Proclaiming Jesus through Catholic Renewal and Evangelization

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

A letter from Ralph Martin

Last month I wrote about how “the persecution is beginning” and that there are strong forces hostile to Christ and the Church that are trying to drive us into a ghetto and silence His voice in our nations. We must prepare for this pressure by drawing ever closer to Christ and becoming ever clearer about the Truth.

In this issue we’re sharing with you a news report we received from reliable sources that describe how the persecution of Christians in Egypt—intensifying since the “Arab spring” is being dominated by more radical Islamists—has led large numbers of Christians to turn to the Lord in fervent prayer. May we do the same, not only for ourselves but for our endangered and persecuted brothers and sisters around the world.

We are also sharing a testimony from one of our long-time supporters about how important “baptism in the Spirit” has been to her whole life. The recent Popes have been crying out for a “new Pentecost” to re-energize the Church for the challenges we are facing—the collapse of Christian society and the need for a new evangelization. Let’s keep spreading the word that this “new Pentecost” is possible and is being realized by millions as they experience “baptism in the Holy Spirit.”

Also in this issue Peter Herbeck writes his usual excellent article on the supremacy of Christ in our lives.

On another matter, Sr. Ann Shields sent out an email when the news first came out about my appointment as a Consultor to the Pontifical Council for the New Evangelization, but I know that many don’t always check their emails, etc. For those who haven’t heard, Pope Benedict XVI appointed me as a Consultor to the new Vatican office commissioned to make the “new evangelization” better known and more effectively implemented in the Church. The appointment is for five years and involves occasional meetings and requests for advice and counsel. It’s truly a blessing and an honor to be named and I experience this as the Lord giving all of us encouragement in the long journey we have been on working and praying for a renewal in holiness and evangelization in the Church. I believe this official recognition by the Church and official request to bring what we have learned into the highest counsels of the Church is intended to strengthen and encourage all of us as we continue each in our own vocations, making our own unique contributions by praying, suffering, witnessing, and financial giving for renewal and evangelization.

Your brother in Christ,

Ralph Martin

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We’re printing a picture of the Great Wall of China because it isn’t safe to print photos of our work there. Some of our team members and people we work with had very close calls. Persecution of Christians in China continues, as it does for so many of our fellow Christians in various places in the world. And it’s coming our way.
Back in the late 1960’s there was a growing void within me. I had a wonderful husband, two healthy children and we were financially comfortable, yet deep within me I knew there had to be more to life. I had a hunger and thirst that was not being met spiritually. We were the active Catholics in the pew that had not been evangelized yet. The church was still a place to go to, to be busy in, a compartment in our lives that was becoming empty. One morning after communion I prayed the most sincere prayer of my adult life up to that point, “Lord if you are really real in this Eucharist you need to show me because I could walk out of this church and keep going.” I spoke of this to no one but within a few weeks someone invited me to a prayer meeting, stating that it was a place where you really encountered Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

I was curious and went. At first it seemed foreign to me; however the Holy Spirit drew me back. I began to recognize that I knew about God in my head, but not in my heart and soul like the people there did. Fr. Jim Ferry led the large meeting of over a hundred people at St. Anthony’s in Northvale N.J. I was still a spectator while others were praying out loud, praising the Lord with arms outreached to Him. I sat in silence, humbly recognizing a Holy Presence beyond anything I had ever experienced as a Catholic.

My heart burned within as Fr. Jim spoke: “You do not become a Christian by hanging out in church anymore then you become a horse by hanging out in a barn. Becoming a Christian is inviting Jesus to become Lord of every area of your life so that you can have a personal and intimate relationship with Him.

It is surrendering to His Lordship in your life. Surrender is an act of humility. Even when the enemy surrenders he raises his hands.” Those people were free in worship, I wasn’t. Then he went on to say, “Many people in the Church live with one foot in the boat and one foot on the docks of the world, a very dangerous place to be especially when the boat starts to move out into deeper waters. Jesus is the Boat. At some point in our lives we have to make a decision; we can’t have it both ways. We are either in His Kingdom, in Him with His values, or out of it in the world with worldly values. Yes, our godparents carried us into the church to be baptized, but faith needs feet and at some point as adults we need to say yes to that faith. We need to make that decision ourselves and step forward to surrender and embrace that faith as our own. The distance of the journey is from our head to our heart.”

