

Deacon Steve Livingston

Bishop Johnston asked me to share his gratitude for Deacon Steve's ministry and to extend his condolences to Donna and all of you who have come today to grieve and pray.

There's a lot to grieve. Steve was a faithful member of his family, a loving husband and proud father. He was loyal to his country, serving in the national guard and working for Southwestern Bell. His careers provided safety and connected people. He loved to learn, starting with military history.

Steve's learning expanded its horizons. Cathedral rector Msgr. Bud Fiedler invited Steve into the diaconate program, fertile ground for a guy who loved to learn. As a deacon here, Steve helped inquirers explore their pining for God, and he led bible study to teach the scriptures and create communities. He held a deep respect for our good neighbors at Grace and Holy Trinity Episcopal Cathedral. Whether blessing animals or leading Stations of the Cross, Steve gathered people to celebrate the elements of faith we hold in common. His insatiable desire to preach and teach, to celebrate and share, gave a towering example of Christian service in the community. Steve knew how to email, but to communicate, he'd pick up a phone. He thrived on conversation and relationships.

These and other traits will last long in our memory, longer than the traits so sorrowfully obvious today. Steve suffered. His body struggled to keep pace with the implacable energy of his spirit. When his legs could not carry him, his faith did. It was hard to see his body deteriorate as his mind kept planning the future. The bible, the book Steve loved more than any other, provides us comfort.

From the Book of Wisdom we heard today about those who suffer before death. It says, "no torment shall touch [the souls of the just].... As gold in the furnace [God] proved them, and as sacrificial offerings he took them to himself." Deacon Steve loved to preach the theme of justice, making us uncomfortable, even when he sweetened it by including himself among those he challenged. But he possessed a soul of the just. It is comforting to think of his suffering as gold in the furnace, a product that God collects.

St. Paul tells the Romans, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared to the glory to be revealed for us." We are "joint heirs with Christ, if only we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified in him." Steve's faith in that glory powered him through the worst of days. He believed in and longed for the gift of God's adoption, the redemption of the body.

This resonates with a teaching Jesus gave his disciples who struggled to know the way forward. "I am the way," Jesus said, "and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." This is what Deacon Steve believed, what he taught, and how he lived at home, at work, at church and at play. He demonstrated how a healthy spirit could overcome an unhealthy body. He loved this cathedral community and sought only to serve us, something he achieved with the stalwart support Donna offered at his side.

We'll remember Steve's suffering. But we'll remember even more his desire to serve. He led the way while summoning us to join. Nothing would please Steve more than for us to follow him along the way that is Christ.