

Bethany Ministries

January 2015 – The Story of 2014

Prayer ~ Proclamation ~ Hospitality

Dear Friends,

The Gospel for the 1st Sunday of Advent this year began with the words that inspired this song:

♪ *Stay Awake, be ready! You do not know the hour when the Lord is coming. Stay awake, be ready! The Lord is coming soon!*
Alleluia, alleluia, the Lord is coming soon! ♪

Peter was planning to use that song in his homily at Our Lady of Hope Parish in Fort Plain, NY. Then, right after we shared a community Thanksgiving Day meal at Our Lady of the Valley, he began to experience chills & fever. By the next day, he was running a temperature of 104° so the doctor sent him to the local hospital in Cobleskill on Friday. Late on Sunday the problem was diagnosed as gall stones & it was decided to transfer him for surgery to Cooperstown Medical Center about 50 miles away.

Our week at the 2 hospitals held many surprises – like finding out with only a 45 minute warning that Peter's surgery, expected to occur on the morning of Wed, Dec. 3, would happen on Tues. afternoon. Wed. we had to call our friends Lynn & Bob O'Rourke, who were on their way to pick us up & tell them that at the last minute the Drs. decided to keep Peter another day.

The rest of the month was a time of recovery, including all the adjustments the surgery & hospitalization brought into our lives—along with regular naps. While looking back over the 2014 story of Bethany Ministries we realized the words “*Stay awake, be ready*” were the THEME of our *whole* year.

[full story is on the 'Reflection Page' of our Bethany Ministries website – www.bethmin.org]

The End of a Long Transition

Since Hurricane Irene abruptly de-cluttered & evicted Peter from his rental by Schoharie Creek on Aug. 28, 2011, he had been “camping” in various temporary abodes. In January 2014, while still renting a tiny apartment on Main St. of Middleburgh over M&J's restaurant, Peter visited his former residence on Mill Lane to see how the renovation was progressing.



Living Room in Peter's New Apartment

When he observed that his landlord was living there himself & had not gotten much more done, Peter realized he was not going to get back into that house soon. He only told Anna about this new awakening. Not even 24 hours later Anna's landlord asked if she knew anyone who was looking for an apartment since there was one available at the 104 Grove Street house.

By the weekend of Feb. 8-9th, with the help of 15 people & 3 pickup trucks, his donated furniture, etc. was moved in & he began to live in the apartment just below Anna's. She's been renting it since '02. The ministry materials she'd been storing were moved downstairs & the washer & dryer purchased in early 2012 were installed by the owner of the local Sears store who had stored it for 2 years.

Ministry on the Road

By the grace of God, our first trip wasn't until Mar. 1-2, to St. Denis in Hopewell Jct, NY to preach at all the Masses. Anna travelled to her IHM chapter meeting in Scranton PA later in the week. Sunday she joined Peter & Darlene Rinaldo at St. Denis for the rest of the Mission. From there we went to Dingmans Ferry, PA for the quarterly Prayer House Community meeting. Later in March, we travelled to the Buffalo area to lead the annual retreat for the Franciscan Sisters of the Neumann Communities in Williamsville, NY. It was a rewarding but exhausting experience.

In early April, Anna travelled to Scranton once more for the IHM Leadership Elections. Peter travelled to a fraternal gathering of his Franciscan Province in Skaneateles April 11-13. At the end of April, we drove to Pittsburgh to attend a conference, "Grace In Process: 30 yrs of Gestalt Pastoral Care." GPC was begun by our friend Tilda Norberg, a Methodist Minister from our Prayer House Community.

After the conference, we visited Peter's brother, Stanley & his family in nearby Indiana, PA. Then we drove to North East, PA, (which is not in northeastern PA but near Erie, PA), to do a preliminary meeting for a Mission in Oct. We took 2 days to travel each way, stopping with the sisters in Buffalo both going out & coming home. In June we travelled the 3 hours to be with the Prayer House Community & went to Scranton from there for the Installation of the new IHM Leadership Team.

In Oct. we did the Parish Mission for St. Gregory Thaumaturgus Parish in North East, PA. We stayed overnight at St. Bonaventure Friary near Olean, NY on the way out, & with the Franciscan Sisters in Buffalo on the way back because we are no longer able to do 5-7 hours on the road in a one day trip.

