



Bethany Ministries

Winter 2013

Prayer ~ Proclamation ~ Hospitality

Dear Friends,

♪ *Surprise, surprise, God is a surprise, right before your eyes, It's baffling to the wise.*
Surprise, surprise, God is a surprise, — Open up your eyes and see! ♪

That song was one Anna often used when she taught 1st grade, and it is a good description of 2013 for us. We continue to be surprised that our ministry is alive and well, both in Schoharie County & in the Albany Diocese & also on the road. And we have been surprised by God at every stage of our journey through 2013.

Family Weddings and Anniversaries

In May, Anna's cousin, James Barnable, celebrated the 50th anniversary of his marriage to Lorraine. Peter surprised them by playing violin with the organist during the Mass. In August, Peter's nephew, Matthew [Barbara's son], married his fiancée, Amy, at an outdoor ceremony near Boston, MA & we sang a blessing for them. Two weeks later, on Peter's birthday, another nephew, Anthony [Norma's son] was married to Amanda in Chicago. Peter played for the processional and recessional & surprised the groom by asking Anthony's brother, Mark [also the best man], to accompany him on guitar. We travelled to and from Chicago by train. While we were there the Sisters of Saint Casimir [a Lithuanian community] delightfully surprised us with their gracious hospitality and gifted Peter with a stole woven with a Lithuanian design.

In mid-November, we had an exceptionally full weekend from Saturday through Monday. We got up at 4:00am so Anna could get to an IHM Chapter meeting in Scranton, PA. Then we drove to NJ for the party celebrating the 50th Wedding Anniversary of Donald & Joanne Gaffney [Joanne is Anna's cousin] where we sang a blessing for the couple as they were surrounded by their grandchildren in the middle of the dance floor. We stayed overnight in Mahwah, NJ with Beth Muliero [another of Anna's cousins].

After celebrating a home Mass with her family, we drove to Wappingers Falls, NY where we stayed at the Poor Clare Monastery. Later on Sunday, we visited Peter's two aunts, Delfina & Linda. We brought them Communion & anointed them with the Sacrament of the Sick. While having supper with them we were again surprised by a call telling us that their brother, Peter's Uncle Rudy, was taken by ambulance to Vassar Hospital in Poughkeepsie.

Monday, we had a preparatory meeting for a March parish mission at St. Denis in Hopewell Junction, NY. On our way home from there we visited Rudy in the hospital. Moving from one event to another felt like we had lived two weeks in 2½ days.

Ministry of Presence Continues

We sometimes share our faith through formal spiritual direction. At other times our ministry of sharing the Presence of God is more informal: walking with people on their spiritual journeys or listening to the difficulties & joys of their daily lives.

During the summer, Glenn Smith asked Peter to talk with his 91year old mother, Beverly, who had expressed an interest in becoming Catholic. While Peter met with Glenn & his mother to pray with her for her physical & spiritual healing, she asked to join the Catholic Church. A month later, we received her into the Church at a Mass in her home with her family & Lynne O'Rourke [Parish Life Director of Our Lady of Fatima in Delanson, NY]. At this Eucharistic celebration, she made a Profession of Faith, was Confirmed & received First Holy Communion. Lynne assured the family that she or someone from the parish would visit their mother regularly. Beverly's 5 children were educated by the IHM's at St. Raymond's.

We were present in December to local communities by sharing in the tree lighting ceremony in the Village of Schoharie and playing & singing at 'Miracle on Main Street' in Middleburgh.

More 50th Anniversaries

Our Bishop, Howard Hubbard celebrated his 50th Anniversary of ordination, his 75th birthday & his upcoming retirement this year. We attended an Interfaith Symposium at Siena celebrating his ministry as Albany's bishop & a Mass & reception at the Cathedral for all the people of the diocese. To celebrate Vatican II's 50th we heard a wonderful talk by Sr. Elizabeth Johnson in Albany. On Dec. 4th we celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the promulgation of its **Liturgy Constitution** by listening to speakers the Albany Liturgical Commission invited [Richard Vosko, Dianne Bergant, & Bishop Brian Dunn].

