

Richard Alan Bartoes Funeral ~ March 25, 2010 ~ A homily preached by The Rev'd Erl G. Purnell at Old St. Andrew's Church, Bloomfield, CT

Ecclesiastes 3.1-8; Psalm 121; Mark 4.30-32

Today, we remember Dick Bartoes with wonderful images in word and song—*“a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; “the mustard seed...is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it...grows...[it] becomes the greatest of all shrubs; “I am the bread of life.”*

Having been a farmer myself, I happen to know there are few things a farmer likes more than dirt and seeds. But the dirt has to be good dirt, the kind that smells organic and is full of worms and bugs. And it's into that kind of dirt that the best seeds grow, like Jesus' mustard seed ... into full, lush plants, teeming with fruit.

Dick knew a little something about seeds and growing. Well, I guess *a little something* is a gross understatement. He traveled the highways and byways of New England and the Middle Atlantic states for years and years representing the Hart Seed Company. He was the right guy, too, because he was a good talker and he knew his seeds were tops. Sometimes Dan or Rich accompanied him in the Hart truck. What a thrill that must have been for a teenage boy, on the road with Dad.

And when he retired from Hart Seeds in 1991, he kept on with dirt and seeds and plants at the Blue Ridge Garden Center in Virginia. At 79, though, he hung up the hoe, retired again and came back to Connecticut. That's when we, here at OSA, started to get to know him.

Those of you from the other St. Andrew's—that is the Church of St. Andrew the Apostle in Rocky Hill—you've known Dick and Nancy, and their five kids for decades. You probably even remember when Nancy sang in the choir. I'm told that Dick did, too. It wasn't so much that he loved singing. Rather, he just wanted to be with Nancy and since she was out at choir, joining himself was the best way he could be with her.

Since moving to Granby, Dick and Nancy have been faithful members in the life of this parish Sunday by Sunday. Dick often commented on my sermons. *“I liked what you said today.”* Or, occasionally, *“I probably would have liked what you said, but I couldn't hear it.”* The wryness in Dick Bartoes' sense of humor was always evident. Rich and Laurie's kids referred to their grandfather as “Corny Joke Papa.” It's the way we endear ourselves to others that makes such a lasting impression. That's why Dick will be remembered so fondly.

The bottom line with Dick? You all, his family, you were the center of his love and concern. But with others, too, he was such a kind and thoughtful man. From his Boy Scout days, he learned what it meant to serve, to give to others because he had received much.

There is always more to say when we're saying good bye. Dan will certainly add to these few comments following the Eucharist. For now, let me simply say, this is Dick's Easter moment and we wish him blessing upon blessing and Godspeed.

Amen.

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