

Street Preaching in Middleburgh by Bethany Ministries – Dec. 6, 2019

On December 6 this year, the Village of Middleburgh, NY, celebrated “Miracle on Main St.” It was the Village’s 21st annual beginning of the Christmas Season celebration. All the restaurants and stores on Main Street stay open until 8:30. There are pony rides, a petting zoo, a tree lighting on the School lawn and all kinds of booths open on the street. Since 1998, when they were not on the road, Friar Peter Chepaitis and Sr. Anna Tantsits, IHM, of Bethany Ministries have participated. At first, they travelled from store to store playing carols on the violin and inviting people to sing with them. In 2015, they were



invited to do a presentation in the public library. This year, in spite of the stroke Peter suffered in September, they were able to do a reflection on the first live nativity scene created by Francis of Assisi at Greccio, in Italy, in 1223. Instead of live animals, they used a table full of puppets, which the children who were present used to help with the

presentation.

Peter played carols on the violin and invited the group to name the song and sing a verse together. Anna passed the puppets out as she told part of the story. They were billed in the local papers and publicity as “Fiddling Friar & Anna’s Animal Puppets.” Among other carols the Christmas song that was featured was “The Friendly Beasts,” and they made a connection between the animals that cared for Jesus & his mother and the way we can imitate them by caring for each other. Jesus had said that whatever you do for any of my brothers and sisters, you do for me and the animals show us how to do that.



The final creature that was presented was a caterpillar that transformed into a butterfly to remind us of how Christmas can transform each of us. One of the children was invited to open the puppet & bring the butterfly out of the caterpillar, to the great delight of everyone who was present.



The 20-minute presentation concluded with singing a verse Peter and Anna had written for this December event in 2011, after Hurricane Irene had devastated the Village the previous August. The verse refers to the large, solar-powered star that was placed on a high ridge to the east of the village as a memorial. It is set to the melody of “O Little Town of Bethlehem.”

🎵 O Little Town of Middleburgh - your star still shines so bright.
Above the valley from the ridge we see your wondrous light.
Yet when the darkness threatened, you found a way to rise.
The hopes & dreams of all the years shine out through you tonight. 🎵

