

A Call to Serve

FATHER CARLINO

In 1967 Louis Armstrong recorded for ABC Records a well-known song composed by Bob Thiele and George David Weiss.

Here is the recurring refrain of the song:

It's a wonderful world

I'm just walking on air

Talk of heaven on earth

I've got more than my share

Haven't got a care

Happy all day through

It's a wonderful world

Loving wonderful you

In referring to “a wonderful world” we might say that the authors of the song were dreamers. However not dreamers in the idealistic sense only, like the song “Dream along with me” which often can have an unrealistic, fanciful, and wish-fulfilling interpretation to it; or put differently, “Dream along with me...because what we want to dream about something that is never going to happen outside of the dream”.

Rather, the authors of “What a wonderful world” dreamed not about something that could not or would not happen but rather about something that could and would.

In today's Gospel Jesus challenged the Sons of Zebedee to be thinking not of their own advancement in their personal careers with Jesus but rather of service to others. In doing so, in a sense Jesus was calling them to be dreamers, telling them quite bluntly that the dreams He had for them could and would be fulfilled. Was He not also challenging all of His disciples – then in the first millennium as well as those of future generations – to be dreamers as well?

I believe Jesus is similarly challenging us today and in many ways. He calls us to be dreamers. He also calls us to fulfill those dreams always with His help and never without it. “Wonderful World.”

I would like to now direct my attention to these 2 important words. We can all have a “wonderful world” here in our 2 parishes. But we must work hard at it! This will mean we will have to put effort into it. The parish families here at St. Anthony’s and St. John the Evangelist have done this in many ways throughout the years.

Now we have to continue to do it. The work that the Lord has given us to do is unending. Our 2 parishes, St. John the Evangelist and St. Anthony’s are facing serious challenges. If we are going to meet these challenges and step up to the plate, we are going to need a lot of determination, willpower, and God’s grace.

As we journey in doing wonderful things together I would like to introduce Tom Cronin. Tom is the Advisor to the Bishop for Evangelization here in the Diocese of Albany. Tom....

TOM CRONIN

As modern day disciples, our mission is to follow and love Christ, serve others, and share our joy and love of knowing Jesus with others – this is certainly not easy, especially in this ever-growing secular world.

We are the living stones of the Church -- parish success and parish vitality is based on the participation and contributions of each one of us.

Many parishes are struggling and experiencing tough times like here at St. Anthony’s and St. Johns

Many parishes are contemplating these questions:

- How do we attract and retain younger families?
- How does the Church become more relevant in today’s society?
- How can we work more closely together for the greater good?
- How do we better engage with our youth, especially after confirmation?

This is our call to action – this is our great commissioning

The parish needs you:

- We need to critically assess the parish culture, ministries, and finances
- We need to increase parishioner participation
- Many thanks to those who regularly attend and are currently active – we need to get you help
- Active participation in utilizing people's time and talents are critical to the success of the parish
- Please consider your gifts as well as the gifts of others and how you can share them with the parish family
- Maybe you haven't yet been invited to do so; maybe you're not sure how you can help
- These are the conversations we need to have to identify areas in which you can help increase the vitality of the parish

We must operate with a sense of urgency. We can't wait -- we must be risk takers like the original disciples.

Our actions will determine the outcome

- It is no one's intent to close either church building
- We must rise to the occasion and take a more active role in our Church

In addition to being more actively involved at the parish; if your financial means allow – please consider increasing your offertory.

- Remember, we are meant to give of our first fruits, not leftovers
- Your generosity is critical to not only keeping the lights on, but more importantly to supporting parish ministries

It is imperative that we work together to make every effort to transition the parish from surviving to thriving

- Consider this an invitation for all to more fully participate in the parish's purpose / mission:
 - To share our love of Christ with everyone we encounter
 - To serve the greater community
 - To form disciples

One area to start: intentional prayer for the success and vitality of the parish:

- Pray for each other
- Pray for our priests, especially Fr. Carlino; and the parish leaders
- Pray for the entire parish family of both communities: St. Anthony's and St. John the Evangelist.

Words cannot adequately describe Fr. Carlino's love for these two communities.

Fr. Carlino and parish leadership have been working on a strategic plan to make the parish community more vibrant.

There is much more to share with you, but time won't allow for that now, but more information will be shared shortly.

We need to be proud to be Catholic. Be courageous to share our faith. Our increased efforts will make a difference.

As Jesus said in today's Gospel: "... the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve..."

The question we must answer is: How are you going to serve?

FATHER CARLINO

Thanks for your patience in listening to this somewhat lengthy homily.

Thank you so much to Tom Cronin for being here today and for all his assistance to me and the Pastoral Council over the last 6 months. We will be sharing with you again sometime around Thanksgiving time and then again soon into the New Year.

Amen.