

The following letter was written by Anna Dec. 26, 1989. A man from Ohio had written to her as editor of the newsletter, and asked why there was so much more Christian activity in Rome, than elsewhere.

“(It’s) not by might nor power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord”. Zech. 4:6

Dear Joe,

It was a real blessing to hear from you! I am sorry that I was not able to get back to you sooner; this has been a very busy month for us. I have been pondering and praying over exactly what it is that I should share with you and hope that you will not be too disappointed in my answers and insights into what the Lord has been doing with His People in our area. We basically have no program, no game plans, no strategy in our ecumenical effort. We simply pray, listen and do whatever God tells us. He doesn’t usually give us the whole picture, but a general direction of a specific inspiration, which we follow. I will try the best I can to tell you how this all evolved.

In June of 1986, my husband and I had made up our minds to look for work in Philadelphia. At that time we were located in Utica and had been asking my husband’s boss for a transfer to Rome for a whole year – to no avail. I was literally on my way down to get our bus tickets when my husband’s boss called him and offered him the Rome transfer. My husband used to live in PA and that’s where he wants to settle, so I was very surprised when he decided to move to Rome. After we’d been in Rome a couple of months, the Lord told me that He had moved us to Rome because there was a lot of faithful people here who had persevered in seeking Him and He wanted to do something that required myself and Ken to minister to these people. At that time I did not know Caz of any other of “these people who had persevered” that the Lord had told me about. We were, however, holding retreat days for a few faithful friends from my old prayer group in Utica, 20-year veterans of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, including Sr. Betsy (you read her letters in Teruah).

In March of 1987, I was led to go and talk to an Episcopal priest (also Charismatic) in Rome. Actually, I had been thinking of joining that denomination, as I had left Roman Catholicism. But God told me in no uncertain terms that I was to join no denomination, but to work for Him only. This was pretty radical, even for me, but it has been confirmed so many times since, that I am greatly at peace with it by now. Anyhow, it was this Episcopal priest that told me about Caz. Caz had been attending his Wed. AM healing Mass. In about two weeks, I found myself there and met two of his “sheep”. Caz would never look at it this way, but I see him as a shepherd who went around “collecting” newborns in the Kingdom, mainly Roman Catholics, giving them literature, counsel, videos and rides to all types of charismatic and Catholic events. When he met me, he said that he’d been praying for someone to help him. He’d had a friend who had moved away and felt he needed help. This was the first basic bit of unifying God did – He got all of Caz’s people (some of whom were already in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal and all of whom were from all over Oneida County, not just Rome) linked up with all of “my” people – basically the Utica Prayer group and Sister Betsy, who ministers to all churches and prayer groups all over Oneida County. Add into this equation a Catholic

Charismatic priest, Fr. Dellos, who was the head of the Renewal in our region. He informed me that I was to do a newsletter for the Region – didn't ever ask me – and I said I would give it a shot. Never knowing that it would get so big. Fr. Dellos also had a heart for Unity in the Body (as Caz does) and we agreed that our regional newsletter should be ecumenical and open to all denominations. He got some flack for that right away from area conservative priests, but he stood his ground, took the word "Catholic charismatic" off the heading and let the newsletter go interdenominational rather than offend brother priests. This proved to be a real blessing in the long run, in building co-operation with other denominations.

God was doing so much with so many others all at the same time! So far we have two main clusters of dedicated Christians: The Utica prayer group & Sr. Betsy and Caz and my people in Oneida county. Father Dellos "had" 17 prayer groups under his jurisdiction. So in 1987, we were working with a population of about 300 Catholic charismatics. Fr. Dellos instituted a monthly charismatic Mass which went from town-to-town, hosted by a different church each month. The newsletter became the link that held them together, so to speak.

Enter Tom Bellinger. I don't know where Caz met him, but Tom was also given a burden by the Lord to use his resources to build the Kingdom in Unity. Tom wanted to bring in a preacher with a healing ministry. This was a Non-denominational Pastor. This became our first group project. Catholic Charismatics from Utica and Oneida County helped out. Tom also had his own cluster of workers from Vernon and Oneida. So now we had 4 clusters of dedicated Christians working together on projects – and Tom's group was basically mainline Protestant. He is in his 3rd year of hosting Pastor's luncheons where he pays for lunch and invited all the Pastors of different denominations to eat together once a month. He has from 12-16 participate monthly. God used Tom, a charismatic Presbyterian, to bring in Charlie Osburn, Catholic lay evangelist, to a Catholic church. Tom could do it because that pastor had been going to Tom's monthly luncheons and they had a relationship. This was the kind of mind-blowing thing that God did (does) up here. I, for example, became Fr. Dellos' helper in overseeing the Catholic Renewal although I was no longer Catholic and was a regular attendee of New Testament Non Denom. Church in Rome. Pastor Magead Salloum and his people, thus, became another cluster in our network. He and Fr. Dellos shared a room when a few of us went down to Wash. DC for Washington for Jesus. Magead opened his church up to the Catholic Charismatics so they (and we) could have a weekly Saturday morning prayer meeting to pray for REVIVAL in our area. The Catholic Charismatics attended a lot of Magead's special events; the Utica prayer group had Magead in to speak; and the Utica prayer group initiated a joint prayer service where they traveled to Rome to join in with a Friday evening prayer meeting with Magead's Church. NONE of this would have ever happened if people here weren't more concerned about God's Kingdom rather than building their own little kingdoms; weren't obedient to the things God asked of them even if they were "weird" things; weren't praying all the time and listening to God for directions; weren't willing to overlook personality clashes, others' mistakes, others' theological lines, all for the sake of the work God wanted done now. I have often felt that I have been watching a movie since I have been in Rome – things seem to be happening