His words helped me to understand and embrace this grace of God for my own life. I wanted Jesus and His Kingdom. Along with others, one by one we knelt down and surrendered to the Lord, repented of our sins and asked to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. When I stepped out into the hall I was weak in the knees and had to lean against the wall. A soft electrical current was going through my body while I felt the warm water of His love gently washing over me and through me, penetrating every cell and making me feel so light and clean while quenching my deepest thirst. It was an experience of infused love beyond any earthly love. But as wonderful as all that was, the greatest experience for me was at that moment I tasted the Eucharist in my mouth! God had so generously answered my prayer from the weeks before. Almost immediately Scripture came alive, a hunger for the Eucharist and daily prayer were the highlights of my day. The truths of our Faith and “being Church” not merely going to church were infused in me. I wanted to share this with others. Now I understood evangelization because I had experienced conversion and my personal Pentecost!

Fr. Jim would remind us, “The devil likes to keep us busy doing good things that are not necessarily God’s thing for us. GOOD minus GOD=0. In God’s mercy He brought us to Himself through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We are the ones who received this grace so we are the ones to share this grace.” He would always say, “Remember there is always more—seek the more that is Jesus!”
It is always a great honor to receive an invitation for mission from Fr. Bőjte Csaba, a Hungarian Franciscan priest in Transylvania, who cares for 3000 orphans in 60 houses. He is very popular in the media and his books are bestsellers. Without a doubt, he is the number one moral authority among the Hungarian speaking community of Transylvania and also in Hungary. Fr. Bőjte planned a special kind of retreat in Nagyszalonta, very close to the Hungarian border. He had restored five large buildings there, former barrack-rooms of the communist army and he announced that between the meditations everybody was invited to work—digging, planting, and carrying water on the huge territory. The audience was really mixed: older children from the orphanage, some of their nurses and a lot of people from Transylvania and Hungary who support Fr. Csaba’s work. They were also very mixed in terms of their beliefs: believers and non-believers, various teachers groups, and a crew of a politically “right wing guard” with a very Hungarian nationalist ideology, many of them wearing a type of uniform. Our priority from the first moment was to evangelize the group.

We began the retreat on Friday with an opening Mass in the parish church of the city. The theme of the retreat was peace—with God, with ourselves, with our family. Laci and I had the opportunity to share our stories of reconciliation with God. We spoke about the importance of repentance and faith in the Redeemer, as the way of reconciliation with God and the way of justification.

The following day we continued our spiritual program in the main dining room of Fr. Csaba’s place. After our common worship and prayers, Fr. Csaba spoke about the Father’s plan for every creature’s life and harmony with God’s will as the source of our inner peace. He also talked about peace with the created world and in the spirit of St. Francis he reminded us of our God-given call “to cultivate and care for the earth.” After the meditations we went to work. It was really touching to labor together with the orphaned children. They wanted to work with us whole heartedly, and they needed our love and presence every moment. The time with them was also part of the mission. We took a break for a quick lunch and continued working until it was almost dark.

We then began our evening session with worship and more talks for about 120 in attendance. Laci and I, as two family men, spoke about the “secret” of peace in the family and the necessary and strong foundation of faith in the living God. I also made it clear in front of the “guard members” that the best way to love their country is to love their wives and children and to be faithful in their marriages, something only possible with the grace of the living God. Laci emphasized the importance of common prayer in the family. Both of us were very serious about proclaiming the basic Gospel in front of this mixed audience. While preaching I felt the walls of some hard hearts, but I also felt the Lord’s power and mercy to break them. After some worship songs we finished the day and on the way back we prayed for the sowed seeds to grow! We were also happy because our connection with Fr. Csaba was strengthened. I believe the Lord will use us together in the great work of the new evangelization.

