



**INAUGURAL ADDRESS
MAYOR SAM TERESI**

January 1, 2012

*City Council Chambers
Jamestown Municipal Building
Jamestown, New York*

President Rabb, City Council Members, County Legislators, Judge LaMancuso, Justice Gerace, Reverend Sweet, Friends and my Fellow Jamestowners.

On behalf of the Teresi family, I would like to welcome you to the Jamestown Municipal Building (the "People's House") and wish everyone within the sound of my voice a truly happy, healthy and prosperous New Year.

I would also like to take this opportunity to properly acknowledge a couple of truly outstanding public servants who have joined us today. Over the years, I have watched and admired both of these gentlemen and it is truly an honor that they agreed to take time away from their holiday and families to join with us, and to administer to me the oath of office as the Mayor of this great City.

My good friend City Court Judge John LaMancuso, who has stood with me now at all four Inaugural Events

-AND-

The Distinguished, Retired New York State Supreme Court Justice Joseph Gerace, also a very dear friend, and someone who I have sought to emulate throughout my time in public service.

Thank you again gentleman for your outstanding service and the honor of your presence with us today!

This afternoon, I'd like to share with you the inspirational tale of two men.

The first man in our story was a 28 year old WWI Veteran and Sicilian olive farmer who chose to immigrate to this Country in September 1923 in order to escape the economic

hardship that was miring down the entire European Continent following the conclusion of the “Great War to End All Wars.”

Dreaming of opportunity and a better way of life, this gentleman left his young wife and newly born son in the loving hands of his extended family in Termini Sicily and, along with his teenage kid brother, sought out on a life-changing journey to America with little more than the clothes on his back and whatever money, personal belongings, and family keepsakes he could stuff into his pockets and a well worn duffle bag.

No formal education, language or work skills and certainly no guarantees of anything...just a limitless reservoir of hope and an unbridled faith that his destination would yield a better life for him and eventually, the family he had just left behind.

After a challenging ocean crossing, they landed in New York City and eventually made their way to a place called Jamestown...where several friends and family members from “the old country” had previously migrated. Jamestown, a good place, but at the time not the most understanding, forgiving and accommodating place for the most recent generation of arriving immigrants, who looked different, sounded different, ate, dressed and worshiped differently than those that came before them.

But nonetheless, over the course of the next few years, while attending to his younger brother, this man worked at numerous dirty, hard labor jobs, taught himself to speak, read and write enough of the English language to get by, regularly sent money back home to tend to his family’s needs and saved every spare penny that he could to eventually send for his wife and son to join him...five years later.

The second gentleman in our tale, was the first man’s son.

His story starts in July 1928, as a five year old little boy whose entire world was turned upside down in the journey to a new home called America. Take a moment to think about what it was must have been like for him...being removed against his will from his home, extended family and the only way of life he had ever known, to come to a new strange place where he knew absolutely no one...except for his mother.

During his later years he would share that his first recollection of America, after being processed through Immigration in New York City, was the feeling of his mother’s hand slipping away from his. And then, watching her running to, hugging and kissing a man that he had never seen. And, after what to him must have seemed like an eternity, being introduced to the man, that was his father.

As a young boy, he endured the economic depression and ethnic strife in his new community, rebelled against his family, struggled academically, but excelled in sports. He periodically got into trouble, ran away from home and ultimately, as a brash tough guy dropped out of high school...only to enlist in the United States Marine Corps following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

He spent nearly four years away from home in the Pacific War Theater, surviving landings in far away, dangerous places called Angar, Guam, Saipan, Guata Canal, the Palau Islands and Peleliu....seeing and likely doing horrific things that most of us can't even begin to imagine.

At the end of the war, he unceremoniously returned home in 1946, took a job in a local factory, utilized his GI Bill benefits to go back to school, enlisted in the Marine Corps Reserves and was part of the first wave of reservists to be called back up for active duty during the Korean War.

At the conclusion of that war, despite being offered an attractive career opportunity in the Military, he took his discharge as a Sergeant, once again returned back to Jamestown where he:

- Accepted a management position with a local supermarket chain.
- Met and married the love of his life.
- Bought and maintained a home.
- Paid all of his bills on time and always lived within his financial means.
- Together with his wife, they raised 3 children, all of which he sent successfully through college and graduate school.
- Retired from the supermarket business and during the last years of his life was elected 8 times by his fellow citizens and again, honorably served his community, for 16 years, as a member of the Chautauqua County Legislature.

Pretty amazing eh?

But the most extraordinary thing about the lives of these two men is that in places called the United States of America, New York and yes, Jamestown, they weren't extraordinary at all. In fact, for what Tom Brokaw termed "The Greatest Generation" they were **extraordinarily ORDINARY!**

Yes, variations of these stories have happened millions upon millions of times, over the past two centuries....and in a modified, current context, continue to take place today in the Greatest Country that Human kind has ever known.

Today, amazing accounts of "The Miracle of Hard Work"...tales of drive, determination, risk, sacrifice and most importantly, personal responsibility are happening all around us...if we are only willing to take the time to look and care to understand.

I have seen it in my extensive travels across our great land. I have personally witnessed it in large cities, small villages and towns across the Empire State. I experience it on my weekly walking tours through our neighborhoods and I can feel it in this Chamber, today.

