



Winter 2009

Prayer ~ Proclamation ~ Hospitality

Dear Friends,

☪ God has done great things for us, filled us with laughter & music.

Come restore our fortune, renew us in your love, As rivers through the sand, as springs within the desert;

Those who sow in tears shall reap rejoicing.☪

During this past year, we have lived those words from Ps 126, *"Those who sow in tears shall reap rejoicing."* In the midst of illness and crisis, we have seen families grow closer and luminous with love and caring. In the midst of personal and communal grieving, we have seen new life and creative growth in individuals and parish communities. In the midst of a recession, we have seen sacrifice and generosity and the forging of new connections. As the life and death cycle of the year has unfolded once more, we have seen the death-resurrection pattern, the *"Paschal Pattern,"* in our own lives and in the lives of so many others, including you who receive this letter.

Family Matters

Peter's mother, Teresa, broke her hip and had surgery in early February. She was moved from assisted living at a place near Hudson, NY to the rehab section of the same institution. After she had progressed as far as she was able, she was moved to the dementia ward there. She suffered from partial loss of her sense of time and place, but still recognized all of her family. After a bout with pneumonia, Teresa was accepted into Hospice and was transferred to Pine Haven Nursing Home in Philmont, NY.

On November 15, the last time Peter was able to give her Communion, she was able to pray out loud & receive a small piece of the host. When he offered her a drink of water out of a plastic cup, she asked, "Can I drink from the chalice?"

On December 4, as this Newsletter was being composed, Peter received a call that his mother was declining rapidly. He and Anna joined Peter's three sisters, Marita, Norma & Barbara at Pine Haven and spent the last 4 hours of Teresa's life at her bedside. She died peacefully, with her family around her thanking her for her life and love, singing songs she loved and praying the prayers of the Church.

Her funeral was December 11, Barbara's birthday, and it was a true celebration of her life and God's promise. We sang the Psalm this letter began with. Peter led the singing of the psalm refrain, and Barbara and her son Matthew, read the verses of Psalm 126. You can read Teresa's obituary on the Bethany Ministries website, along with the homily Peter preached. Pray for her and the family as they remember her life and grieve their loss.

Grieving with Others

Saint Joseph's parish in Schoharie, NY, merged with Saint Catherine's in Middleburgh to form the new parish of Our Lady of the Valley. On June 28, 2009, the doors of the Church building in Schoharie were closed. Peter had been connected with that congregation since 1993. He presided and preached at almost all the Sunday Masses at St. Joseph's from November, 2008 through June, 2009. With Anna, he helped create the final liturgy in June.

This communal grieving has been accompanied by the experience of several funerals and memorial services for family and friends. Sam Campilii, Peter's "uncle," [the youngest of the four cousins who grew up as siblings to his mother], died in late December, 2008. Clara Frame, the wife of David Frame, the son of Heloise, one of our ministers of prayer, died tragically in April. Peter preached at her funeral in an Episcopal church in Oneonta, NY on the day after Easter.

Ron Barrett, the husband of Lyn Barrett, at whose marriage Anna & Peter preached in May '08, died suddenly and unexpectedly this May. Lyn asked Peter & Anna to preach the homily for his funeral at St. Luke's United Church of Christ in Lititz, PA, where Lyn is pastor. In June, on his birthday, we did a memorial service for Joe DeLeo, at the request of Angela Muliero and his family. While in NJ we stayed with Anna's cousin Beth, Angela's daughter-in-law.

During July, we did a graveside memorial service for Virginia McGuire, the mother of Mary Inghrim. Peter was on a Marriage Encounter team with Mary and her husband, Joe, for many years, and they continue to be a part of the Bethany Ministries web of relationships.

In October, Fr. Ed Hinds, a close friend of Anna, her sister and their family for over 30 years, was murdered in his NJ rectory. During Lent of 2008, Anna and Peter had done a Mission there at his parish, St. Patrick's in Chatham, NJ. Peter had also done a Mission for a parish in Boonton, NJ when Fr. Ed was pastor there. We spent most of Oct 30th at his wake where we were able to take part in two of the services and we comforted his friends and parishioners while working through our own grief.

Franciscan Ministry of the Word at Bethany Ministries

All the parish missions we did this year were for parishes in the process of merging. We did 3 four-day parish missions and one weekend mission. The one at the end of January was near Pass Christian, MS & consisted of three “church houses” [as they say in Mississippi]. These were located in De Lisle, Dubuisson Community and Rotten Bayou, MS [no, we’re not kidding about that name]. In 1969, when Hurricane Camille destroyed the “church house” used by the white Catholic community, the black Catholic community in DeLisle invited them to worship in their “church house”. They have been one truly integrated parish community ever since. While we were there we met Brett Favre’s mother, who is a parishioner.

The other four-day missions we did were in the Albany Diocese. It was our first in Stillwater and Mechanicville, but it was the second we did in Lake Luzerne and Corinth. The second time we visit a parish we use the Beatitudes and the Lord’s Prayer as themes for the mission presentations.

We also traveled north of the Adirondack Park to Colton, NY, in the Ogdensburg Diocese, for the weekend of the Feast of Saint Francis. It was the first time we used our *weekend* parish mission format. We led a “*Transitus Service*” [a commemoration of the last hours of Saint Francis’ life] on Saturday evening; did a Sunday afternoon performance of “*Sacred Creation*,” [a dramatic meditation on the lives and stories of Francis & Clare]; and we preached at all the weekend Masses in the three “church houses”. This new format of parish mission should be a useful addition to our service to the People of God.