A “team” of eager helpers worked beside Zoli and Laci throughout the afternoon. They are some of the 3,000 orphans cared for by Fr. Casaba in Transylvania.

“We spoke about the importance of repentance and faith in the Redeemer, as the way of reconciliation with God and the way of justification.”
First Things First

I’m a slow learner. I often forget to keep first things first. When it comes to the most important aspects of faith, I find in myself a tendency to let secondary things take the first place. For example, I know that the most fundamental and important realities of our faith come from what God has done for us. Yet I often forget that and act as if the most important things are what I do for God!

The apostles worked hard to help our brothers and sisters in those early Christian communities keep first things first. St. Peter said: “I intend to always remind you of these things” and “to arouse you by way of reminder.” (2 Peter 1:12) He was intent on reminding them because he knew how easy it is to forget what matters most. He knew that the fundamental truth about our lives, the most important things we could ever know, come from what God has done for us. Knowledge, real living and personal knowledge of God’s action in our lives, of the facts of salvation, make it possible for us to grasp the meaning of our lives.

St. Peter begins his second letter with a powerful reminder of what God has done for us:

“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, that through these that you may escape the corruption that is in the world because of passion and the shadow of death and to guide our feet into the way of peace” (Luke 1:78–79).

“See what love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are” (1 John 3:1). Friends, do you see what love the Father has given to you? With tender compassion our God has come to restore our dignity, to give us an identity and destiny that is unimaginable. Can you hear the amazement and the wonder in the words of the apostles and prophets?

“None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, ‘What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him’” (1 Corinthians 2:8–9).

And with utter confidence in God the apostles knew that what has been given to us by God’s power can never be taken from us:

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? … For I am sure (convinced) that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:35, 37–39).

What the Father has done for us in Christ Jesus is a fact and it is yours as a free gift. You
don’t deserve it and you cannot earn it. What the Father has given to you is the deepest, most important truth about your life. This is what gives our lives true meaning. Nothing else will ever give us the peace, joy, hope, contentment and purpose we all seek.

Recently, while at home alone painting our living room, the Lord helped me remember this simple truth. As I was painting I was listening to some Christian music, when a song came on that spoke about the Father’s love. It had a simple message: God made me; He is my Father, and He is love. In Jesus the Word, he came to speak that love directly to me. He told me, he showed me, that I am made by love, for love and that the whole and entire purpose of my life is simply to say “Yes!” to that love. That is the point of my life.

As I stood with my paint roller in hand, the Spirit began to touch me, to open my heart again to this simple, beautiful, life-changing truth that I so often forget: my life has ultimate, unfathomable meaning because God knows me and loves me, period. It was a moment of grace, one that I needed. As it made its way from my head to my heart, all I could do was sit down and weep for a long time, expressing both sorrow to the Lord for losing sight of the gift, and for joy and a sense of child-like wonder. I kept hearing what seemed like the Lord’s voice in my heart saying: “See what love the Father has given to you, Peter!”

The Crossing the Goal team is in action, not only with their weekly television show, but with men’s conferences in March and April 2012. For more information go to www.crossingthegoal.com.

Please Pray…

+ for all Christians throughout the world suffering persecution and hardship. May they be strengthened and encouraged to persevere to the end.

+ for the 20th annual Lift Jesus Higher Rally in Toronto on March 3. May all those who attend be more deeply converted through the proclamation of the Gospel.

+ for the prayer intentions of all our supporters and their family members, especially as they face the challenges of illness and economic uncertainty.

Thank you for your continued support through prayer as we labor together for the Gospel and the renewal of the Church.
Egypt’s Remarkable Prayer Gathering

An estimated 70,000 Egyptian Christians gathered on November 11, 2011 for praise, worship and prayer at St. Simon Church in Cairo while millions around the globe followed the event live on television and the Internet. This was a significant event on multiple levels: it was the largest Christian gathering in the modern history of Egypt; it brought together for the first time all Christian denominations: Coptic Orthodox, Catholics and all branches of Protestant and Evangelical Christians. The prayer meeting started at 6:00 PM and continued uninterrupted until 6:00 AM the following day! The focal point of the gathering was repentance and forgiveness.

