

Funeral Homily
Verner Dalmond Godwin, Jr.
February 19, 2018
Church of the Advent

I want to welcome you to Church of the Advent for this joy-filled opportunity to give thanks for the life of Verner Dalmond Godwin, Jr. I must begin with an apology—to Mr. Verner, whom sadly I never had the pleasure of meeting in this world. He told his family—more than once—that he did not believe in eulogies, because people say only good things about the deceased and make them out to be someone no one would recognize. And here I am about to say a lot of mighty nice things about a man who managed to stay a nice person—a good person—for almost 101 years on this earth, so Mr. Verner, I am sorry, but I promise not to exaggerate, but share only those things about you that came from those who loved you most, because I believe them all to be true. And you lived a long time—so this might take a while.

Verner Godwin, Jr. was born in Williamston 1917, and grew up with his siblings in a house that used to sit on Main Street. His sister Mary Charles remembers Verner as a sunny person, with a peculiar sense of humor. From childhood, he would have his siblings laughing hysterically

on hot summer nights on the front porch, by trying to scare people walking by with a piece of rubber tubing pulled by a string to make them think it was a snake. He used to mess with the family car, attaching objects to the exhaust that made lots of noise and set his Daddy to all kinds of consternation poking around under the hood trying to find the problem. And Verner was the *king* of bad jokes—his whole life. He reportedly had a whole repertoire of church jokes—all terrible—which nevertheless cracked up anyone he shared them with, because *he* thought they were hilarious. He liked to quote a verse from the King James Bible from the first letter of Peter which reads, “but ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a *peculiar* people.” He would admit he was a *peculiar* person, but that was OK, because it was in the Bible.

Verner did have a serious side. He served in the Navy in WWII and he loved the Navy. He had his own refrigeration business, and took care of everyone in town—more than one generation—though not many people knew that he did the same good job for those who didn’t have much—and could not pay him the standard fee—as he did for the most well-off people in town. What most people *did* know was that he could fix most anything, using most anything—like McGuyver. He put odds and ends to new uses—

before recycling was a word or a thing. Verner taught his children and grandchildren that “your word was your bond,” and that “if you say you are going to do something, then you do it.” He told his children that he would not likely leave them with any worldly goods, but he would leave them with a good reputation—which he thought infinitely more important.

Known as “Bock” to his grandchildren, Verner was married to his beloved Leona, known as “Muff,” for 67 years before her passing. He often said that he loved her every day of his life and would never remarry. Evidently some ladies didn’t get that memo, because at the place where he was living for the last several years, he gained the reputation of being the charming widower—highly sought after to the point of it becoming a nuisance to him. With his *peculiar* characteristic humor, at the age of 96, he published a list of requirements for him to consider remarriage—just a *little* tongue in cheek—meant to get the ladies to back off. Included were that any candidate should be financially secure with few blood relatives, be a safe driver, eat her own home cooking, be able to milk a cow, hitch a wagon and plant a garden, be a small eater with a good sense of humor, never complain, find fault, or sit down for long spells, be patient, long-suffering and love the Lord. The list concluded with the note: If you can

qualify, I will be happy to talk to you. VDG Azalea Room #218. I am told that it worked, and that he had no takers.

Verner Godwin, Jr. was a long time member of Church of the Advent, having been born within a month of the dedication of this sanctuary we are in, making him the youngest member at its beginning, and until his death last week, also the oldest. Yet more important to him than being an Episcopalian was being a Christian—a child of God. He loved the Lord, and he lived his faith—not just by practicing his religion or reading his Bible and his Book of Common Prayer, but in how he loved his neighbors as himself. He attributed his long life to a passion for eating honey—every day—on anything and everything, yet surely his peculiarly long life was meant to be a gift from God to others—his family and all who were blessed by his sharp mind, quick wit, and loving disposition which just kept on keeping on. A few years ago he was invited to be a guest for Geriatrics lecture at VCU Medical Center. In a room of 300 people they gave him the mic for a question and never got it back from him, as he kept the crowd of doctors and medical students spellbound for most of the hour.

So Verner, I apologize for the eulogy, but today you *are* the message. A story of a long life of faith well-lived is the best testimony of the Good News of Jesus Christ that anyone could hear, anytime, and it has been my joy to share just a bit of your peculiar story. So thank you, God love you and rest in peace in the light of the Resurrection, reunited at last with your beloved Muff. Just give the angels a break with the church jokes. Amen.