



Reflection from Fr. Don Farnan

CARRY ON WAYWARD SON

In Robert Services' famous poem, "[Carry On](#)," he encourages human engagement in every aspect of life, from the youthful energy of overzealous adolescents to the struggled breathing of those in their final days on earth. He ends with these words: "Carry on! Carry on! Fight the good fight and be true; believe in your mission, greet life with a cheer; There's big work to do, and that's why you are here. Carry on! Carry on! Let the world be the better for you; and at last, when you die, let this be your cry: Carry on, my soul, carry on!"

"Carry on" is a wonderful mantra for the Lenten season, as are lyrics from the 70's rock band, Kansas. Their hit song, "[Dust in the Wind](#)" paraphrases Biblical Wisdom literature from Ecclesiastes: "I reflected on everything accomplished by man on earth and I concluded that everything he has accomplished is futile: like chasing the wind." We began the springtime ecclesial season with the ritual mark of ashes with a proclamation to remember that dust is our earthly origin and destination. Deeper than most Top-40 hits, the song delves into that mark and declares that life is fleeting and there is little to hold onto: we close our eyes for a moment and the moment's gone...we're just a drop of water in an endless sea...nothing lasts forever but the earth and sky. In this, some people are left with meaninglessness, but for people of faith it points to meaning and purpose—for we are part of something far greater than ourselves. If we refuse to see, all that we do crumbles to the ground in our demise, like dust in the wind. But if we see, it shall raise us beyond earthen realms.

In "[Carry On Wayward Son](#)," the band's other big hit, the singers remind us that our spiritual sojourn involves much more than chasing futile dust. Like Max Ehrmann's "[Desiderata](#)," it speaks of rising above the noise and confusion to catch a glimpse beyond this illusion. Like our annual scriptural trek with Jesus from the desert to the mountaintop, we are beckoned to soar ever higher. They croon: "On a stormy sea of moving emotion, tossed about, I'm like a ship on the Ocean...I set a course for winds of fortune...for surely heaven waits." Though we descend from the mountains of glory and grace to sail the stormy waters of life, we find encouragement through companionship, knowing that it is, at least in part, otherworldly or even divine. Not unlike Christ's disciples who realized that He calms the seas if we carry on in our search for truth and meaning, we realize that there will be peace when we are done, when we complete the human pilgrimage. Wayward wandering lurks, even for the most obedient and docile souls among us.

Kansas' account of our spiritual odyssey mirrors the inspiration that Robert Service offers through difficult times, beyond personal feelings of insignificance and emptiness. We should carry on, even if we are wayward sons and daughters, because there is something beautiful on the other side of the drudgery of human limitation and struggle. When we surrender ourselves to a mission far past that which is human or earthen, we can embrace a higher meaning and greater purpose and will carry on to a better end.

*Peace,
Fr. Don*