Dear Fellow Disciples,

Greetings in the Lord!

As I write this I’m coming to the end of the most “packed” travel schedule I think I’ve ever had. So many doors are opening that Anne and I were asked by my spiritual director to pray and discern about what the priority should be in accepting these invitations. We’ve come up with a sense of what our priorities should be and my spiritual director agrees that they are sound. So, we’ll see!

Beginning with our *Lift Jesus Higher Rally* in Toronto in early March, travel or speaking has almost been non-stop up until April. Our 20th annual Rally in Toronto was inspiring as usual, and you’ll find some good photos in this newsletter. In conjunction with the Rally, Msgr. Gregory Smith, the Chairman of our Canadian Board, Peter Herbeck and I were able to have dinner with Cardinal Collins and retired Bishop Pearce Lacey, our Episcopal Advisors in Canada, to discuss matters of mutual concern. This year was special for me since my nephew, Fr. Jonathan Morris, whom many of you might have seen as a Catholic commentator on Fox News Channel, spoke at the Rally with me for the first time. Our talks meshed together really well and we’ll be making them available in both CD and DVD formats as soon as we can get them produced. We’ll let you know, certainly by the next newsletter, but perhaps by email as well. Fr. Jonathan grew up right next door to us—and it was really special preaching with him for the first time. He’s now a priest in the Archdiocese of New York, assisting Cardinal Dolan with Catholic media, in residence at Old Saint Patrick’s in lower Manhattan.

From Toronto I flew right to Hattiesburg, Mississippi where long-time supporters of Renewal Ministries hosted me for a mission at Sacred Heart Parish. All the priests and parishes there collaborated and it was a special joy to see Fr. Godfrey Andoh, from the Archdiocese of Cape Coast, Ghana, who is a student in our STL program at Sacred Heart Seminary in Detroit. He is serving in a parish there while he works on his thesis. I was asked to address the junior and senior students at Sacred Heart High School.
Dear Fellow Disciples

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After I returned from Hattiesburg I drove to Grand Rapids, MI where I met with the editors of Eerdmans Publishing, who have decided to publish my dissertation on evangelization as a book. This is a well respected publishing house and it is definitely a blessing. They hope to have it out by the fall in time for the World Synod of Bishops in Rome on the New Evangelization. It is entitled: Will Many be Saved: What Vatican II Actually Teaches and Its Implications for the New Evangelization.

Then I was off to the Diocese of Arlington, VA where I gave three talks at the annual Catholic Women’s Lenten Retreat Day. It was a capacity crowd of over 300 and the organizers told me they could have had another 100 women there if they had the space. There was special joy here too—my two youngest married daughters were there for the day along with some old friends from across the years and cities, as well as my wife Anne. I then spoke at a two night parish mission in Fenton, MI. I love the message on holiness and evangelization that the Lord has given me to preach and teach; I can see it helping people every time I have the chance to do so.

Next I took a very special trip to Washington, D.C. to the headquarters of the US Bishops where I was asked to address the Bishops’ Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis. Cardinal Wuerl spoke first and then I gave a forty minute presentation which seemed to be well received.

My next stop was St. Louis, MO where I had dinner with Archbishop Carlson, our Episcopal Advisor in the US on two nights, and gave four talks at the Catholic Charismatic Spring Conference. I stayed an extra day, again at the home of long-time supporters of Renewal Ministries, to speak at the Legatus Chapter of St. Louis, an organization devoted to building up the faith of Catholic chief executives.

Then home to a parish mission in Jackson, MI where one of my former students from the seminary is now a fervent associate pastor. Then to New Orleans, where old friends, Al and Patti Mansfield (many of you know Patti from The Choices We Face) continue to organize a yearly conference for the Catholic charismatic renewal. Then home to another parish mission in Michigan and finally it was April, with significant events, but less of them!

In between all these opportunities to serve God’s people were classes at the seminary, meetings at Renewal Ministries, etc.

Thanks for your prayer support. During times like this it really makes a difference. And of course, Peter and Sr. Ann have full schedules as well. What great opportunities the Lord is giving us in these crucial days.

Thank you to those who have been standing with us for many years, and also to those who have just begun to stand with us—it makes so much possible.

Your brother in Christ,

Ralph Martin

P.S. A week before Archbishop Dolan of New York left for Rome to become a Cardinal he asked me to be his guest on his weekly radio program. I found the program very inspiring and I think you will as well. A link to the program is now posted on the Bulletin Board of the home page of our website. www.renewalministries.net. Let’s pray for Cardinal Dolan as he leads the American Bishops in their response to those powers who seek to limit the freedom of the Church and impose on it alien values.