Even though we have several week long retreats scheduled for 2010, we did not do any in 2009. But, we did lead six one day or weekend retreats. One weekend retreat was at Stella Maris in Skaneateles, NY where we will be doing a retreat this summer [July 11-17]. Another was for a group from the United Church of Christ in Southeast, PA. We did two evening performances of *Sacred Creation* that were followed by reflection on and discussion of environmental spirituality, in Paterson, NJ and Oneonta, NY. We also did a follow-up for the Oneonta parish, focusing on Church statements on the environment and how they connect with science and the poor. We found Chapter 4 of Pope Benedict’s new encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate*, very useful. Over the past year, Anna coordinated First Reconciliation Celebrations for 2 parishes and Peter covered Masses in 18 different parishes in the Albany Diocese on 44 weekends and Holy Days. He also taped two TV Masses for *Table of the Lord*.

The Prayer House in Pennsylvania

This past summer, the adjoining properties of The Prayer House [www.theprayerhouse.org] & Penn House [Tilda Norberg & George McClain’s home] dug one new well for both. This enabled Peter to resign from the board of the well corporation which was providing water to both houses. So now he has the time to take the reservations for those who want to spend time at The Prayer House. Peter, Anna & Donna Joy Schmid met Dec.31--Jan.3, in Dingmans Ferry, PA with other members of the Prayer House Community. We took some pictures of the new renovations to put on that website.

Bethany Ministries - Web of Relationships

Kim and Reggie Harris spread the Gospel of peace and freedom through music and storytelling, and when possible join Anna & Peter for Table of the Lord, the Albany Diocese TV Mass. **Angela Warbach** introduced us to Joe Uveges, a singer whose song “*Receive Who You Are*” [from his album *When Freedom Calls*] we often use when we do retreats and missions. **Donna Joy Schmid** is a part of the local Ecumenical Ministerium which prepared its Annual Thanksgiving Service held this year in Our Lady of the Valley Church here in Middleburgh. She is planning to move to California in the Spring. We will miss her, but, in the meantime she continues to be one of the substitute teachers that serve the children of the area.

Barbara Chepaitis continues to work on a documentary about peace-building using seed money provided by a grant from Holy Name Province. She will begin a new job in March on the Faculty of a low residency Master’s program in creative writing based in Colorado. We are happy for her, especially since it does not involve having to move from her home in Altamont, NY. She has a new non fiction book which will be released in June through SUNY Press. It is entitled “*Feathers of Hope*” and is about the Berkshire Bird Paradise.

Some of us who live in Schoharie and Middleburgh still meet on Thursdays in one another’s homes to share prayer and food. Usually the group consists of Donna Joy Schmid, Stasia Hagan, **David Nidey**, **Noreen Flanagan**, **Darleen Rinaldo**, and Peter & Anna, when we are in town. The special Ministers of Prayer for Bethany Ministries, **Bonnie Martin**, **Mary Piccione**, **Heloise Frame** and **Stasia Hagan** continue to pray for all of our intentions and yours – especially those you specifically ask us to pray for and for all those things God knows you need, even if we don’t.

Website Changes

Tom Burnett, who manages the website for The Prayer House in Dingmans Ferry, PA now also manages the Bethany Ministries website [www.midtel.net/~bethmin]. He is good about keeping our schedule up to date in real time. Just recently we began putting the Sunday homilies on the website -almost every week.

God's Providential Care

We had to take our Saturn Wagon off the road in October and are now managing with one car. Since our homes are 1½ miles from each other this stretches us, but it does save on the cost of insurance and repairs. Although our "Teal Oldsmobile" is working well, it is aging and we will be needing another ministry car soon.

When our fiscal year ended on June 30, 2009, we were \$5.79 in the black. Although we have had fewer week-long missions and retreats than usual since July, the other work we have done, weekends and evenings, along with an appeal letter have generated enough stipends and generous donations to get us to the end of December, 2009 only \$590.78 in the red. Trusting in God's Providence, we are sure that with donations and the stipends we will receive for our work we will get through in the black to the end of the next fiscal year [June 30, 2010].

We are deeply grateful for your prayers and your participation in the web of Bethany Ministries. You have truly filled our lives "...with laughter and music" [Ps 126]. We have remembered you in our prayers during the Christmas season, and we pray for you every time we light a candle whenever we gather to pray.

May the God of music and laughter fill your life with peace, joy, truth and much love.

Fr. Peter & Sr. Anna

BETHANY MINISTRIES is a spiritually diverse community of financially independent households who seek to live creatively in the tension between solitude and community. The stories of Jesus in relationship with Martha, Mary, and Lazarus of Bethany, as mirrored in the lives of Clare and Francis of Assisi, provide the inspiration for the existence and activities of Bethany Ministries. Prayer, Proclamation & Hospitality are the 3 principle activities of Bethany Ministries.

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THE FRANCISCAN MINISTRY OF THE WORD AT BETHANY MINISTRIES
is how Friar Peter S. Chepaitis, OFM & Sister Anna Tantsits, IHM earn their living.

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