to us – and even though I know it's through us – it is simply and very definitely a sovereign move of God.

While all of these things were coming together – Utica, Caz's people, Fr. Dellos' people, Magead's people, God raised up three important communications ministries in 1987: Teruah newsletter; WRUN-AM Christian radio and Good News Concerts. All the leaders had the same vision of the Unity of the Body of Christ and dedicated their ministries to this end. No coincidence! Caz, Tom and Magead have had as one of their main ministries the bringing in of different speakers, as God directs, on about a monthly basis, to feed the local Body. People from all the five clusters I mentioned attend these events. (There is a new "cluster" which sort of overlaps and includes some of the others – Tony Enjem's monthly HOPE Clergy and Lay fellowship. Now that Tony is president of the Utica-Rome Full Gospel Chapter, HOPE and Full Gospel people make up another cluster.)

Of course, there are many more Churches and pastors who have been and continue to bring in speakers. Our area, we believe, is unique in the number of religious events scheduled per week. My husband and I do a bit of traveling, and we are constantly amazed at how much we have up here in the way of speakers versus other places.

I do not want to exclude another mighty work that the Lord raised up here over the past 3 years – Crisis Pregnancy Center of Oneida County. This is a non-profit organization (ministry) which provides material and spiritual aid to women in crisis pregnancy situations. This ministry is run solely on the pledges and volunteer time of donors – all of whom hail from every denomination imaginable. And the director is a Messianic Jew! Because of this, I was also able to network with his fellowship of Messianic Jews in Syracuse. Looks to me like God has been able to involve just about all the denominations in His work up here! It is interesting to note that about 80 percent of the leaders God has up here were brought to Rome from other states or cities. This has happened, I am told, over the last 12 years. God told me when we first got involved with Caz in Rome that He had everything set up like dominoes and all He'd have to do was hit the first one and they'd all fall in line. Of course, I didn't know what He meant right then, but it really makes sense now.

So, I have told you our history – what God has done. But from where I'm sitting, the response is not nearly what it should be for all the time & work expended. In the beginning, when Fr. Dellos was still here (he got transferred last year), there were about 150 of the 300 active Catholic charismatics attending each monthly charismatic Mass. We have watched this number drop to anywhere from 25-80 tops for a charismatic Mass over the past two years. The new Liaison (priest who replaced Fr. Dellos) felt that I was too Pentecostal, so chose not to work with me. Now the events that are sponsored don't have a priest's blessing, and some of those Catholic charismatics who need that no longer participate. The number going to Catholic Charismatic lay leaders' meetings has dropped from 35 to 6-10. The charismatics are getting more and more involved with their own prayer groups and parishes, rather than coming together more frequently as they used to 2 and 3 years ago. None of us up here really knows what is causing this trend. There

seems to be a solid group of about 200 people of many denominations, but mostly catholic, who will go to a function or support a project nowadays. When you realize that 20 years ago there were 7,000 registered Catholic charismatics up here, that seems a very small remnant indeed.

As far as EVANGELISM – I don't believe our thrust is really on evangelism, although everyone sees that on the surface. I believe God's purpose for all this activity and networking is to bring the members of His Body together – Christian Unity. There are converts, mostly to non-denom churches, during the tent meetings and revivals we hold (or different churches up here hold.). I don't know of any Catholic converts, although Caz may know of a couple. Most of the people up here, I feel, have been inoculated with Christianity and no longer go to church at all because of having been hurt or burned out. Charlie Osburn preaches a hard (and very necessary!) message, but I don't feel he gets a very good turn out – even from big parishes.

What is looking up lately, however, is the integration of the Black Churches. There has been a long history in Rome of white Pastors persecuting Black Pastors, so the Black churches stay small and isolated. Caz and I have tried to support their events, and get our friends to, to help break down the walls. A couple weeks ago, my music group played for a concert that was sponsored by a Black music group. Afterwards a Black Pastor came up to me and asked if my group would like to play for an all-day concert he is thinking of having in March. I was surprised, because I was also praying about having the same event – in that very building! Turned out he can get the building for free and he asked me to work together with him to put on the day of concerts. “I'm not going to an all-Black heaven and I don't want an all-Black church, either!” he told me. A man after my own heart! This is such an encouragement to me after 2 and a half years of attending Black events with Caz, his wife and I being the only white people. This was a very important barrier to come down up here and I rejoice that God has begun to do it! Praise His holy Name!

