

Dear Parishioners of Holy Innocents,

My sincere thanks for your warm welcome at Holy Innocents. I look forward to being with you in the parish and serving you as pastor.

The year was 2005 and I was busy studying (and fishing) in Buffalo, NY when the Lord spoke to me the words he said to St. Peter in our Gospel this Sunday: *"Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men."* I, like St. Peter, didn't see this invitation coming at all. To be honest, I didn't really have the humility that St. Peter had when he fell at the knees of Jesus and said, *"Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man."* My reluctance came from the fact that I was scared of public speaking and didn't want to make a fool of myself in front of people. *What am I going to say to people!?* But the Lord was insistent and so I, following in the footsteps of Saints Peter, James, John, and countless other men and women throughout history whom he has called, *left everything and followed him.*

I found early on that God does have a sense of humor. He led me to the Order of Preachers (the Dominicans) and told me that if I am going to make a fool of myself, so be it, since I will be not just anyone's fool, but God's fool.

As a young man in Indonesia, I had a career traced out in the business world. Never in a million years would I have guessed that one day I would be your pastor in Pleasantville, NY. Indeed, my life as a Dominican priest has brought me to many places and many wonderful people. From the big cities of Washington DC and New York City, the mission in Kenya, to the rust belt of Youngstown, Ohio I have met and ministered to so many whom I have come to treasure in my life. In my vow of poverty I found detachment from earthly things, in chastity I found the heart to love everyone, but most importantly it is in obedience to God's will, following where he wants me to go, that I have found abundant blessings for me and for those I have met.

Being a pastor of a parish is a great responsibility that I do not take lightly, but the most important role of a pastor is the same as of any priest's: to bring himself and his people to heaven. God always provides, but at the same time I will be accountable to him for this task. From time to time I hope you will remind me of this responsibility.

Each one of us has a potential to be a saint. Let us not waste our time because life is short. I look forward to our time together growing in love for God and neighbor. I leave you with the words of St. Paul:

*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. (Phi 4:8)*

Yours sincerely in Jesus Christ,

Fr. Bernard M. Timothy, OP