

Dear Friends of Bethany Ministries

The past eight months have been a truly moving experience.

- » On June 20, Kateri moved from her trailer on a hill to an apartment in the village of Middleburgh.
- » On July 2, Anna moved from the Convent of Mercy in Rensselaer to live with a Franciscan sister in an apartment in Guilderland.

The story of Kateri's move is another image of hope for Bethany Ministries:

It was a Saturday, and it was hot! Jerry, Vicky, Ed and his teen aged son Liam had gathered to work with Kateri, Anna and Peter.

During the week before one obstacle after another seemed to appear. Peter was recovering from kidney stones, and had to do a wedding on Saturday afternoon; Anna woke up sick on Friday, and it seemed impossible to get a vehicle to carry the few pieces of furniture down the hill.

Peter had been promised a pickup truck by his landlord, but it didn't work out for that day. We had borrowed Kim and Reggie's van, but needed one more vehicle.

On Friday night, without expecting any response, Peter mentioned the problem at the wedding rehearsal. The groom immediately said, "I'll bring you a truck tomorrow, what time do you want it?" Peter was stunned! This young man was going out of his way to help on the very day of his wedding.

The next day, he drove the truck to Mill Lane at 9:00 A.M. the parents of the bride followed him and brought him back to his home to get ready for the wedding. With the addition of the pickup, the move went like clockwork.

Peter drove the truck to the wedding to return it and, of course, used the story as a part of the homily.

And once more this experience reminded us that nothing is impossible with God.

Yes, Bethany Ministries is moving – in more ways than one. Our ministry of proclamation is growing. Besides doing parish missions and retreats, we have begun a relationship with the Secular Franciscan

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Dear Bethany Ministries Friends & Supporters

On September 29, 1998 we received confirmation that we will be included in the Official Catholic Directory. This inclusion gives us tax exempt status as Bethany Ministries.

We applied for and received an IRS identification number so we could open a new bank account in the name of Bethany Ministries. Checks can and should be made out to Bethany Ministries, rather than to Franciscan Friars.

This process was accomplished with the help of the Albany Diocese and with the encouragement of Holy Name Province of the Franciscan Friars.

Francis, in his wonderful prayer, The Praised of God, wrote, "You are all our riches, You are enough for us".

Clare, on her deathbed, received the "Privilege of Poverty," that is, the right to depend on God alone for the needs of her community.

Since its beginning in 1995, Bethany Ministries has chosen to depend on the Holy Spirit for its vision, on Jesus for its inspiration and on God who gave it birth for its continued existence.

We have chosen to place our total trust in the Lord to provide enough to pay the bills and to enable us to grow as the Holy Spirit leads us.

- » Bethany Ministries does not receive any financial support from the Albany Diocese, or from a local Parish.
- » It is not endowed by any major contributor,
- » It is not supported financially by Holy Name Province or the Prayer House Community (though we receive other kinds of spiritual and practical support from all these groups.

In spite of this, for more than three years Bethany Ministries has received just enough to break even. God has truly provided, but God's instruments have been different every year.

The commitment of Bethany Ministries to reach out to those in need, to collaborate in ministry and to make prayer our first priority makes it difficult to bring in enough income through stipends for our work to support the ministry.

We never refuse any person hospitality if they do not have the money to make a donation, and we never refuse a parish or group because they do not have

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Order of the upstate NY region.

In September, Anna, Kateri and I collaborated in giving a retreat to the SFO of the Albany area. We think this will be the first of many opportunities for ministry for and with them.

In August, Anna and I participated in the first Schoharie County ecumenical Tent Meeting, a gathering which included the active participation of 30 churches in the county. We provided the sermon and benediction on Thursday evening and were part of the praise celebration on Sunday afternoon.

One of the missions was for an integrated parish in Syracuse, NY. Kim and Reggie joined with me and Kateri to celebrate a wonderful week of renewal and reconciliation.

And, in October, I was in Maryland collaborating in leading a Marriage Encounter weekend with a team of couples who were Jewish, Protestant and Muslim.

