

PETER'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF ORDINATION & ANNA'S 60TH OF PROFESSION

Link to video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2p-XN9PXI8>

First Reading: Isaiah 42:5-7,9

Responsorial Psalm: "God has done great things for us, filled us with laughter and music."

Second Reading: 1 John 4:16-18a

Alleluia Verse: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me/ who has sent me to bring good news; to the poor, the oppressed and the rejected"

Gospel: Luke 10:38-42

On their journey towards Jerusalem, Jesus entered the village of Bethany where a woman named Martha welcomed him to her home. She had a sister named Mary, who seated herself at the Lord's feet and listened to his words. Martha, who was busy with all the details of hospitality, came to him and said, "Lord, are you not concerned that my sister has left me to do the household tasks all alone? Tell her to help me."

The Lord in reply said to her: "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and upset about many things; one thing only is required. Mary has chosen the good portion and she shall not be deprived of it.

♪♪ I have loved you with an everlasting love, I have called you, and you are mine.
I have loved you with an everlasting love, I have called you, and you are mine...

Here I am, Lord, is it I, Lord, I have heard you calling in the night.

I will go, Lord, **where** you lead me, I will hold your people in my heart. ♪♪

[Peter] You were singing both of those songs before I asked you to name them. They sing of the heart of what our ministries have meant to us over the years. Did you notice a word we changed in the 2nd hymn? "*I will go, Lord, **where** you lead me.*" In the hymnal it's "*I will go - if you lead me.*"

Throughout our lives as members of religious communities & ministers of the Gospel both Sr. Anna & I have tried to go **where** the Spirit of God leads us, always believing that God would call us & the Spirit would give us the vision and strength to follow. Sometimes we didn't find out that we were on the right path until after we had begun to follow, & there have been a few detours along the way, but we have discovered, over and over

that the Lord was leading us.

As I heard the Gospel story of Martha & Mary, I could hear Jesus singing to Mary, "*I have loved you....*" That's her song, because she took the time to sit at the feet of Jesus and listen. Jesus sang the same song to Martha, and she sang back, especially in John's Gospel, in the story of raising Lazarus from the dead, "*Here I am, Lord,... I will hold your people in my heart.*"

When I was ordained 50 years ago, I began a journey that often moved between the service of Martha & the prayer of Mary.

Anthony Fedell, the Friar who preached at my 1st Mass on Aug 27, 1972, spoke words that describe the call to be **both** Mary and Martha. He said:

"I think that what Peter has been called to do is first of all to BEHOLD. In other words, simply to sharpen his eyes to the vision of the people and the things around him...So that he can begin to see all the world and everything that is in it as a gift from the Lord."

I took that call seriously, but it took me 5 years of a very "Martha" time to respond. Right after I was ordained, I was teaching High School, directing musicals & leading a charismatic prayer group in Buffalo. I was giving talks on prayer all over the Diocese but I wasn't spending much time in prayer. The Spirit within me led me to ask to be at St. Joseph's House of Prayer in Warwick, NY. I lived there for 10 years & that's where Sr. Anna met me in 1980.

I still hear that call to ground my work in prayer in the words of St. Clare, "Gaze upon the Lord, gaze upon his love, gaze upon his life."

My Friar friend continued, describing the "Martha" side of my life,

"Once he has seen, then he has been invited to LIFT UP, to raise up, to hold up everything in the world in one simultaneous gesture of wonder and thanksgiving; to lift people up when they are down, to try to revive their drooping spirits, to lift them up out of the waters of Baptism into new life; to lift them up out of the mire of sin and give them the pardon of God; to lift up the bread and wine at the altar, and then to lift up the Body and Blood of Christ."

