

**2019 BTC Journals**

**Day Four – Meriden to Waterbury**

We all began to awaken and prepare for our ride to Waterbury. Fr. Tom and Carol were preparing breakfast for us. Scrambled eggs, sausage, and toast. The coffee tasted good this morning but some of us had problems with the coffee machine. All in all we had a nice morning.

The weather this morning was indicating we would have a rainy day. We prepared for that. There would only be 5 of us cycling today, me, Johnnie F, Lauren, Claudia, and Claire. Wendy arrive with Doris in time for breakfast.

We loaded the support vehicles, pumped tires, and took a photo outside the garage. We were joined by Juan who was the nighttime custodian and a very friendly guy with a big smile. Ft. Tom sent us off with a nice prayer.

We all put on rain jackets because it began to spit a little but before we actually began the ride, we decided to let it be and cycled without them.

The ride to Waterbury was going to be a wet one. I warned Claudia to mind her breaking and taking turns due to the wetness. She was a fast learner.

For the most part the ride to Waterbury was pretty good. Only wet. We were all careful. It was not a constant rain so it was tolerable. Again, think of the homeless outside in the rain. Who cares about them? We know we will have a shower later in the day. They never know when their next shower will be.

As we entered the Waterbury area I was wondering if we would hit any really hard hills. Again I had not driven this Cue Sheet and was somewhat worried what we would encounter. The Holy Spirit was with us as we did not have to climb any really challenging hills. We all did fine.

First on our itinerary was getting to GWIM, the Greater Waterbury Interfaith Ministries. We visited them in 2017 and we were curious how it would be coming back. Barbara Dunn was excited to have us back. I was wondering about little Jordan, the 5 year old that broke my heart two years ago. Seeing little kids in a soup kitchen just is not right!

We were invited to have lunch assured there was enough food for all those who really needed it. We slowly entered the eating area. Barbara was already trying to get a reporter from the Waterbury Republican either to come over or on the phone. That did happen and I spoke to one for round 30 minutes. We would see the article the next morning.

I mingled with the guests and am always amazed how pleasant they are. No bitterness, no angriness. Always smiling because it was going to be a great day. Most are very faith filled. I guess you have to be to get by day to day.

I asked Barbara what was different from two years ago. Were the number of homeless actually down like the recent news article indicated? She replied that possibly the number is down but the need for more food is very high. More than ever. That says a lot right there. And, there are more families coming with little kids. I asked her about Jordan. She said he still comes with his Gramma. I felt that little twinge in my chest.

I recognized some of the folks there helping out. Regina with her big smile, stood out just like two years ago.

We interacted with some of the guests. One in particular was in need of getting his bicycle repaired. Apparently, there are no bike shops nearby in Waterbury. We talked to him about BiCiCo and the good they do but how would he get his bike to Hartford? That is the real problem with being homeless. How do you get from this place to that. Especially if you are in need of a shelter. This young man was pretty ingenious. He handed out a card with his “needs” to anyone who he thought could help him. He knew exactly what he needed to get by. I asked him about a job. He was in construction, a real handyman but currently out of work. Hard to find long-term employment in this field. You have to feel for these folks. The day to day struggle. The stigmatism they all face. People just don’t get it! They are just like You or Me! Any of us can be here at a soup kitchen or looking for a shelter. One wrong decision, one mishap and it can happen. We here this over and over with those we speak with. Those are the stories we bring with us when we speak during our presentations. Those who never visit a soup kitchen or go to a shelter. It should be a mandatory thing for any local, state, or federal legislator to do!

As we began to get ready to leave, Barbara invited us back for next year. We will think about it. Normally we do not do that but maybe we will this time.

We decided we would go for some ice cream before heading over to the Salvation Army Shelter. John and Sue found a place in the mall nearby. Hershey Ice Cream. Yummy stuff! The lady behind the counter asked what we were about. John filled her in and then she offered him $20 as a donation. John said we do not take donations. So, he asked her to write a letter to here legislator which she said she would do.

We got back on our bikes and cycled over to the Salvation Army Shelter which we found was under an emergency renovation and that Sofia Swaby was not there because they had no power and she was somewhere else responding to some other situation. Luckily Rebecca showed up and talked about what they have been doing at the shelter over these past two years since we last visited. More divorced situations, more single dads. She was an excellent substitute for us and talked to us for at least 25 minutes.

So John and Sue went out scouting tomorrow’s Cue Sheet to see if we had to make any changes. We had a lot of time before we had to be at the Basilica which was only about 5 minutes away. I had called Jason, our contact there, to see if we can come over earlier than expected. He said he would call when we can come over. Lucky for us he called shortly after Rebecca had to leave. So, we cycled over to the Basilica and were greeted by Jason, Donna, and Fr. Jim Sullivan. Nice “reunion” with both Fr. Jim and Donna.

Donna pointed out the sleeping arrangements and no women were “allowed” on the second floor as they might run into a priest and an uncomfortable situation. We began to scramble for our sleeping spots. Joan and I would be in one of the offices with our blowup mattress. The girls were all together in the living room. John and Tom were upstairs.

We all did our shower thing and got ready for supper. Excellent food again and we were stuffed. Slowly john slipped out to prepare for the presentation which would be in the Basilica proper. We expected a large crowd.

Well less than that attended but it was a worthy audience. Those in attendance sat in the first few pews and were attentive during the entire presentation. Fr. Marcin also attended but did not interact much with us. I think he expected more people too.

But all in all, it was a successful evening with all of us participating. Some people wondered in off the street but that was okay too.

We all eventually got back to the living room. It seemed everyone was anxious to get to bed but we had to do the word of the day. Somehow we began and after each person shared they threw a grapevine stem to the next person to speak. A bit different than normal but it worked.

**Day Four’s Word of the Day:**

Johnnie F Perseverance

Claudia Joy

Lauren Lovely/Fake it until you make it

Joan Contradiction

Wendy Support

Tom B Smooth as silk

Claire Reuniting

John Forgiveness/the best thing we have going for us

Sue Humbled

Doris Experience

Lou Content