The leaders of all churches came together in unprecedented unity to lead thousands of people in worship and prayer for Egypt: “We are here to rend our hearts before the Lord and repent of all our sins,” said one priest. Before leading the people in prayers of repentance he reminded all church leaders, “Let the priests, who minister before the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar. Let them say, ‘Spare your people, Lord. Do not make your inheritance an object of scorn, a byword among the nations.’ Why should they say among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’” (Joel 2:17) Another priest prayed for the healing of the land and for God’s intervention to save the country from a disastrous famine as the Nile is drying up at an alarming rate. The powerful time of praise and worship focused on God’s glory being declared once again over the land of Egypt. One of the highlights of the event was a prayer of dedication, wherein the country and its people were covenanted to the Lord to live a consecrated life.

This historic day of prayer took place at a momentous juncture considering the current situation in Egypt. Nine months to the date, on February 11, 2011 the former President of Egypt, Hosni Mubarak was forced out of office. The January 25th leaderless revolution that surprised the world seemed to have succeeded in putting an end to decades of oppression and corruption. However, the following nine months saw nothing but chaos, brutality and frustration. More than 12,000 people have been detained and tortured by military tribunals mainly for speaking up against the injustices and lack of freedom. Hundreds of people have lost their lives due to the lack of security. Tourism and the economy in general are in a free fall since the revolution. A sense of despair and frustration is gripping the people, especially the younger generation, who stood up against the escalating injustices and paid with their lives demanding freedom and basic human rights.

The culmination of this sense of despair reached an unprecedented level on October 9, 2011 when the army brutally massacred 27 Christians and injured more than 300 in downtown Cairo. The peaceful demonstrators, both Christians and Muslims, were demanding basic human rights of respecting the establishment of places of worship (churches) that were previously destroyed by the government. They took their frustration to the streets in peaceful demonstrations after repeated attacks on churches, Christians, homes and businesses owned by Christians. The demonstrators were...
run over by military tanks that literally crushed them. These barbaric acts that were seen around the globe were condemned by international governments and human rights’ groups, however, no word of apology was offered by Egyptian officials.

The landscape in Egypt is changing for the worse; the earlier scenes of Christians and Muslims united during the revolution, praying and standing together in Tahrir Square for a common future for their country have been replaced by Islamic fanaticism that excludes Christians and moderate Muslims from their political program. The current developments are worrying Christians and Muslims alike as their hopes for a democratic Egypt that respects the freedom of religion and citizenship for all are slipping away as an Islamic state looms on the horizon.

The 70,000 Christians who gathered in St. Simon Church have a different way of looking at the future. They were very aware that they were praying at the exact location where 1,000 years ago God answered the prayers of Egyptian Christians and miraculously intervened to spare their lives against the aggressions of the Caliph. The prayer movement that started several years ago is now spreading to churches across Egypt, and this spark cannot be quenched. Egyptian Christians realize that their hope and trust are not in earthly powers and systems but in the resurrected Christ who is given all power and authority on heaven and on earth. Whatever the future holds for the Christians of Egypt, they are heirs of one of the richest histories of the faith; they gave to Christianity the first organized theological school in Alexandria, the deep sense of spirituality in the monastic movement and above all a large number of Christian martyrs. They will continue to be a blessing to the nations through their lives of dedicated prayer, humility and service.

An estimated 70,000 Egyptian Christians gathered in November for prayer at St. Simon Church in Cairo. This largest multi-denominational gathering in modern Egyptian history lasted twelve hours, focusing on repentance and forgiveness.

