Greetings Friends!

A letter from Ralph Martin

Over the last few months I’ve been sharing some thoughts and insights that have left little room to report on how the work of Renewal Ministries is impacting lives all over the world. This month I’d like to simply share with you some of the “feedback” we get about the fruitfulness of our work which is made possible through your prayers and giving.

We continue to get numerous reports about how anointed the preaching of Peter Herbeck and the Crossing the Goal team is at the various men’s conferences they regularly do.

“I think the speakers were incredible and I think the Holy Spirit touched a lot of guys through them.” (Dallas)

“Peter’s talk spoke to me big time! I intend on pursuing getting a men’s group started at our parish, while the fire is hot!” (Texas)

The Crossing the Goal TV program also continues to touch lives.

“Your program got me through the most difficult time in my life. Keep up the great work.” (South Dakota)

It’s both amusing and inspiring to hear our various speakers come back to “home base” and say they felt they gave the best talks ever. We expect growth as we grow closer to the Lord and it seems to be happening. Thanks be to God. As the needs increase the Lord seems to be giving greater boldness and clarity in our teaching and preaching.

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“Your talk at the Divine Mercy Shrine inspired my sister to think that evangelization is something that she can do too. It’s awesome.” (Massachusetts)

Recently during the class at the seminary that I taught I decided to have my students give testimonies each week that told of their own experience with God, gearing their stories towards unbelievers. It was a very powerful experience and I think the priests, deacons, seminarians and lay people in the class learned a lot through it.

“Thanks for a great class. The testimony portion was intense and powerful. I had never experienced anything like this in a class before. The readings and everything gave me new strength and support for what a year ago I was only wondering what was missing from parish life. Now I know how to talk about it, give examples, and can be confident when I bring this to others.” (A student at Sacred Heart Major Seminary, Detroit, Michigan)

“Thank you for the formative impact you had on my priestly vocation. I can easily say that your Spirituality class at Ave Maria, when it was in MI, remains the most useful course I had in all 7 years of preparing for the priesthood and that the importance of the universal call to holiness is a key motivator in how I approach my priestly duties. May your labors in the vineyard continue to yield much fruit.” (A priest in Minnesota)

“I recently gave 22 copies of The Fulfillment of All Desire to the head of a new seminary and he reported back that the seminarians love the book and are discussing it among themselves.” (Missouri)

“I am a GREAT fan of your book, The Fulfillment of All Desire. Our bible study group is now studying it with great enthusiasm. Our Secular Franciscan Group is also studying it.” (Fenton, Michigan)

“Last Wednesday evening I read to our RCIA candidates from your book The Fulfillment of All Desire. They enjoyed it as much as I did.” (Priest from Oklahoma)

“We are watching the DVD series of The Fulfillment of All Desire here in the Central Arizona Correctional Facility. This is helping us evangelize our fellow inmates.”

While at the Divine Mercy Shrine in Stockbridge, MA recently, the Marian Fathers’ class of novices wanted to meet me and tell me how much they liked reading Fulfillment as part of their formation as novices. These are inspiring young men.

And here is a letter from the Bishop of Cape Palmas, Liberia, Africa.

“The missions that Renewal Ministries have been making to Liberia since 2009 are helping our local churches. I want to thank Renewal Ministries immensely for making their first mission to my Diocese this year. The teachings they gave have been helpful to our catechists, the laity, priests and religious. Our knowledge of the faith has been deepened. It is my hope to bring together the youth of the diocese during next year’s mission. Renewal Ministries will help us put them on fire for the Lord. Many thanks for the wonderful collaboration Renewal Ministries is having with the Church in Liberia.”

“I am happy to announce that Archangel Radio, WNGL 1410 AM, will now be carrying Fire on the Earth and Food for the Journey every weekday.” (Fairhope, Alabama)

“I’m listening to your podcast programs each morning as I work out and get ready for work.” (California)

“I have returned to the Catholic faith after being away for 30 years. I have a great zeal for Catholic evangelization and am involved in Nursing Home ministry. I live in the nursing home so I have an access to meet their spiritual needs. Pray that I may show the love of Jesus to the residents and that I may be an inspiration to them.” (Tennessee)

“You sent me New Covenant magazine back in the 70’s. It changed my life and now I am serving as a priest in Peru.” (Lima, Peru)