Joe, I'm sorry that this has been so long and involved. I hope you can make some sense out of it all. What I am trying to convey is that there is NO program you can follow. All you can do is get together with like-minded people – those who long for Unity in the Body – those who long to see souls saved – and start praying together. Seek the Lord for what He would have you do in your area. Each area is unique. God knows what the people of each area need and will respond to. Prayer, love, commitment, FORGIVENESS, perseverance and single-heartedly FOLLOWING the Lord's instructions are the only insights I can offer. We did this day-by-day, year-by-year, not really knowing where it would all lead. I really don't think the project up here is finished yet. I still don't know what God's ultimate goal is. I know He is strengthening and healing His Body and training us so we can reach out in His Name with credibility (love). I know that He would love to involve all Christians in this effort, but if they refuse to respond, I know He will work around them in spite of them.

As far as specifics on Catholic evangelism, your main battle, I feel, is to help them get into a personal relationship with Jesus. Then they will want to get involved with going to

church and serving. Many Catholics and Catholic Charismatics up here do not go to church. Many need healing and forgiveness (they need to forgive) for past deep hurts. A one-on-one approach is always fruitful. If you sent teams out (two, ideally one man, one woman) to visit the homes (by appointment, is an option) of ex-catholics or burned-out charismatics, you could share the Gospel, or just start by forming a relationship & listening, offering to pray for them and then, down the road, at a follow-up visit, share the Gospel. Also, I do not believe that any Kingdom-building will succeed if it is not interdenominational, because that is simply God's game plan today. (ie. The New Orleans conference and the upcoming Indianapolis conference – all ecumenical, networking with the leaders of other denominations to seek out God together.)

Don't be discouraged by the lack of participation of the Pastors in your area clergy association. The Rome Clergy Asn. has about 6-12 active members (out of a potential 40 – and NO Catholic clergy attend) and only one of these (MaryEtta Skinner) works with us. The President, Col. King of the Airbase, works with us, in a sense – he lets Caz & myself attend their bi-weekly prayer meetings on the Base. The Pastors who work with us have been gathered by God through Tom Bellinger's luncheons and now also through Tony Enjem's luncheons. Lay people have put their finances on the line to pay large bills month after month to bring these Pastors together – it did not happen over night. Then you have your few stray pastors like Fr. Dellos and Magead who were (are) men of prayer and obey God in working with us lay people. The monthly packet of welcome to new people in your area is more than anything I know of that Rome's Pastor ascn. Is doing. Follow-up and visitation is, of course, ideal after the packets are sent out.

I don't know how you feel about tent meetings or revivals, but Billy Graham and the various preachers we've brought in have resulted in converts. A group of pastors could get together (with lay people, too, of course!) and decide on a speaker to bring on that will preach and give an altar call. It is very important then to have counselors representing different denomination to minister to the new converts and get them into THE CHURCH OF THEIR CHOICE. We NEVER try to get members for any particular church – only for the Body of Christ! It is a very important aspect of interdenominational work – not to ever put down a co-worker's belief or denomination nor to try to talk them or new converts to getting out of one denomination and into another. The preachers and evangelists we bring in succeed much more if they do not tear down other denominations to their listeners. You might consider using Fr. John Bertolucci in your area. He will be back from So. America in Feb. and intends to pastor a church in Hudson in 1990. He is an excellent evangelist, especially for Catholics.

You asked about funding. Caz, Tom and Tony Enjem have taken everything out of their own pockets. Most leaders up here do the same, only with more limited resources. The newsletter pays for itself (praise God!) via donations, ads, patrons and subscriptions. Crisis Pregnancy is funded by private donations, as is Sr. Betsy's traveling ministry. Most things we throw are paid for by the people throwing them. Sometimes we ask for donations (as in the case of the conference, which still went 125 dollars in the red - \$450 total cost). We use mainly free advertising (Caz & I) – there is a lot of that available up here. God has given us the great gift of a Jewish (non-church-goer) reporter from Utica

who covers all the religious events – first, a friend of Caz & now a good friend of mine – he offers to cover all our stuff without being asked and always does a great job -- another miracle! Apart from Tom’ projects, Caz’s dinners and plane tickets, most of our projects are a “free will donation” to get in (to pay the speaker, etc.) and we all scrape by on a wing and a prayer. God always provides. The music groups involved generally play for free & others help out for free. Churches are given for free, etc. – it is all God.

I think I’ve told you enough for one letter! I again apologize for the length. I hope that there was something useful in all of this that you can glean. We will definitely pray for your efforts in evangelism in your area. No one can motivate a commitment to this work, except the Holy Spirit – we have tried, it doesn’t work. What we need to pray for is that God will touch hearts and send laborers into His harvest – and that we will have the wisdom to recognize them when He sends them – the wisdom to encourage and help them develop and use their gifts – the wisdom to bring them together – and the strength to work together – no matter what! May the Lord bless you and your ministries in the coming Decade of Evangelism!

In Jesus’ Love,
Anna Behrens