IHM & OFM

Anna meets a few times a year with her IHM mission group, the *Dream Gatherers*, & connects with her congregation regularly for continuing formation and community business & celebrations. Peter appreciates attending, when possible, the wonderful continuing education sessions provided for the sisters. We were unable to travel to the IHM Center in Scranton Nov 15th-16th for the presentation on "Contemplative Dialogue" by Liz Sweeney, SSJ, so we made use of the IHM live streaming & the emailed handouts to participate in the weekend. That weekend we entered into the whole experience & have been able to share much of it with others since then.

In June, Peter travelled to Siena College to be a delegate at his Franciscan Province's Chapter. At that meeting, the *Emmaus Fraternity* –the group he had begun in 2000– was affirmed & given new hope. The *Emmaus Fraternity* continues to meet & have recently gained a new member. During part of the year he ministers in Saudi Arabia & will join the brothers by Skype when he is away from the US. In Dec, Peter was appointed Liaison to the Province for the Emmaus Friars by the Province's Leadership team.

In June Holy Name Province [Franciscans] gave Bethany Ministries a car [Pontiac Vibe 2005]. This now enables us to go in different directions for ministry or community meetings. Our new car gets around 30 miles/gallon. Our old one needed a new windshield but it is still running so we kept the Subaru [4 wheel drive] for local & winter travel.

During the summer, we travelled to parishes to preach for the foreign missions served by both of our congregations. Peter went to 4 parishes in the NY & Albany Dioceses: Hopewell Junction, Copake Falls, Rhinebeck & Maybrook. Anna went to 2 in the Syracuse Diocese: Baldwinsville & Mexico, NY.

Health & Vacation

Peter continued to have pain in his legs in 2014, so his doctor prescribed physical therapy. By July, after about two months of receiving PT, then doing the exercises on his own, his legs felt better & he has not needed his cane or had that problem since.

We stayed in Bolton Landing for the Lake George Jazz Festival in Sept & continued our vacation near Lake Champlain at the Westport, NY home of our friend, Pastor Lyn Barrett. Peter took a kayak out on the lake with her on a warm Sept. afternoon.

While there, we visited *Crooked Brook Studio*, the home & workshop of Ted Cornell. Peter was especially taken with his outdoor sculpture, "The Angel of Inerrancy, conveying well meaning souls to hell" [more in the homily for the 26th Sun on our website]. The 3 of us offered to pray with Ted for his upcoming health issues. He received the prayer with deep attention & gratitude.



The Angel of Inerrancy, Conveying Well Meaning Souls to Hell

Spirituality & Prayer

One of the wonderful developments this past year was our Franciscan Spirituality Group that we gather every month. There are about 12 to 15 people from Schoharie & Schenectady Counties in NY who come regularly. The faith sharing has been extraordinary & the topics for future meetings often arise from that sharing. In early October, we were able to celebrate the "Transitus" with them, a service which tells the story of the last hours of St Francis' life.

We continue to meet weekly on Wed. evenings with a group of around 10 people to pray contemplatively & share faith after going to the Middleburgh ecumenical suppers. During the summer break, we returned our weekly meetings to the original format of "Prayer & Pot Luck" and had pot luck suppers *after* our contemplative prayer.

Peter continues to walk as a spiritual companion with 5 or 6 people both in person & by phone or skype. Two notable occasions took place in Oct. The 1st took place over the course of 3 days, when he took the "5th Step" of a long-time friend who had travelled from Michigan to NY to do so. The 2nd was when Bonnie Martin came from the Buffalo area for her yearly retreat. Since we no longer have a guest room in either of our apartments, she stayed at a local Bed & Breakfast only a mile from where we live.



Peter on the porch of the Prayer House

Anna is always creatively attentive to the many needs of our local Bethany Ministries web of relationships & engages with some local people as a spiritual companion, sometimes informally.

In Aug, Anna made her yearly retreat with her good friend, Sr. Rosemarie, IHM at the convent where they began their religious life as Sisters of Christian Charity in Mendham, NJ. Peter made a week's retreat at the Prayer House later in Aug, & shared some reflections on that experience on the 'Reflections Page' of our website.