The 20th Annual Catholic Renewal Ministries
Lift Jesus Higher Rally
GIVE THANKS, BE HEALED, RESTORE YOUR HOPE!
An Uplifting Day with
- Powerful Talks
- Videos from Missions
- Eucharistic Healing Procession
- Divine Mercy Celebration
- High Mass with Archbishop Collins

Tickets/Information:
Cost: Adult Rally $19.00
416-251-4255 or 905-270-2510 or
pdkromer@rogers.com
Catholic Renewal Ministries, P.O. Box 45018
5845 Yonge Street, Toronto, Ontario M2M 3V0

Saturday, March 3rd, 2012
9AM–5:30 PM
Metro Toronto Convention Centre
North Building
255 Front Street W., Lower Level

Calling all teens!
Separate Youth Rally
A high energy day with music, skits, talks and testimonies
Cost $10.00

Special Guests
Archbishop T. Collins Fr. Jonathan Morris Msgr. Gregory Smith
And The Renewal Team
Ralph Martin, Peter Herbeck and Sr. Ann Shields, SGL
On the Road

“This very moment I may, if I desire, become the friend of God.”

Saint Augustine

“When just imagine a people who worship with an amazing fervor while often meeting in secret. Think of a people who are simply heroic in many ways—but their eyes well up with tears when they realize you have come to share the Word of God with them, tears stream down their faces when they sing hymns, and they may sob uncontrollably when you reach out to pray with them. It’s a difficult thing to convey in words only.”

A letter from one of our team members working with persecuted Christians

February 2012

Lincoln, NE, Diocesan Women’s Retreat
February 3–5
Sr. Ann Shields
Contact Allan Zach at: al-zach@cdolinc.net
or 402-786-2705

*Birmingham, AL, Crossing the Goal Taping
February 12–15
Peter Herbeck

*Tulsa, OK,
Diocesan Clergy Continuing Education Day
February 14
Ralph Martin

Flushing, MI, St. Robert’s Parish
February 19–21
Sr. Ann Shields, Ralph Martin, Peter Herbeck
Contact Deborah Thiede at: 810-659-2501

Detroit, MI, Sacred Heart Major Seminary
St. Paul Fellowship
Friday, February 24
Ralph Martin
Contact Peter Williamson at 734-434-2781
or williamson.peter@shms.edu

*Cromwell, CT, St. John’s Parish Mission
Monday, February 27–Tuesday, February 28
Ralph Martin
Contact number: 860-635-5590

March 2012

Toronto, Ontario, Canada
20th Annual Lift Jesus Higher Rally
Saturday, March 3, 9 AM–5:30 PM
Ralph Martin, Sr. Ann Shields, Peter Herbeck, Debbie Herbeck
Contact numbers: 416-251-4255
or Sadie at 905-270-2510
or www.lift-jesus-higher-rally.org

Hattiesburg, MS, Parish Mission
March 4–5
Ralph Martin
Contact: dburckel@aol.com

North Ridgeville, OH, St. Peter’s Parish
Tuesday, March 6
Sr. Ann Shields
Contact Robert Franco: franco@stpetermr.org

* Omaha, NE
Institute for Priestly Formation Council
Thursday, March 8
Ralph Martin

Springfield, VA
Diocesan Day of Renewal for Women
Saturday, March 10
Ralph Martin
Contact: t.bermpohl@arlingtondiocese.org

Lithicum, MD, Parish Mission
March 11–12
St. Ann Shields
Contact Beth Vissari at: bvissari@gmail.com

Fenton, MI
St. John the Evangelist Evenings of Renewal
March 12–13
Ralph Martin
Contact: SSlon@aol.com or 810-919-8066

St. Louis, MO, Renewal Conference
March 16–18
Ralph Martin
Contact: janeguenther@archstl.org

Jackson, MI, Queen of the Miraculous Medal Parish Lenten Mission
March 18–20
Peter Herbeck, Sr. Ann Shields, Ralph Martin
Contact Joan Grant at: 517-783-2748

*Events not open to the public

Renewal Ministries is a Catholic ministry committed to renewal and evangelization in the Church. It seeks to proclaim Jesus Christ through its TV and radio outreaches, as well as through books, tapes, conferences, retreats and other international evangelistic events.

Editor
Debra Herbeck

Design
Anne Martin

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