During my 50 years of ministry as an ordained Friar, I have had many experiences of being an instrument of peace, always by the grace of God & the support of the communities I've been a part of [many of them represented here today]. I've been able to awaken people who felt deep guilt & shame to the truth that they are loved & forgiven. I've worked with Marriage Encounter teams to nurture growth in love in married couples & families. I've had the great joy of leading college students at SBU in music ministry & of singing the praise of God & the love of Christ at the Eucharist. I've been on the road with Friars & lay preachers. Since 1995, I've been preaching in partnership with Sr. Anna.

That was the year I moved to Middleburgh to begin Bethany Ministries with Sr. Anna.

Like a violin string that needs to be in tension, yet constantly tuned to the right note, we have been working at living creatively in the tension between Martha & Mary for 27 years, while tuning our lives & preaching to the Gospel harmony.

And Lazarus has been part of that living. Looking back over my life, I have met him often in times of transition, when I experienced different forms of dying and rising.



Peter & Anna in the Church Hall after the Mass

Sometimes it was the death of leaving one ministry, sometimes even closing it down, and going to another. Sometimes it was experiencing the joy of seeing people transformed at a parish mission or retreat, then having to leave for a new chance to preach & live the Gospel.

That process continued after Bethany Ministries began when we were on the road close to one week a month after 2000. I can hardly believe we were able to do that. It must have been the grace of God. In 2011, it was losing almost everything in the flood caused by Hurricane Irene and beginning again in the midst of this parish & community. In 2020 it was a pandemic that closed us off from much of our ministry. Earlier this year, in 2022, it was an illness that showed us both how much we were loved by God & by you.

Fr Anthony concluded his homily at my 1st Mass with these words, which I have tried to put into practice since that day.

He said, *"In his ministry, Peter will be called to remind each of us that we not only come to receive Holy Communion, we are supposed to try to be a holy communion of people. So he invites us to lift up our hands toward one another in a sign of peace. And we should remember too that he is reminding each of us here today that somehow we are all called to be priests -- to behold, to lift up, to intercede. We all must do that in our own way & we should thank the Lord for the call He has given each one here."*



Guests at the dinner after the Jubilee Mass

We are together now, on this day in 2022, to remember and celebrate that call, not only for Anna, myself, Fr. Tom, Deacon Gary, Fr. Mark & my brother Friars but for each one of you & your families, and for this wonderful parish community.

[Anna] We chose the Gospel passage is an illustration of the truth **that ALL HUMANS (not merely males or females) are called to be Disciples.**

Mary is sitting at the feet of Jesus, in the position of a disciple.
In the culture of the time, women were not allowed to be disciples.

Lazarus was also in the home at Bethany.
Probably he was *right there* beside his sister, Mary, listening to Jesus.

The Gospel story is a call to be reconciled within ourselves
as well as among each other.

As Augustine (whose feast is today) writes, “*Martha & Mary are sisters !*”
Jesus was lifting up **both** (Mary & Martha),
& reminding them that they are connected ~ that they are sisters.

Jesus was including both Martha & Mary in his embrace.

He was calling them back to connection **with** each other & **with** him.

Rather than eliminating the tension *between* them,

He was restoring the **right tension between** the details of **hospitality**
& the **purpose** of welcoming a guest.

He is calling **all of us**, to be there for *each other*

-- women & men, -- young & old, -- working & retired, ~ **all** of us.

The story does **not** put Martha down.

We need **both** the prayerful listening of **Mary** & the hard work of service of **Martha**

to be true to our baptismal call

to BE **CHRIST** for EACH OTHER-- & for **ALL**.

We all need both times of rest & times of activity.

We are called to alternate between both service & prayer.

Just as we need to breathe in & breathe out in order to live.

We need to alternate between breathing in the love & truth of Christ
& breathing out the love & truth of the Spirit of God
if we are to truly live the Gospel of Jesus.

This is not **only** true of **Christians**, **but** for every **human being**
who wants to live well & be at peace.

That's why we call ourselves – **Bethany Ministries** –

~Prayer, ~Proclamation & ~Hospitality
~ & constantly balancing **all 3** ~