The *Mministry of Hospitality* continues to serve people who meet us when we are leading retreats and missions. People like Linda from Brooklyn continue to visit to take time for spiritual growth and healing, either for overnight stays or for a day or evening.

The *Ministry of Prayer* is moving us more deeply into contemplative intercession for personal and social situations.

We take our experiences of proclamation and hospitality to prayer and we take our experience of prayer to our other ministries. We pray daily with each other and in solitude, both I liturgical prayer and in more spontaneous ways.

We continue to experience the wonderful blessing of being able to pray with anyone who seeks meaning and peace.

I began with an experience which renewed my hope, I'll end with a quotation from Vaclav Havel about hope, the virtue I think we all need when our lives are moving in directions we cannot predict or control. *"Hope is ...not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out."*

May your lives be full of the simplicity, freedom and hope Francis and Clare lived so well.

Peace and Good,
Peter Chepaitis, OFM

From Kateri Maus

Dear Friends,

This past July, during a gathering of the Prayer House Community in Dingmans Ferry, PA, Peter, Anna and I assisted in the building of a monument and the celebration of a memorial service for 79 victims of genocide in Rwanda (the Prayer House Community is the spiritual sponsor of Bethany Ministries. We meet four times a year to work on the Prayer House and pray together).

Solange, a 26 year old woman from the Tutsi tribe in Rwanda, was present at that gathering. She had met Peter at the end of a retreat he was giving at St. Stephen's Church on 82nd Street on the East side of Manhattan. Because he was leaving the area that day, he suggested that she go to see Tilda Norberg, a Methodist minister and a therapist who is the president of the Prayer House Community.

From 1990-1994, the Hutu carried on a genocidal war with the Tutsi, killing over a million people. During this massacre, all the members of Solange's family except one brother and herself, were murdered.

Solange was living in a hostel when the 1994 killings

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From Barbara Chepaitis

Dear Friends of Bethany Ministries,

Let me introduce myself. I'm Barbara Chepaitis, Peter's sisters, member of the Refounding Core Team and author of the novels "The Fear Principle" and "The Fear of God."

The novels in this series of futuristic mysteries all deal, in some sense, with the exploration of our two primary emotions, fear and love. As one philosophy believes, all our other emotions and actions are motivated by either fear or love, and know which one you are operating out of at any given point is crucial to living as a true human.

In the world of my novels, my protagonist, a woman named Jaguar Addams, rehabilitates criminals by making them face their fears. In the forthcoming novel, "The Fear of God," she has to rehabilitate a fanatic end-of-days cult leader who has killed the children of her cult and may have plans for further destruction if Jaguar can't stop her. But to stop her, Jaguar first has to understand what spiritual power this woman is afraid of, and why.

This novel is about what we name as sacred, and understanding how that is a reflection of our souls. As Jaguar knows, if we are to understand our

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began. Ironically she was protected by nuns of Hutu descent who risked their lives to save their guests. Solange described how the women in the hostel would sleep in the hallways with mattresses placed against the walls for protection from the nightly shelling.

Just before the Hutu invaded the hostel, Solange was evacuated by another Tutsi and a United Nations soldier. On their way to Nairobi, Solange and her rescuers narrowly missed being killed. Two days later the remaining women in the hostel were led away and brutally murdered.

During those July days at Dingmans Ferry, she was able to continue her healing process in a tangible way. The Prayer House Community helped construct a monument in the wooded area between the Prayer House and Penn Haus (a place Tilda uses for retreats and workshops).

Anna and I helped in etching names into small granite and marble fragments. In all, there were 79 names of Solange's family and friends who were killed.

Peter helped in the building of the mound of fieldstone and gravel which served as a base for the etched stones. Each of those named were just left where they were slaughtered, never remembered or grieved, never given a funeral or a memorial service. Since Solange and most of those who had been murdered were Roman Catholic, Peter presided at a memorial Eucharist on Saturday afternoon, July 18. The service took place at the monument which had taken shape on Friday and Saturday morning.

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relationship with the Divine, we must first be willing to "See who we are," and "Be what we see."

