

The parishioners of St. Michael Catholic Church in Wheaton say goodbye to Fr. Santos Castillo Sunday, [June 27](#), at a farewell reception from 1-3pm in the Parish Center.

Fondly known as “Fr. Sunny” to parishioners for the past three years, he is beloved by the community who will celebrate him as a man generous in heart and spirit, song and laughter. “I first introduced Fr. Sunny to our parish community with the song, *You Are My Sunshine*,” says Fr. Don McLaughlin, pastor of the 128-year-old Wheaton parish. “Now my heart sings, *Ain’t No Sunshine When You’re Gone*.”

The following is a profile of Fr. Sunny and a picture of [today](#)’s Catholic priests in the Diocese of Joliet—men who are dedicated to their calling, beloved by their community, and inspired to use You Tube and blogs to tend their flock these days.

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SINGER, ACTOR, POET, BLOGGER... PRIEST?

Meet Santos Castillo, fondly known as “Father Sunny” to the parishioners of St. Michael Catholic Church in Wheaton, who will be bidding him farewell at a reception to be held 1-3PM on Sunday, [June 27](#), in the Parish Center. Father Sunny served the people of St. Michael for 3 years as Parochial Vicar, his role there just one more bright bit of glass in the mosaic that comprises his priesthood.

Although his journey took a meandering path, all steps seemed to guide him to the mission he so uniquely serves. Named for a Benedictine monk who visited his family in Candon City, Philippines (“Santos Castillo” translates roughly to “Castle of Saints”), he began early study at the San Pablo Seminary in the Philippines, but left to pursue careers, first teaching philosophy at a Jesuit University, and then singing and co-hosting a children’s show on national television there. He acted on Filipino soap

operas and worked as a commercial model for Cosmopolitan Philippines, showing enough promise in those pursuits to know that he could realize both fortune and some fame. That didn't seem to be enough, however, and he returned to school to achieve his master's degree in philosophy.

Through those years, something indefinable kept tugging at his heart; he recognized it as a call to return to the Seminary. In 2000, he did just that. His spiritual advisor encouraged him to become a diocesan missionary to a foreign country that might be in need of priests. He chose Mundelein Seminary in Joliet Diocese, because it is the biggest Catholic seminary in the United States, and he felt a desire to give back on behalf of the Catholic Philippines, who "had received evangelization from missionaries from the West." Father Sunny was ordained a priest on [June 5, 2004](#), only the second Filipino to be ordained for the Diocese of Joliet, and perhaps the first to view the United States as his mission.

This priest is surely one for the modern ages: his website, sunnycastillo.multiply.com, highlights his books of poetry (most recent: *Plant Me On The River*), his photography, favorite recipes and original songs. His YouTube site is Hapipadi ("happy priest" in Filipino). This site features in-depth mini-studies of Catholicism and the church, and also includes examples of his photography and his songs. All proceeds from book sales and donations from songs go to his home church in the Philippines. Both sites feature the sense of humor and sense of humanity that endear him to his flocks on the Internet and in the pews.

On [June 23](#), Sunny assumes his new duties at St. Dominic Catholic Church in Bolingbrook, where he'll continue his personal solar effects: compassionate warmth bringing spiritual growth. And maybe another song.

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