During our vacation in Bolton Landing & Westport, NY, Peter suffered a calf injury while fishing the Ausable River. Yet it did not prevent him from attending the 50th St Mary's HS class reunion weekend in Hudson, NY and celebrating Mass for his classmates.

Ecumenical Sharing & Outreach

In the fall our weekly centering prayer meeting inspired by the 11th Step of AA ["We sought through prayer & meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood God; praying only for knowledge of God's will for us & the power to carry that out."] moved from Thursday to Wednesday. This was so that after we share the local community Ecumenical Meal-NET [Neighbors Eating Together] which also moved to Wednesday evening, we can go to Stasia Hagan's home for our prayer gathering. David Nidey, Joan Miller & Darlene Rinaldo continue to be regular participants and Mike & Cathy Saccento have prayed with us also.

For the benediction at the Wednesday evening Thanksgiving Ecumenical Service in the Middleburgh Reformed Church we did a blessing based on the Sabbath Prayer from Fiddler on the Roof.

We had also adapted that prayer & did it with violin & voice for the June Baccalaureate service in Schoharie, at the request of the seniors from Schoharie High School. Earlier in June, we had done a presentation on the Catholic Liturgy for people from the four churches in the Village of Middleburgh.

IHM & OSM

Anna participated for the first time in the MDW yearly meeting in Feb. at St. Petersburg, FL. She has been a full time member of the Franciscan Ministry of the Word of Holy Name Province since 2000. While there we were invited to the IHM Convent for supper with Sisters Florence Ann and Lisa. Anna has been attending weekend chapter sessions of her IHM Congregation, as well as gatherings of the "Dream Gatherers-Mission Group", [the sisters who are her connection with the wider Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters' Congregation].

Peter continues to meet with 5 other Franciscan Friars who form a "community without walls" they call the Emmaus Fraternity. They met five times in 2013, in person, by conference call & through skype.

The group includes Chris Keenan [a NYC Fire Dept. chaplain], Neil O'Connell [adjunct professor at Lehman College living in Harlem], David Bossman [a professor at Seton Hall], Ben Taylor [founder of Create Inc. in Harlem] & Francis Kim [founder of organic farms in Korea, China & NJ].

On our way back from one of our Prayer House Community meetings in Dingmans Ferry, PA, we spent a few days at the Franciscan Retreat Center in Easton, PA so Peter could attend a "Fraternal Gathering" in preparation for his 2014 provincial chapter.

Bethany Ministries on the Road

Our first parish mission this year came as a complete surprise when we received a call from Sacramento, CA. We travelled there in March to St Paul's, a parish with a large number of parishioners from the Philippines. We began our week there by doing a retreat all day Saturday for 90 some lay ministers of the parish. We were pleasantly surprised that we were able to do a bi-lingual retreat day, in collaboration with a deacon & another Spanish speaking presenter. Neither of us speak Spanish, but Peter's violin is multi-lingual & both of us can sing in Spanish. At the end of the week, we were able to spend a day with Peter's nephew, Sean & his girlfriend in Sausalito. The week after we returned from CA, we travelled to Westwood, New Jersey to do a workshop on the Fair Trade Movement for the Social Justice Ministry of 2 parishes there. [for more info, - www.fairtradeusa.org]

We gave a week long retreat for the Felician Franciscan Sisters in Coraopolis, PA [near Pittsburgh]. And, we resumed doing Days of Reflection for the Sisters at Villa Fusco in Niskayuna, NY.

In April, we led a Mission in Mattydale, NY [Diocese of Syracuse]. And in May, we led one for 5 different Catholic parishes in Pike County, PA, near Milford [Diocese of Scranton]. We were surprised that we were able to do it and we surprised the pastors by being able to preach at all the Masses in each of the parishes, a feat which took two weekends & a complicated schedule of drivers. In July, Peter did a Mission in Tuxedo, NY to celebrate the feast of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel at a church of the same name.