Two of Ralph and Anne Martin’s daughters, Rachel and Maureen, who live in the Washington, DC area, joined them at the Catholic Women’s Day in the Diocese of Arlington, Virginia.
Celebrating 20 Years!
Lift Jesus Higher Rally

Thank you for your continued support through prayer as we labor together for the Gospel and the renewal of the Church.

Please Pray...

+ for an abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the life of the Church and an increased hunger for the presence and power of the Lord.
+ for our bishops and priests that they may have courage and wisdom in confronting the attack on religious liberty.
+ for continued renewal, revival and restoration of the Catholic Church in Canada.
+ for the prayer intentions of all our supporters and their family members, especially as they face the challenges of illness and economic uncertainty.

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This year’s rally, attended by more than 1,000 youth was held in the more intimate setting of the John R. Bassett Theatre. One youth group leader later emailed to share how the theme of Freedom had resonated with his teens. “I brought a bus of 48 people this year, and the teenagers were impacted in a very powerful way. The Holy Spirit was clearly bringing restoration and healing in many people’s lives!”

Award winning Canadian music artist and worship leader Chris Bray and his team led the youth into the presence of the Lord throughout the day. One teen commented, “The Rally was one of the greatest experiences! The worship was amazing and I got to go to confession for the first time since elementary school. I was able to literally lift Jesus higher, which was unreal! I cannot wait until next year! It was also nice being in a room filled with Christians and being able to experience the presence of Jesus in the room.”

Ralph and his nephew Fr. Jonathan Morris joyfully preached the word together at the Rally.

Young people witnessing and ministering to their peers is a powerful and effective way to evangelize! A team of 23 young people from Michigan (seen here), along with the Souled Out youth group from Grimsby, Ontario, hosted the day—performing skits, sharing their faith, and praying with many.
A capacity, standing room only crowd of more than 3,500 adults gathered in Constitution Hall of the Toronto Metro Convention Centre for a day entitled, “Give Thanks, Be Healed, Restore Your Hope.” For many there, it was their first time at this annual event in Toronto.

Renewal Ministries' staff members Jan Sauter (left) and Kathleen Kittle worked hard throughout the day to provide resources—books, CDs, DVDs, and booklets to many who were hungry for God's truth.

A powerful skit entitled Fix You, which opened the youth Rally, depicted the battle Jesus wages against the Devil to free us from the bondage and oppression of sin.

Although the Youth Rally only lasts for 8 hours, the experience leaves a lasting impression on many, who return annually and witness to their own growth and the fruit born in their lives throughout the year. Last year, a 10th grader who attended was an agnostic. At the Rally she committed her entire life to Jesus Christ and she is now volunteering as a leader in the EDGE ministry at her parish. God is truly at work in her life!
When the Going Gets Tough

At the recent Lift Jesus Higher Rally I saw so many people hungry for God’s word, seeking to live out His will in their daily lives. But I also know how hard it is to maintain that enthusiasm, that desire, that faith when I am “back home” from whatever conference or retreat I have just attended.

While there are lots of reasons why that happens to us—often year after year—I want to focus on one reason. We lack faith! “Now wait a minute,” you may say. “My faith is strong; I wouldn’t even be going to conferences or retreats if I didn’t believe in God, if I didn’t want to love Him more.” I believe that is true in many of our lives. But, stop just for a minute and think about this. You say, “I believe that God exists; I believe God the Father sent His Son to die for my sins so that I could live eternally. I believe that the Holy Spirit is given to me in Baptism, I believe in the gift of the Eucharist given to sustain me on my journey home to God. I believe in the forgiveness of my sins. I believe that the Ten Commandments are my pathway to heaven. I do believe.” It is true that those are pivotal beliefs and powerful expressions of faith.

But, what happens when we return home after a very good rally or conference and difficulties surface—marital problems, a very sick child, a financial emergency, job loss, good friendships threatened, the sudden death of a loved one—what happens then to my faith in God, my trust in His goodness, my desire to serve Him?

How do we cooperate with God so that the roots of our faith, instead of being destroyed in times of trial, go down even deeper and find the nourishment that God supplies?

“Faith is not a thing of the mind; it is not an intellectual certainty or a felt conviction of the heart. It is a sustained decision to take God with utter seriousness as the God of my life.’’ It is a decision to shift the center of our lives from ourselves to Him, to forego self interest and make His interests, His will, our sole concern…” (See Magnificat, February, 2012, p. 389)

What a clear and practical definition of faith.

The hardest part, I think, is shifting the center of our lives from ourselves to God. It means seeking His will in every important conversation, in every major decision, in all forms of recreation that are a regular part of our lives. Whose voice am I listening to? Have I asked His will about what television programs I watch or internet sites I frequent? In the forming of friendships and work relationships, have I asked Him what He wants from me and for me?

