

Musical Reflection and Benediction during the swearing in of Pete Lopez, Jan 9, 2015

Fr. Peter Chepaitis, OFM and Sr. Anna Tantsits, IHM of Bethany Ministries.

[This followed the installation of NY State Assemblyman Peter Lopez by Judge George Bartlett at the Schoharie County Courthouse. It echoed and reinforced the remarks by Mr. Lopez after his installation and came at the end the ceremony, just before the "Retrieval of Colors" by the Albany County Sheriff's Department]

Fr. Peter plays the melody of "Oseh Shalom" on the violin, and says:

That is the music to an ancient Jewish prayer, still used in the Synagogue,

The words in Hebrew sound like this: **Fr. Peter & Sr. Anna sing:**

♪♪ Oseh shalom bim-ro-mav, hu ya aseh shalomaley nu

v'al kol y'Israel, v'im ru, im ru amein.

Ya-seh shalom, ya-seh shalom, shalom alenu v'al kol y'israel...♪♪

Those Hebrew words can be translated in two ways:

*"May the one who causes peace to reign in the heavens
make peace descend on us, on all Israel, and all the world"*

They can also be translated:

*"The one who makes peace reign in the heavens,
sends peace to us, to all Israel, to the whole world."*

I believe both translations are true. We are gathered today to seek peace - to pray and work for what the song calls "shalom." And shalom means much more than the absence of violence. It means: Wholeness, healing, reconciliation/ justice, harmony, recovery/ everything that is good, not only for each of us as individuals, but for all of our sisters & brothers.

But in many ways this gift - or the potential for it - has already been given to us- to the degree that we can see the good in ourselves and each other, and work together for the common good.

The God whom we call by many names: Adonai, Father, Allah, Great Spirit and many more - has sent this shalom, this peace to us. We have seen and felt it in the response to Hurricane Irene, in the tireless work of our friend, Pete Lopez, and in so many other ways in the ongoing work of building up this community. This *shalom* is cause for rejoicing - but with the knowledge that joy is not the absence of sorrow, or even of conflict, it is the presence of God, it is the presence of Love - which I believe is God's favorite name.

May we continue to work and pray for that peace even as we open our hearts to receive it from on high and spread it to each other.

I want to end this reflection with a song. I was very moved when I heard it sung at Mario Cuomo's funeral on Tuesday. Feel free to sing or hum along after I play it once.

♪♪ Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.
Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be.
With God as our father, we are family,
Let us walk with each other in perfect harmony.

Let peace begin with me, let this be the moment now.
With every step I take, let this be my solemn vow.
To take each moment, and live each moment in peace eternally.
Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me! ♪♪

Sr. Anna: Now we would like to pray a benediction - a blessing for Pete Lopez, his constituents and the people of the State of NY - in the words of two great people - a woman and a man - whom many all over the world revere.

In the words of Mother Theresa of Calcutta:

*"Today may there be peace within.
May you trust that you are exactly where you are meant to be.
May you not forget the infinite possibilities
that are born of faith in yourself and others.*

*May you use the gifts that you have received and pass on the love
that has been given to you. May you be content with yourself
just the way you are.*

*Let this knowledge settle into your bones, and allow your soul
the freedom to sing, dance, praise and love.*

It is there for each and every one of us.

Fr. Peter: These final words of blessing are from the Hebrew book of Numbers, and are often used at Christian services. As a matter of fact, Francis of Assisi used them so often they we Franciscans like to refer to it as the Blessing of St. Francis. We pray these final words of blessing for Pete, and for all of you here.

Fr Peter & Sr. Anna sing: ♪♪ The Lord bless you and keep you,
The Lord make his face to shine upon you,
And give you peace, and give you peace.
The Lord lift love's countenance upon you,
And be gracious unto you, in mercy.
The Lord be gracious, gracious unto you. Amen. ♪♪