Peter preached for the Franciscan Missions in 3 different parishes, one of which invited us to do a mission there in 2014. Anna preached at Minoa & Bridgeport, NY for the IHM Srs. in Peru. Peter went along to preside at some Masses & play the violin.

Our travel to local parishes in the Albany Diocese continued throughout the year. We travelled to 13 different churches on 24 weekends or feasts, covering Our Lady of Fatima, in Delanson 9 times. The sacramental minister for that parish is the pastor in Middleburgh, Fr. Bill Gorman, and sometimes he asks Peter to cover for him, especially for major feasts. We were surprised by a request to help their Parish Life Director & their Faith Formation team to prepare two young people, for Baptism, Confirmation & First Communion at the Easter Vigil. So, we spent the Triduum [Holy Thursday, Good Friday, the Easter Vigil] & Easter in Delanson this year.

We were delighted that we could cover the Black Apostolate Mass at St. Joan of Arc Parish twice in the fall. The Albany Kateri Institute for Formation of Lay Ministers invited us to lead 2 workshops on Ecclesiology in the spring. Peter continues his ministry to the Knights of Columbus, & took his 3rd degree in 2013.

God's Providential Care

Peter has become friends with an inmate at Woodbourne Prison & sometimes receives phone calls from him. Every few months, he is able to visit him in person. During one of these visits, he asked if Peter's sister, Barbara, [a published author] would help him write a memoir of his life journey. She agreed to talk to him on the phone. However, the conversation went much deeper than writing advice, since Barbara was a survivor of the very crime that led to his incarceration. It was not an easy choice for either of them to engage in this conversation. Once the choice was made, however, the Spirit surprised both of them with the depth of the healing & the potential for new life that began to emerge. Barbara said that she had expected to meet a frightening monster, but was surprised to meet a mirror of some of her own life experience.

In June, a flash flood which turned Main Street in Middleburgh into a raging river surprised us. It did not do much damage, but did remind us we are still not back in the house on Mill Lane that Hurricane Irene had flooded. We have money from insurance in a savings account to pay for moving costs, and we hope it will be soon, but, the final date is a surprise known only to God.

Our regular bills are paid, & we trust we will receive donations to cover the cost of this newsletter & our other expenses. Our 2001 Subaru now has almost 200,000 miles on it & requires expensive repairs, so we are praying for another donated car, hopefully before this one dies. Our desire is for one that is good on gas & has enough room for the ministry baggage we need on the road.

We rejoiced in God's Presence while on retreat at the Trappist Abbey of the Genesee near Rochester, NY in mid-October.

On God's Side

Our hope for the future has been nurtured by a new book written by Jim Wallis, the CEO of *Sojourners*. Its very title says a lot about living out that hope, "On God's Side: What religion forgets and politics hasn't learned about serving the common good." In a spirit of hope, we are beginning a new adventure—inviting people to be part of a lay Franciscan group to reflect on the gospel spirituality of Francis & Clare and ways of living it in our time. Our prayer for you and ourselves is our version of the full text of the Serenity Prayer:

*God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
The courage to change the things I can
and the wisdom to know the difference.*

*Living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time,
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace,
Taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it. Trusting that you will make all things right if I surrender to your will,
That I may be reasonably happy in this life,
and supremely happy with you in the eternal now of the resurrection.*

May the God of love, hope and peace meet you in each present moment of the New Year and surprise you with blessings and joy.

Fr. Peter & Sr. Anna

We try to keep our schedule updated in real time on our Bethany Ministries [website](#). Peter often posts his Sunday homilies on the Resources page there as well as on our Facebook page. You can find the [website address](#) and our [facebook page](#) with all of our contact information below.

THE FRANCISCAN MINISTRY OF THE WORD AT BETHANY MINISTRIES
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