there are many rooms...I go to prepare a place for you.”

But Art+ believed and lived into these words every day as, “I’m ready.” He was prepared—more than prepared—he was ready.

Being ready Art lived and loved to the fullest. Born in Saginaw, Michigan 83 years ago and getting his undergraduate degree from Michigan he was a staunch Michigan alumnus and fan. One learned fast that it was best not to telephone Art or Marilyn when his Michigan team played her Michigan State team on the TV. He was such a fan that he was given a custom made Michigan bib to wear when he ate ice cream sundaes.

He lived life full out. It would be impossible, in fact, to count Art’s conversations, telephone calls or letters written to protest “pious claptrap” and/or bogus issues upon which the “kingdom of God” didn’t depend. Plus it would be impossible to count all the ice cream sundaes consumed or all the Westerns watched by Art, as it would be to measure the love given to all of us by Art. You all know that smile that went up into his eyes he’d give you, the joke, the stories—all part of the love Art gave.

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But look around you. You see that love in the faces of Marilyn and their children Rebecca, David, Lynn—from Bethlehem, Kirk, Lynn—from Florida and John and their families. You see that love in the faces of Ellie and Paul. You see that love in every one of us here. And in his life he prepared, he made ready all gathered here today to celebrate his life.

Art+ talked the talk and walked the walk. Art was faithful—boy was he faithful! In retirement attending All Saints’ Church, he never missed church unless he was hospitalized or out-of-town. Even when on sabbatical in England or making a trip to Michigan—guess what for—or to the West or just to visit family, Art always brought back the bulletins for the churches visited and services attended. With the bulletins of course came new ideas for prayer lists, pastoral care and committees.

Art was faithful in the usual ways serving parishes in Grosse Point, Michigan; Wilmington, Delaware; Glenburn, Pennsylvania and as Rector number eight right here, at Trinity Memorial. He was Canon to the Ordinary for four years and then Archdeacon for four years in the Diocese of Bethlehem and was Deputy to General Convention. In the Diocese of Central New York he served on the Standing Committee, the Episcopal Fund for Human Need and other committees.

But Art was more than faithful. He put his faith into action. And when his faith and political views coincided—you better watch out! Ecumenical in all things, he was a member of an ecumenical clergy group for years that met for breakfast. Moreover he tried repeatedly, without success, to open that group to women clergy and religious sisters. He had more success as an advocate of women at Trinity Memorial: with the first women wardens, chairs of commissions and mentoring some of the first women ordained in Central New York as curates.

He was fiercely Pro-Choice. He was on the Board of Planned Parenthood of South Central New York, and held a service for Planned Parenthood right here amidst outside protests. He started a ministry with the students at Binghamton High School which included a clinic that dispensed, along with other things, sex information and birth control. Needless to say, there were pickets, threats, hate mail and a colleague said his photo was hung upside in the clergy room at Lourdes Hospital. Yet the ministry continued; Art was faithful.

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In his life and ministry, the words of St. Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians ring true. Normally we hear this list of gifts of the Spirit in the Body of Christ on the Feast of Pentecost, Year A. Here, it speaks of Art’s own gifts of wisdom, utterance and prophecy and the many gifts he appreciated in others. There are “[a] variety of gifts ...through the Spirit...for the common good” whether “Jew or Greek, slaves or free” and all are members of one Body in Christ. Of course he would have never said it that way—it’s too close to pious claptrap. Rather, here’s a story that the Rev. Holly Eden told me about Art. When Holly was a curate with him, in a very trying meeting, Art said to her, “Holly, use your administrative skills! Holly said, “Art, use your pastoral skills!” See? No pious claptrap.

The lessons, the hymns, Rite 2 were chosen by Art—of course—to be used for his service.

They are well chosen to remember and celebrate Art+.

- To remember and to celebrate him as a loving husband, brother, father and grandfather—who could be counted on to share his views on most things;
- To remember and to celebrate Art as a minister of the Word of God and the Sacraments and leader of the church;
- To remember and to celebrate Art as a faithful, caring, and loving pastor who was there for his faith communities and the broader church;
- To remember and celebrate Art as a priest, a man of faith who talked the talk and walked the walk every day of his life;
- To remember and celebrate his wisdom and advice he shared with Bishops, fellow clergy, wardens, vestries and all who were dear to him;
- To commemorate Art’s life and ministry by loving, giving, refraining from “pious claptrap“ and making sure that what we do is actually building the Kingdom of God.

Jesus said, “Do not let your hearts be troubled.” Art+ said, “I’m ready.” He knew there was a room prepared for him by God. I think that’s why he smiled after his last breath. Let us give thanks for Art+ and celebrate his life. AMEN.