



The Vergers Voice

The news blog of the Vergers Guild

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Friday, July 14, 2017

Tales from the Slype 2: It Is In Giving That We Receive



David Deutsch in the Slype at the Washington National Cathedral preparing for Evening Prayer

By [David Deutsch](#), Volunteer Verger at the Washington National Cathedral, dsd@his.com

I began as a volunteer verger at the [Washington National Cathedral](#) in July of 2003. Over the course of my time, I had certain epiphanies that, among other results, told me that this great stone edifice which can look cold and imposing on the outside, actually has a warm heart and vibrant spirit. When I am at the cathedral, I hang out in the [slype](#). Now a slype in medieval times was a covered passageway between the dean's office and the nave, giving the head of the cathedral easy access to the services. At the Washington National Cathedral, the slype is comfortably furnished, has storage for vestments, the service books, etc. The slype is both a control tower and hanger for worship.

I am enjoying my down time in the slype which usually occurs between 3pm and 4pm. I am doing the crossword puzzle and just this side of dozing. Suddenly bang—rattle—bang. Someone is knocking on the slype door which generally causes the door to crash around. I jump up to see who it is. A docent enters and tells me a man and his son need someone to talk to. By 3pm the chaplain of the day—a priest from the diocese who volunteers his/her time to be on call in the nave for just such occurrences—has gone home. The canons of the cathedral are in meetings or off the Close. The one available person is the verger. That verger is me.

The docent leads me to a row in the back of the nave. The father is a middle aged African-American man. I guess the son to be about 17, dreadlocks, t-shirt, etc. He sits in a row behind his dad and remains aloof and quiet. The dad greets me and explains that they both have not eaten anything all day. Can I get them a voucher for Subway? Or McDonalds? I tell them to wait while I go to the chaplain's office. I arrive and start rummaging around for anything that looks like a food voucher. I find none. I get angry and frustrated.

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As I trek back to the pair, I look in my wallet. It is all ATM money: Twenties. I know conventional wisdom says not to do it. One does not give money to people who come into the cathedral looking for what some might call a handout. But I take out a twenty and approach the father. I mumble something about how I'm not supposed to do this, that I am breaking the rules. But here: Take this twenty. The father's eyes light up. He takes my hand and thanks me profusely.

But get this. The taciturn, seemingly disengaged teen age son rises from his chair and comes over to me. Whereupon he gives me one of the most humongous bear hugs I have ever received. What a sight of spontaneous compassion entwined with spontaneous gratitude! Dreadlocks mixing with a purple cassock!

For me, this very emotional moment brings to life the line from the Prayer of St. Francis - *It is in giving that we receive.*

The 2017 VGEC Annual Conference will take place in Atlanta, Georgia from October 12th through October 15th. We hope you can join us! Click the big red button to register today. You can also [read more about the conference](#) and [book your hotel](#).



*Editors note: Send ideas for **Vergers Voice** topics to ideas@vergersvoice.org*

Abstract: Volunteer Verger David Deutsch from Washington National Cathedral begins a series of Vergers Voice blog posts entitled, "Tales from the Slype." In part 2, David experiences an event that brings to life the line from the Prayer of St. Francis - "It is in giving that we receive."

Posted by [Scott Smith](#) at [10:53 AM](#)



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