I bring this up in the context of this newsletter because to me it reflects the heart of Bethany Ministries – an understanding of the diversity of the sacred.

Because Bethany Ministries is a network of believers who are rooted in the Christian tradition in the Spirit of Francis and Clare and also deeply committed to interfaith dialogue, it allows each soul to express its vision of the sacred in a unique way, recognizing the infinite nature of the divine.

I have found that Bethany Ministries is uniquely suited to the task of bringing together good people of diverse traditions because it is secure in its own vision of the divine, and secure in its attitude of celebration of the Spirit in all its forms.

There was a slight breeze on the warm and somewhat humid day. Candles flickered with the breeze. After Solange spoke each of the names aloud, a bell was tolled followed by a brief silence for each of the 79 victims.

Although the darkness of the murders surrounded us that day, the pure light of the Resurrection kept all darkness at bay. Truly the souls of those who had died so violently were surrounded by Resurrection light and would now be remembered.

The memorial stands as a testimony to the courage of Solange, her family, and friends. The memorial is a powerfully quiet place – a deeply peaceful place.

We returned to pray there this past October when the Prayer House Community gathered for its regular fall meeting. Etched in one of the larger stones are the words:

"In Memory of the one million people whose lives were taken by genocide: Rwanda, 1990-1994.

Pray that God may heal the scars of war and empower humankind to embrace justice and Peace."

We invite you to pray with us for peace: peace in the world, peace within our families and churches, peace within ourselves.

Our lives and our prayer at Bethany Ministries have been deeply affected by this experience; our ministry feels more connected with the pain of our sisters and brothers, and our faith in the power of God's grace has grown stronger because of our journey with Solange.

Peace, Kathy

I feel very proud that my brother has asked me to be a part of this important work even as I continue in my journey of the spirit.

I am delighted to have collaborated with Kateri and Peter in creating the dramatic and reflective presentation we first called "The Prayers of St. Francis, Embracing the Humanity of Christ." Since it is the story of both Francis and Clare, we have renamed it "The Song of Francis and Clare" and hope to issue it as an audio tape as well as being ready to present it when asked.

I do look forward to meeting more of the friends, members, and supporting network of Bethany Ministries. I invite any of you to contact me via e-mail (chepaitis@aol.com) if you'd like to know more about me or my place in Bethany Ministries.

See who you are - be what you see!

enough for an appropriate stipend.

Prayer is fully one third of our ministry. The commitment to prayer in solitude and with each other limits the time and energy which can be spent in doing the ministry of proclamation which is the main source of income from stipends.

So any donation to Bethany Ministries enables us to welcome those who have limited financial resources, to collaborate freely and justly in the ministry of Proclamation, and to devote significant time and energy to the ministry of Prayer.

As treasurer of Bethany Ministries, I can tell you that we have always received what we needed. The bottom line for 1997-98 (July 1 to June 30) found us \$73.62 to the good.

The problem is that requests for ministry and donations from guests will not meet our needs until this coming Lent when three Parish Mission have been scheduled.

In addition, Peter is just beginning to give the financial contribution he owes his province. This year, we hope to increase the amount he can send in for provincial support. Maybe next year he will be able to send in the full amount that every friar contributes to this.

After you pray over this information, we ask you to call on the same Spirit who brought Bethany Ministries to birth to discern how you can support our ministry.

We ask all of you for prayer, since that is our first priority and a third of our ministry; we appreciate support through letters and e-mail; and we rejoice with donations of any amount, as your resources allow (one of our supporters sends \$10 a month, another \$60, a few people have given over \$1,000 in one time gifts, but most of our income from donations comes from people who give \$20 - \$50).

The issue for us, as we pray our financial statement and our calendar, is trust in God and to discern God's will for us and for Bethany Ministries.

As Fr. Tom Berardi, quoting a Sufi proverb, said at our last Refounding Core Team meeting, "Trust, and let your doing become prayer."

We ask you to pray over your checkbooks and your calendars so that your lives may be more deeply rooted in God's truth and clearly expressive of God's Love.

Peace and Joy,
Anna Tantsits, IHM