Ministry of Presence Continues

We continue to engage in a ministry of presence – to both Middleburgh & Schoharie County, to the Diocese, to our families, & to the people who seek us out for spiritual support & guidance.

Ten days after Peter's surgery on Dec. 2, we were a part of the annual "Miracle on Main Street" in Middleburgh. We began in the library, playing & singing carols for a group of children & adults who were gathered to hear stories. We continued by visiting some of the stores & restaurants which stayed open for the event. We sang "O Little Town of Middleburgh," at every place we stopped. [cf our 2011 Newsletter]. Earlier in the year, we participated in a session in the local Reformed Church that was sponsored by Schoharie County to hear, tell & record stories of Hurricane Irene. We learned things about the 2011 flood we had never heard before.



Peter & Anna doing a blessing at the Middleburgh High School Baccalaureate

In 2014, we were asked to do several funerals for families in our area & to play & sing at others. We continue to pray for Mark Trendell, Beverly Smith, Tom Cooper, Al Amico, Fr. Bill Gorman, Jim Conroy, Heloise Frame, Mary Ann Ethier, Matt Fagnani, & Betty Urrey & their families. On Good Friday, we were part of an ecumenical service in Schoharie, NY. In June, we participated in the Baccalaureate for Middleburgh HS.

On Jan 3, 2015, we went to the diaconate ordination of a good friend, Rick Lesser. On Jan 9th we did a reflection at the installation ceremony of Pete Lopez, our NY State Assembly person.

We meet with the other clergy in Middleburgh monthly when we are home. They sponsored an Ecumenical Church Series in May. We met with some lay leaders of the local Catholic Parish & helped with their reflections on "Preach the Gospel at all time, if necessary use words." We were also scheduled to be part of the Middleburgh Thanksgiving Ecumenical Service, but it was cancelled by SNOW.

In April, we were present for the ordination of the new bishop of the Albany Diocese, Bishop Edward Scharfenberger. Peter still serves as chaplain for the Knights of Columbus in Delanson & meets with them every month. He also is present to an inmate at Marcy Correctional Facility by visiting, writing to him & receiving his phone calls. Peter is currently investigating housing & employment for his friend when he is released in March, 2016.

When not on the road, Peter continues to preside & preach at weekend Masses throughout the Albany Diocese & Anna usually accompanies him. People look forward to the presence of a *Sister* at their parish as much as they do to Peter & his violin. We travelled to parishes on 24 weekends & feasts to preach, sing & pray. At times, we did Baptisms at the Mass & were asked to be there at First Communion & Confirmations. For two months after Fr. Bill Gorman retired for health reasons, Peter was interim sacramental minister for OL of the Valley, Middleburgh & OL of Fatima, Delanson. Holy Week, Easter & Christmas we were at Our Lady of Fatima in Delanson.

God's Providential Care

We recalled something Peter said in his Christmas Eve homily, "Fear is trusting in your own power." when we received some unexpected & generous donations that helped us pay our bills during Peter's hospitalization & recovery process. As God has provided for Bethany Ministries the last 20 yrs, we trust that in 2015 God will provide a way for us to pay our regular expenses by sending us enough income-producing jobs. Though we are not able to travel as much as we used to, we have some requests to do weekend workshops & possible Parish Missions. We thank you for your generosity in the past, & we count on your support so that Bethany Ministries can continue its ministry locally & on the road.

During the Christmas season we were frequently made aware of one of our favorite sayings: **Joy is not the absence of sorrow or conflict, it is the presence of God, the presence of Love.** In 2015 & beyond, we pray that you & those you love will be "awake & ready" to receive the peace & joy of the God who is Love.

Fr. Peter & Sr. Anna

You can find our **facebook page** and all of our contact information below.

We try to keep our website '**SchedulePage**' updated in real time & often post homilies on its '**ResourcesPage**' & point to them on our Facebook Page.

THE FRANCISCAN MINISTRY OF THE WORD AT BETHANY MINISTRIES

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[Donations made to **Bethany Ministries** are tax deductible]



*"We have not stopped
giving thanks for you,
remembering you
in our prayers."*

Ephesians 1:16

