

Dear Friends of Bethany Ministries,

On Friday, April 25, at 8:51pm, I received a call from the personnel director of my Franciscan Province, and I was delighted to hear that the council had approved my continued involvement in Bethany Ministries as my official ministry assignment.

At the time I was at a gathering of the Prayer House Community in Dingman's Ferry, PA. It was a true joy to be able to thank God with the community which sponsored Bethany Ministries and continues to support and challenge it.

It's really hard to believe that I've been in Middleburgh for almost two years. The vision which God has revealed to us here remains the same, but the details keep changing.

As the Holy Spirit called Bethany Ministries into existence, She sustains it and regularly rewrites our calendars. I can look back over the last few months and say that I have had time to pray and work to do.

Guests are continuing to come on a regular basis, both for overnight stays and for day visits. Kateri has been able to host guests at her house while I offered opportunities for spiritual direction.

Since the last newsletter, I have done three parish missions, four retreats, and a special blessing for a herd of milk cows and their barn, collaborating with the Franciscan Ministry of the Word, Sr. Anna Tantsits IHM, and with Kim and Reggie Harris.

When I first heard the call to this life, I envisioned about a third of my time in solitude with the Lord, after the pattern of Francis. I have discovered that this deep hunger for prayer in solitude is an essential part of the ministry God calls us to.

Letter from Kateri

Hi Everyone

So much has happened since my last contribution to this newsletter. While on Sabbatical last Fall/ Winter, I began to learn how to ask for what I need and that a person's "no" is not a personal rejection.

And how did God allow me to have such a quick start on these lessons? It was so very simple: I broke my

A support team is being born out of the relationships and experience of the past two years. My Franciscan Province calls it a Refounding Core Team, and those who have been invited to be a part of it will meet regularly to share faith and listen to the Holy Spirit as the vision of the ministry unfolds.

The group consists of myself, Sr. Anna Tantsits, IHM; Kateri Maus; Sr. Joan Curley, CSJ; Arlene Shako; Jerry Marten; Rev. George McClain (of the Prayer House Community); Barbara Chepaitis, and Fr. Tom Berardi.

As the hummingbirds bring beauty and grace to my kitchen window, may the God of Grace and beauty bless you with the vision to enjoy the beauty of life and the strength to endure its difficult times.

Peace and Good,
Peter Chepaitis, OFM

From Sr. Anna Tantsits

Dear Friends,

Some of you know me. All of you have seen my name in this newsletter before.

I spent the first nineteen years of my ministry as a teacher of the primary grades by day and in my spare time got involved in various aspects of adult religious education.

For the next fourteen years as a member of various parish staffs I was responsible for the various faith formation programs and the recruiting and training of the parishioners involved in them.

Last year it was my pleasure and privilege to have a year for spiritual renewal and updating.

I spent the summer and the fall at Wellsprings Program for Christian Ministers in Glens Falls, NY and the spring doing the Franciscan Challenge Program in Rome, Italy.

Between the two programs I was able to do a Lenten parish retreat with Kateri and Peter at St. Vincent's in Cobleskill, NY.

In early October, 1996, Peter, his sister Barbara and I did a presentation of "The Prayers of St. Francis,

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left ankle on a low-ropes obstacle course.

It required surgery and was non-weight bearing for eight weeks. It was a difficult eight weeks, but it helped me to learn these valuable lessons. I considered this "Break Through Spirituality" which I continue to work on.

I believe that all of this leads me to honesty:

- » honestly asking for what I need,
- » honestly looking at myself spiritually, emotionally, and physically and,
- » honestly sharing who I am with others.

To put it simply, it's about being truly real. It is a difficult, but rewarding journey for me.

Since returning from my time away from Middleburgh, I have been able to participate in the ministry of hospitality by hosting guests at my house.

And, I am happy to announce that Bethany Ministries now has a canoe for the use of its members and guests.

"Nature Art by Kateri" continues to be a part of my contribution to Bethany Ministries.

Nature Art offers a variety of handmade items: wood carvings, tau crosses, rosaries, dream catchers, necklaces made from clay beads (all work-rolling, painting, burnishing done by hand with clay from the creek behind my house), polished rocks from the area, incense burners, etc.

If you are interested in ordering something, or have any questions please feel free to contact me at (518) 827-7829.

Thank you for all your prayers and support. Each one of you is part of the web that is Bethany Ministries.

May God continue to bless you and keep you.

Love, *Kateri*

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Embracing the Humanity of Christ" at St. Mary's in Sharon Springs, NY.

Shortly after this Peter and I did a parish mission for the St. Patrick's Cathedral Parish in Harrisburg, PA, as the culmination of their parish preparation to move into a process of forming Small Church Communities.

On November 18, 1996 I began my new job as the Associate Director for Adult Catechesis at the Office of Religious Education of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany, New York.

Since I am the only Immaculate Heart of Mary Sister from Scranton, PA, in the area, I live with the Sisters of Mercy in Rensselaer, NY, just across the Hudson River from my office in Albany. And in between my responsibilities at the Pastoral Center I am able to be involved with Bethany Ministries in various ways.

One Saturday in Advent, Peter and I did a day long workshop/retreat for all involved in the various ministries in St. Joseph's, Bogota, NJ.

My connection with Bethany Ministries also provides a chance for me to exercise the IHM charism of hospitality by being Martha for guests at the house on Mill Lane when Peter is away giving a mission or retreat.

It is also a place I can come to when I am feeling like Lazarus and only the power of Jesus can call me back to life.

And sometimes, when I get so busy about the work of the Kingdom that I forget just **whose Kingdom** it is, it's good for me to come and sit by the cornfields or the stream and, with Mary just listen to what God has to say to me -- sometimes through other guests or members of the Refounding Core Team; sometimes from the pages of a book; sometimes in a dream; and sometimes from deep within me, from that Source of Living Waters Jesus promised us would never run dry.

*With prayers, that you always
connect with that Source,
Anna Tantsits, IHM*