In the use of my finances, do I place what He has made possible for me in His hands? Do I thank Him for the fruits of my labor? Do I seek Him as to how I should serve others with what He has made available to me? In the use of food and drink, do I ask Him what He wants me to use and what to forego?

Is there daily prayer in my life? If not, I cannot expect to experience the peace and strength of His presence when times are hard. Sometimes in His mercy He pulls us out of the problem but the Lord asks for a daily time with Him so that we can take on His mind and be more open and expectant of His grace as we walk in fellowship with Him. Is your faith feeding your relationship with God?

Once you have made God part of your everyday life and decisions, then you are truly beginning “to take God with utter seriousness as the God of my life.” The shifting of the center of our lives from ourselves to Him takes time but if we make this decision and wait on the Lord for strength and wisdom, we will not be disappointed.

The Lord has made it clear to us that hard times are ahead for the Church and certainly for us in North America. A prophecy given on Pentecost Monday, 1975 in St. Peter’s speaks of preparation for the impending trials and changes.

“You need the power of my Holy Spirit in a way that you have not possessed it; you need an understanding of my will and of the ways that I work that you do not yet have. Open your eyes,
open your hearts to prepare yourselves for me and for the day that I have now begun. My Church will be different, my people will be different; difficulties and trials will come upon you. The comfort that you know now will be far from you but the comfort that you will have is the comfort of my Holy Spirit. They will send for you, to take your life but I will support you. Come to me, band yourselves together around me. Prepare for I proclaim a new day, a day of victory and of triumph for your God. Behold, it is begun…"

Let us thank God for all the tremendous conferences and retreats like the Lift Jesus Higher Rally that we have been able to participate in and receive good food to sustain us on our journey. But, let us also examine the level of our faith and the sources of solid nourishment available to us. Let us do all we can to make sure that Jesus and His will are really in the center of our lives, so that in the day of trouble we will not be shaken.

The last Sunday of this month we celebrate the great feast of Pentecost. Let us ask the Lord for a deepening of faith that we may receive great grace to shift the center of our lives from self to Him!

"Let us do all we can to make sure that Jesus and His will are really in the center of our lives, so that in the day of trouble we will not be shaken."
May 2012
Winnipeg, Canada
Annual Catholic Charismatic Conference
May 4–6
Peter & Debbie Herbeck
Contact: ccrs@catholicrenewalservices.com
or 204-895-7544

Lincoln, NE, Women’s Retreat
May 11–13
Sr. Ann Shields
Contact: al-zach@adolinc.net or 402-786-2705

Canton, MI
St. Thomas a’ Becket Parish Event
Saturday, May 12
Peter Herbeck
Contact Charlie Sheffieck at 734-397-3723

*Canton, MI
Talk for Catholic Scripture Study
May 17, 2012
Debbie Herbeck

San Jose, CA, Diocesan Conference
May 25–26
Ralph Martin
Contact: Burningbush1@aol.com or 925-449-7848

June 2012
Marquette, MI, Annual Lecture Series
Sunday, June 6
Ralph Martin
Contact: ggostomski@dioceseofmarquette.org

Ann Arbor, MI, Renewal Ministries Gathering
June 8–10
Ralph Martin, Peter Herbeck, Sr. Ann Shields and Guest Speakers
Contact: kkittle@renewalministries.net
or 734-662-1730, x132

Mission to Turkey
June 11–23
John Kazanjian and Team
Contact: Kathleen @ kkittle@renewalministries.net or 734-662-1730, x132

Jamison, PA
St. Cyril of Jerusalem Day of Renewal
Saturday, June 16
Ralph Martin
Contact: annemariecostello@comcast.net

St. Paul, MN, University of St. Thomas
Renewal Ministries’ School of Evangelization
Wednesday, June 20–Sunday, June 24
Peter Herbeck, Lloyd & Nancy Greenhaw, Dcn Mike Thoenens, Mary Hagar
Contact: www.coreministries.us or dr.mike@tds.net or Kathleen at kkittle@renewalministries.net or 734-662-1730 x132

*Champaign, IL, FOCUS Staff Training
Monday, June 25
Peter Herbeck

*Steubenville, OH
Theology and Spirituality of the New Evangelization Course
June 25–July 13
Ralph Martin

St. Paul, MN, The Renewal Ministries’ School of Catholic Bible Study
Thursday, June 28–Sunday, July 1
Bishop Jan Liesen, Debbie Herbeck, Laurie, Manhardt, Sharon Doran
Contact: www.coreministries.us or dr.mike@tds.net or Kathleen at kkittle@renewalministries.net or 734-662-1730 x132

*Events not open to the public

On the Road

“Breathe into me, Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy. Move in me, Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy. Attract my heart, Holy Spirit, that I may love only what is holy. Strengthen me, Holy Spirit, that I may defend all that is holy. Protect me, Holy Spirit, that I may always be holy.”

Saint Augustine