



The Post-Standard

Vision of peace lives on in village

Saturday, March 04, 2006
RENEE K. GADOUA
RELIGION NOTEBOOK

Before his death Feb. 8, 1996, the Rev. Bruno Hussar, founder of the "Oasis of Peace," urged people "to be united in love and faith."

According to a translation of his will, recorded in Hebrew, Hussar described the community he founded halfway between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem as an effort at live reconciliation between Jews and Palestinians.

"In order to work fruitfully towards this aim, we need to have mutual understanding and consideration of each other in this village," he said. "Faith in the ultimate victory of love over hate." Hussar's vision remains relevant amid recent events in the Middle East, the group said in a news release.

In April, two residents of the village spoke at Manlius Pebble Hill School in DeWitt during an 11-day tour of the Northeast.

The community Hussar settled in the early 1970s is home to 53 families - half of them Jewish and half Palestinian. The village is called Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam; the Hebrew and Arabic translate to "Oasis of Peace." It is a reference to a quotation in the Book of Isaiah: "My people shall dwell in an oasis of peace."

Hussar, a Jew born in Egypt who converted to Catholicism and became a priest, believed peace was possible.

"This is the real aim of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam - to keep the hope alive and to sow a lot of love seeds in this dry earth of our land," he said in his will. "The fruit will come in its time, on the day of harvest."

Holiness survey

A recent survey by the Barna Research Group found that 21 percent of Americans consider themselves holy, while about a fifth of respondents said they did not know how to define holiness.

"Most adults remain confused, if not daunted, by the concept," said a news release from the Evangelical Christian pollster George Barna. Read about the survey at www.barna.org/ Barna has visited Central New York several times, most recently in September 2003 at Believers'

Chapel in Cicero.

The telephone survey of 1,003 adults found that one in five could not describe what it means to be holy. According to the release, 19 percent of respondents described holiness as "being Christlike"; 18 percent described holiness as making faith a top priority; 12 percent described the quality as living a pure or sinless lifestyle; and 10 percent described holiness as having a good attitude about people and life.

Holiness, the release noted, is a central teaching of many Protestant churches. The survey results worry Barna.

"The results portray a body of Christians who attend church but do not understand the concept or significance of holiness," he said. "The challenge to the nation's Christian ministries is to foster a genuine hunger for holiness among the masses who claim they love God but who are ignorant about biblical teachings regarding holiness."

Time for spiritual cleansing

As we tire of slipping on the ice and shoveling snow, consider Deborah King's suggestions for spiritual spring cleaning.

"We all have issues that block the flow of spiritual energy and hinder our growth and happiness," she said in a news release promoting her nonprofit organization, Miracle Healings. "Now is a good time of year to zero in on the spiritual bad habits you're living with and work to replace them with healthy new ones."

A biographical sketch on www.miraclehealings.com/ says King has a law degree and a degree in healing science and "started studying healing after her own miraculous recovery from illness many years ago."

To sweep away spiritual debris, she suggests identifying distressing spiritual issues; seeking help; starting a journal.

She suggests meditation, which she calls "basic spiritual hygiene."

She also urges people to enjoy nature.

"It reminds you that renewal and rebirth are not only possible, but natural," she says. And it reminds us that winter eventually ends.

Renee K. Gadoua covers religion and spirituality for The Post-Standard. Reach her at rgadoua@syracuse.com or 470-2203.

© 2006 The Post-Standard. Used with permission.

Copyright 2006 syracuse.com. All Rights Reserved.