My Highway to Heaven

journey with Father Tony

Special guest chapter by Timothy J. Hauprich

From September 1984 to June 1988 there was a popular TV show featuring the characters Jonathan Smith and Mark Gordon. Jonathan was an angel portrayed by Michael Landon — who had earlier become famous for his characters on Bonanza and Little House on The Prairie. Mark was an ex-cop portrayed by Victor French. The show was called Highway to Heaven and was not about NASCAR.

It had no car chases and did not necessarily showcase beautiful women, but rather focuses on a pair of highway travelers intervening on the lives of ordinary people who were challenged by real life problems. I had no idea that by 1991 I would be the Mark Gordon character balancing Father Tony’s real life portrayal of Jonathan Smith.

It was with memories of this program in mind that I wrote the eulogy that follows in letter form to be shared with those who attended a Memorial Service for the Rev. Anthony Maione at St. Peter’s Roman Catholic Church in Saratoga Springs, NY in 2006.
The Rev. Anthony Maione is seen (above) coaching along side SCC Athletic Director Timothy Hauprich at a drug-free powerlifting tournament in 1991; rolling up his sleeves with Tim at a Legends of the Fall event in 1994; attending to his Campus Minister duties at Saratoga Central Catholic High in 1998; and feeding Larry Bird -- who was left in Tim's care after the priest's untimely passing in 2006.
Dear Tony –

It’s been about 16 days since you found that beach in heaven and settled into your lawn chair to work out the latest New York Time’s cross word puzzle. There weren’t too many of us back in Saratoga who could match you. Maybe Bill Shakespeare or Charles Dickens can give you a little competition up in heaven.

I hope you’re hanging out with Larry the Bird or maybe one of your favorite dogs from your earthly days. I’m sure there aren’t any cats on your side of heaven. They are all hanging out with Bob Cinq Mars over by the Chicken Wings and Strawberry short cake. I’m going to guess you’ve already talked to Casey Stengel about the Mets and Weeb Ewebank about the Jets. I’m sure those two teams will soon be moving up in the standings in the months to come.

I’m also sure you’ll be getting a good seat for the Belmont this Saturday. Eddy Arcaro and Willie Shoemaker can probably get you some good information on the Big exactas coming up this weekend. If you see Seabiscuit, tell him we liked the movie. Julia Childs is probably happy to trade recipes with you in the kitchen and Victor Borno is likely writing a poem on some of your short order Super Bowl party specials.

I still see our Special Olympian power lifters from time to time. None of them forgot who you were. That “How’s Father Tony?” question is going to be a tough answer from now on.

We just had our eighth Hall Of Fame induction this past Tuesday. We inducted several of your friends and ex students into the club. I think you would be real happy with the choices this year.

Oh yeah, that football thing we were working on back in 1991 and 1992 finally was approved. The Saints will be back on the Grid-Iron this Fall. We’ll have to dust some of those weights off and get our junior high guys going so we can uphold the honor of all you heavenly Saints in the future.

I’m sure you were busy during the past few years in Orlando. We didn’t always get answers on our e-mails. I guess the answers will now come only through questions in the form of a prayer … but …we understand.
A lot of Father Tony stories are coming out of the archives lately — many with a humorous twist — like the time you were at a Super Bowl party and somebody asked: “Tony, what do you do for a living?” and you responded: “I’m a priest.”

I know you didn’t want the behavior of the room to be in any way affected, but I tend to believe differently. When you weren’t wearing the collar, you caught a lot of people by surprise.

I know you really loved kids, especially babies and Baptisms, but you were a little disappointed if the boys were not named Anthony or the girls named Antonia. You were just kidding, weren’t you?

I hope all the trouble caused by the Rameses–Hunt trouble is behind you now. It was getting tough when you could only swallow food by washing everything down with water. Now you can eat what you like and not have to visit the treadmill the next day.

I haven’t really changed much myself . . . all those tricks you tried to show me like how to drive ridiculous distances in short times without any sleep. I’m not there yet. The ability to run a retreat at 8 a.m. when you started planning at 4 a.m. — that’s not me. Those amazing trips to Europe where we would walk 12 miles and then ride a bus for 12 hours . . . I never caught on.

But your overall goodness … the ability to hear out every one’s problems . . . or organize a relief fund for hurricane victims or a Thanksgiving luncheon for the challenged youth or your countless trips to the hospitals to visit the sick or your amazing homilies at weddings and funerals. We are all still in awe.

You’re going to be missed, but never forgotten.

