WASHINGTON (NNPA) - In an emotionally charged eulogy that took place on a radiant afternoon, Stephen Tyrone Johns, the special police officer who was slain at the U.S. Holocaust Museum, was remembered as a gentle giant with a big heart and warm smile.

Hundreds of mourners, including local and national dignitaries, museum staff, law enforcement officers, and a host of holocaust survivors, poured into the massive Ebenezer A.M.E. Church in Fort Washington, MD, to pay their final respect to a man also described as having uncommon valor and compassion.

In the hour-long eulogy, delivered by the Rev. Dr. John L. McCoy, senior pastor at The Word of God Baptist Church in Washington, mourners were encouraged to live in racial harmony and to not tolerate blatant acts of racism such as that which claimed Johns' life.

"Tolerance isn't a valid or godly response to racism, polite silence is no longer a viable action," said McCoy, who reminded the congregation that Johns' last act was one of kindness.

"He fell victim to a senseless and barbaric act as he extended an act of kindness," said McCoy. "[But] don't retaliate against racist acts with racism [as] we must not stoop to hating the racist."
Referring to the holocaust, McCoy added that the hope of the museum is that the world never again experiences such crimes as those of World War II.

He went on to say that Johns "was a victim of a mentality thought to be rapidly diminishing from the American landscape."

Noting the large outpouring of sympathy accompanied by the huge attendance at his funeral, McCoy said that on the day Johns' life was taken that "good stood up to evil as the community rallied together."

District Mayor Adrian Fenty did not attend the service, but stated among the acknowledgments

that the fact that Johns “laid down his life was the ultimate sacrifice.”

In another condolence read during the service, Maryland Sen. Ben Cardin said, “[Johns] is mourned by me and all who seek peace and justice.”

Johns, who lived in Temple Hills, MD, worked at the museum for six years.

The 39-year-old officer, who also left behind two step-sons, had just celebrated his first wedding anniversary when he was killed in the line of duty as he opened the museum’s door on June 10 for James Von Brunn, 88.

The avowed White supremacist has been charged with first-degree murder.