As I look throughout both this audience and across our entire community, I know that we are still filled with the same drive, determination, hope, and love of family that **were** the very essence of my Grandfather and Father, and am heartened that the three guiding principles of the best man that I ever knew....who spent his entire life trying to teach his three children, not through the poetry of his words, but through the simple eloquence of the way he lived his life each and every day...that those three principals are alive and well, are still being applied, and need to be our guiding force today.

1. Spend your life serving others and not yourself.
2. In that service to others do **big things** that will long outlast your time in this place.
3. And always remember...it's not about what **you** accomplish during **your** lifetime. Rather, it should be about what you **inspire others** to accomplish during **theirs**.

Yes, I believe that these three principles are alive and well in this Chamber today and throughout the City that has empowered us to serve.

As I look around this room and our City today, I see:

- The most dedicated, talented, hardworking, under-supported, at times underappreciated, and tolerant group of Department Heads and Municipal staff members that one will find anywhere on the planet.
- Elected officials from all backgrounds and walks of life, who have dedicated themselves, often with great sacrifice and sometimes with deep heartache, to make their community an even stronger place.

Contrary to the perception of some, public service to these folks is not about a paycheck, a pension or the pursuit of power...but rather a passion to try to do the right thing and make the lives of their friends and neighbors better.

- Business owners and developers that continue to stick it out, invest and provide employment opportunities, despite the mindless impediments and roadblocks that are occasionally thrown in their way by well meaning governments.
- And, I see men and women of every ethnic group, religion and economic means living the “Miracle of Hard Work” with the desire to maintain their homes, send their kids to college and provide a better future for the ones they love.

In short my friends, despite all of our blemishes and imperfections, I still believe, that because of the great and diverse ancestral DNA we have been blessed with and the natural attributes that the Creator has bestowed upon our corner of the world, there is still much more that is good and right about this place than what could possibly ever be wrong. And to paraphrase a recent President, let us always remember that there is nothing that is wrong with Jamestown that can't be fixed with what is right about Jamestown.

I'd like to close today with another true story that hails back to October 29, 1999....just days before the election that led to my first term as Mayor.

This was the morning in which the strong editorial endorsement for my opponent, the incumbent Mayor, came out in the paper, and while I had been tipped off and was fully aware when it would be happening and exactly what it was going to say, I was nonetheless devastated.

No matter how much you prepare for the disappointment, when it finally appears in print, for the entire community to read, you can't help but to feel the rejection and start questioning the sanity of your decision to put it all on the line....no matter how good and sound your initial reasons may have been.

And then the phone rang...at 8:45 in the morning...with a little voice on the other end that I knew all too well. It was 92 year old Frances Gerace...my biggest supporter and most loyal campaign headquarters worker...4'10" and 85 pounds of pure Sicilian TNT...another member of the Greatest Generation...and the matriarch of one of the most prominent political families in local history. The mother of former County Executive, State Agricultural Commissioner and Retired Supreme Court Justice Joseph Gerace and the grandmother of my good friend Sheriff Joe Gerace. And then the conversation began with...."Oh honey! I feel so bad...how could they say such terrible things about you?!"

She then reassured me that everything would be OK and asked me to pray with her....
"Lord lift me up to the rock that I can not reach myself."

After several times reciting this, there was a long uncomfortable pause, followed by her stern directive...."Now you get yourself out of bed, get dressed, drag yourself out there and start knocking on doors! **We** have a lot of work to do! Do you understand me young man?!" Yes Ma'am!

Just at that point I noticed that the mail truck had pulled up in front of the house and was delivering something. "How strange" I thought. "Our mail never comes at 9 AM...it always arrives late in the afternoon." In the box was one envelope post marked a couple of days earlier, from Lorraine Zanghi...another one of my loyal, senior, female, Italian campaign workers. The envelope contained a simple "thinking of you card" with an inspirational verse that immediately put my morning and entire life into perspective.

ANWAY

People can be unreasonable, illogical and self-centered,

LOVE THEM ANYWAY

If you do good, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives,

DO GOOD ANYWAY

If you are successful, you may win false friends and true enemies,

SUCCEED ANYWAY

The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow,

DO GOOD ANYWAY

Honesty and frankness may make you vulnerable,

BE HONEST AND FRANK ANYWAY

What you spent years building may be destroyed overnight,

BUILD ANYWAY

People really need help but may attack you if you help them,

HELP PEOPLE ANYWAY

Give the world the best you have and you may get kicked in the teeth,

GIVE THE WORLD THE BEST YOU'VE GOT ANYWAY

Almost twelve years ago to the hour, a half block down the street, I chose to close my first Inaugural Address with these words, the author of which is unknown, and to this day, this verse, adorns the wall in my outer office. It is literally the first thing that I look to when I arrive at work in the morning and the last thing I see when I leave at the end of each day.

To me, this little passage pretty much says it all...what we should be striving to do and how we should be conducting ourselves at all times...whether it is dealing with an unfair political attack, an angry or unsympathetic constituent, an honest policy disagreement taken to the extreme or a matter in our personal lives.

To the residents of New York's Pearl City, I would like to thank you for the high honor you have given me to once again serve as the Mayor of this great place. And to my colleagues in public service, both elected and appointed, I look forward to serving with each and every one of you, every single day, as we work to build an even Greater Jamestown. And in the words of the late great Frances Gerace...let's get out there and start knocking on doors! Together **WE** have a lot of work to do!

Thank You and Happy New Year...and may God bless us all as we continue our work on behalf of the people of the great City of Jamestown.