

June 15 & 16, 2019  
Most Holy Trinity

All Saints Parish, Syracuse  
Fr. Fred Daley

### God Is Love

Father Henri Nouwen was one of the great spiritual writers and teachers of our time. In 1985, exhausted and disillusioned from his crushing teaching and speaking schedule, the Dutch priest withdrew from his teaching post at Harvard and joined the *L'Arche* community in Triosly-Breuil, France, the first of over 100 communities founded by the late Jean Vanier, where those with developmentally diverse abilities and those who assist them live together in the spirit of the Beatitudes. We are blessed with four *L'Arche* communities in Syracuse and our friends from Droyden Ave. regularly join us for mass.

At Triosly, Father Nouwen met Adam Arnett. Adam could not speak, or even move, without assistance. Grippled by frequent seizures, he spent his life in obscurity. In his last book before his death in 1996, Father Nouwen describes how he became Adam's care-giver – responsible for feeding him, washing him, dressing him, giving him his medication, transporting him in his wheelchair, getting him to therapy, etc. Having never experienced the world of the intellectually and physically challenged, Henri was terrified at first, but through Adam, the priest came to a new and deeper understanding of his faith and what it means to be among the beloved of God.

Father Nouwen, in his book, "Adam: God's Beloved:"

*Adam's humanity was not diminished by his disabilities. Adams humanity was a full humanity in which the fullness of love became visible for me and for others who grew to know him. Adam couldn't say, "I love you;" he couldn't embrace me spontaneously or express gratitude in words. Still I dare to say we loved each other... we were friends, brothers, bonded in our hearts. Adam's love was pure and true. It was the same as the love visible in Jesus, which healed everyone who touched him.*

*Adam was so fully alive to me and he shed light on all the questions. This experience cannot be understood by a logical explanation, but rather in and through the spiritual bonding of two very different people who discovered each other as completely equal in the heart of God. From my heart I could offer him some care that he really needed, and from his heart, he blessed me with the pure and lasting gift of himself.*

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Today we celebrate the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity, a celebration that the one God is on fire with love — a love of three distinct "persons" or characteristics: God the Creator, God the Savior and God the Sanctifier — all in a majestic flowing of love that is so powerful that it overflows into the creation... of all creation!

Sisters and brothers, we are created in the image and likeness of our God – a God who is love! This God is most profoundly experienced in relationship: God is love and where there is love – there is God. (1 John 4: 7-12)

Henri Nouwen and Adam Arnett, in a relationship of love... the God of love was present. Our 1<sup>st</sup> Reading from the Book of Proverbs on this Feast of the Holy Trinity, calls us to realize that the love of God is in every molecule of creation, in every cell of our being... life that God has brought into being, out of a love so great and complete that we can hardly imagine it.

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In June of 2017, after a period of discernment and prayer, our Parish made the decision, to become a Sanctuary Parish by a vote of 454 yes, 16 no and 7 abstentions. Since then we have been supporting the under-documented in a number of ways: raising funds for bail, bringing folks to their ICE Hearings, etc. In the Spring of this year, when we received a call from Casa Marianella, a shelter at the border, that there was a mom and dad, three-year-old and six-month-old in need of shelter, we, with the support of the Interfaith Sanctuary Coalition, made arrangements to bring the family to live here in our Parish Sanctuary Apartment.

Guillaum and Guyguy Lufungula with their daughters Valentine (3 yrs. old) and Daniela (6 mos. old) arrived by Greyhound at the Syracuse Bus Station at 1:30am April 12 after a 56 hour bus ride from Texas. This completed their 4 year journey from Congo.

Their story begins in early 2015 when Guillaum and his fellow Catholics were holding a peaceful march to enforce the Catholic Bishops Pastoral Letter asking that the President of Congo hold elections because his term of office, and his constitutional legitimacy, had expired. The army opened fire on this very large assembly and more than 70 people were killed on the spot.

Guillaum, a leader of the march, was arrested. He spent time in prison, until one evening he was approached by the night guard, who had been his classmate. This night guard helped Guillaum to escape, but told Guillaum to flee Congo because he was on the list of those who were going to be executed.

Guillaum and Guyguy fled south to Angola. From Angola the couple flew to Brazil. Slowly they journeyed through South America until they reached Columbia. In January 2019 the Lufungula Family took 2 boats across the Caribbean to Panama.

The boat of Guillaum and Valentine arrived safely in Columbia. The boat of Guyguy and Daniela was not so fortunate. In the open sea, it capsized. There were 46 people in that boat. 38 of them drowned. Guyguy grabbed onto a rope attached to the capsized boat and with her other hand she held her baby firmly to her breast. Mother and baby thus bobbed up and down in the waves of the Caribbean Sea for several hours until they and six other people were rescued.

The place in Panama where they came to shore was an uninhabited forest area. The refugee group walked for seven days without food through this forest until they came upon a Catholic Mission where they were assisted. During the next three months the Lufungula family travelled through Central America, and reached our southern border and the shelter of Casa Marianella.

The response of our parish has been amazing! Over the course of a weekend, parishioners stepped-up to furnish to their apartment and provide all the items needed for the little ones, in space made available by our Sisters Maura and Annie, and to organize around such tasks as helping applying for legal aid, arranging for medical appointments and transportation, dental appointments, babysitting, enrolling Valentine in preschool etc. etc. And what love and faith our Lufungula family has brought us – so manifesting God’s love and faithfulness!! At our 11:30am mass this weekend, we have the privilege of Sacramentally blessing their marriage, as a sign of God’s loving presence.

God is love ~ where there is love, there is God! Love is here, ... God is here!

Amen!