God Bless You, Tony!
Ann Hauprich caught brother Timothy J. Hauprich placing a *Highway to Heaven* call to Father Tony Maione in the Saratoga Central Catholic Junior-Senior High School parking lot just before a chapel was dedicated in honor of late friend. As per the 2010 news story written by Ann for the *Saratogian* on the facing page, the chapel that bears the former SCC Campus Minister's name is situated in a part of the school where Tim and "The Powerlifting Padre" once trained student weight-lifters. A 1991 article Ann wrote for *The Evangelist* can be found on a subsequent page.
Members of the Saratoga Knights of Columbus march to St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church en route to a service honoring the Rev. Anthony Maione in 2010. The Rev. James Ebert (seated above left with Past Grand Knight Rich Gorman) told those in attendance at the chapel dedication ceremony how Father Tony had helped to inspire him to become a priest. Details of the event were captured in the above article Ann Hauprich wrote for The Saratogian in which Father Ebert described the padre at right as having been an important spiritual advisor and mentor. “One of the things Father Tony said that helped me with my decision to become a priest was that my concerns about priests not being able to experience the joys of fatherhood were unfounded,” shared the then newly ordained Father Ebert. “He said: ‘Look at me! I’ve got 250 kids’ – a reference to his students.”
The Powerlifting Padre made uplifting headlines in 1991...

**28 WEIGHTY TOPIC**

**OOOF!**

Priest hefts weight to keep his down

By ANN HANFORD

Metropolitan Clark Kent stepping into a phone booth to emerge as the unsuspecting "man of steel" and Rev. Anthony Mason can't help but fit his facial muscles into a powerful grin.

While he doesn't aspire to be a "Superman," the 23-year-old priest has learned to respond good-naturedly to his nickname: "The Powerlifting Padre."

That's what happens, he says, when the enormous weightlifter you counsel find out you can deadlift 370 pounds. When many students at St. Agnes Central Catholic High School don't know is the extraordinary story behind their campus minister's commitment to weightlifting.

"Beginning"

"I had a knee disease when I was 16 years old and was bedridden for a year," explains Father Mason. "During that year, I gained a lot of weight, which became virtually impossible to lose. The disease kept me athletically inactive throughout high school and I just kept gaining weight, which alarmed me."

Beginning it, I was 6-foot-11, 428 pounds. My health was causing health problems ranging from dangerously high triglycerides that threatened to seclude him for the rest of his life, to a disabling case of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. During a muscle-building program given to all priests at the Army Diocesan in 1989, a doctor ordered Father Mason to lose weight - preferably about 400 pounds.

"Changes"

At first, the challenge seemed overwhelming. "It meant changing my entire lifestyle," recalls Father Mason. "I had to re-learn how and what to eat as well as adding exercise to my already packed schedule."

At the time, Father Mason, who is ordained in 1985, was working as associate pastor at St. Gabriel's Church in Rochester. (Prior to that, he served the Rockland Park's St. Edward congregation.) Signing up for exercise classes was definitely out of the question. Participation in strenuous team sports like basketball and volleyball was also out of the question. Indeed, the only exercise he did regularly remained walking — something none to a person for the then 230-pound padre.

"The diet part went well, but I just couldn't bring myself to lose a lot of weight," admits Father Mason. "The result was... after dropping more than 100 pounds the goal dropped to 450 lbs., which I was able to hit last August..."

"He's a nice guy and he feels comfortable. Weight training is good for them because they are almost guaranteed to see steady increases in their abilities from week to week."

"Goal"

"Father Mason's personal goal is to much nearer where he'll be able to be a "fit to win" in competitions for his age group. Hopefully, the 1992 or early-1993 competition will be achieved that goal will mean benching 250 pounds, squatting 400 and deadlifting 850."

"30" will still be a "Powerlifting Padre" all years from now.

"Let me put it this way," he says. "I recently saw an 84-year-old man dead lift 350 pounds at the national drug-free championships. That made me realize this is not an activity that will have to end with youth. Seeing that will have an action really inspired me to want to stick with this as long as I am able."
... while CHEF Maione shared cherished recipes from Italian ancestors with Saratoga Living readers in 1998.

This in-depth feature about The Rev. Anthony Maione was written by Ann Hauprich for the first edition of Saratoga Living magazine in November 1998. At Father Tony’s suggestion, complimentary copies of the glossy new regional periodical founded by Ann were handed out by SCC students as part of "Giving Day" festivities in Saratoga Springs. To view this story in its original 8.5 x 11 format, kindly visit the Magazine Memories section of www.LegaciesUnlimited.com.