“I read A Crisis of Truth when I was in the seminary back in the 80’s and also heard the audio tapes based on it. They were a God-send and your witness to the truth was very important for me at that time when so many of my teachers were not teaching the true faith. Your book and tapes really helped me sort things out. The book also reassured me that I was not crazy! Thank you.” (A priest in Washington, DC)
“We are watching The Choices We Face here in China via computer. You gave a magnificent talk on the necessity for evangelization. Your words are truly anointed and speak deeply to the heart. I cannot thank you enough for speaking the truth all these years.” (China)

“My wife and I watched The Choices We Face when Patti Mansfield was your guest. It was really wonderful. The witness of both of your faithfulness over all these years to the simple proclamation of the saving message of Jesus our Lord is inspiring. Thanks for your faithfulness to the Lord and his Gospel.” (Maryland)

“Please send me 750 copies of “A New Pentecost.” We need a New Pentecost here in New Jersey!” (Priest in New Jersey)

We’ve also sent 1000 copies to Houston, 1200 to Portland, Oregon, and 1500 copies to a parish in Michigan!

“Your interview with Cardinal Dolan was great!” (Michigan)

“Your article on Freiing the New Evangelization on your website is great.” (Pennsylvania)

“Last night at our parish mission was truly anointed. The fact that so many people came with such hunger is a testimony to your long-time faithfulness. Even my teen age daughter volunteered that she really liked your talk!” (Louisiana)

“I’m loving your CD album on Thérèse of Lisieux. She’s changing my life!” (Virginia)

“I just want to thank you from my whole heart, for the February 2012 newsletter. They are all wonderful but February really touched my heart. Life really is getting harder. The world is spinning out of control. We have had a lot of sickness in our family and friends and my husband lost his job. But it’s ok. God is bringing us closer and closer to Himself. I feel all will work out; our journey has been one of amazement and God’s love is all we really need to go on. Every one of you are in our prayers. God’s army must move on until the end of time.” (Ohio)

All I can say is “Amen” and thanks be to God, and to you.

Your brother in Christ,

Ralph Martin

“Giving Through Your Will

Residents of the United States and Canada are well-known for their generosity. Each year their charitable giving sustains thousands of charitable organizations—like Renewal Ministries—that are doing a tremendous work around the world.

There are different ways you can make a bequest to Renewal Ministries. If you live in the United States, one of these formulas will easily work:

“I give and bequeath to Renewal Ministries Inc., 230 Collingwood, Suite 250, Ann Arbor, MI 48103, Tax ID 38-2385975, the sum of $_______ for its general uses and purposes.”

“I give, devise, and bequeath to Renewal Ministries, 230 Collingwood, Suite 250, Ann Arbor, MI 48103, Tax ID 38-2385975, the ______% of the rest, remainder and residue of my estate.”

If you reside in Canada, use the following name, address, and registration number in the above formulas: Catholic Renewal Ministries Inc., 331 Evans Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M8Z 1K2, Registration No. 12374-0243-RR0001.

If you have any questions, please call Gary Seromik at 734-662-1730 ext. 121, who is administrator for Renewal Ministries. He will be happy to answer any questions you might have and send you helpful information on bequests and other charitable giving vehicles such as charitable gift annuities.

“The world is spinning out of control.

We have had a lot of sickness in our family and friends and my husband lost his job. But it’s ok. God is bringing us closer and closer to Himself.”
Put First in Your Prayer
What is First in God’s Heart

Recently, Pope Benedict gave an excellent teaching on the meaning of Acts 2:1–4:37, which describes an encounter between the very young Church and the authorities of that day. His teaching provides great wisdom for us in the U.S. and Canada as we face increasing difficulties in the political, social and spiritual realms. (For the full article see L’Osservatore Romano, April 23, 2012, The Church that Prays Finds Harmony in Times of Trial, pp. 11–12)

Before you continue, read Acts 2:1–4:37 and keep the bible open in front of you as you read through this article.

The Pope tells us: “I would like to reflect on what has been defined as the ‘little Pentecost’ which took place at the height of a difficult phase in the life of the nascent (newly born) Church.” The lesson the Holy Father wants us to see is how the early Church dealt with opposition from authorities.

Peter and John had been arrested because they preached openly about the Resurrection when the crowds gathered after the miraculous healing of the paralytic. The authorities threatened them and charged them never to speak again in the Name of Jesus. Peter’s response is clear: “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge; for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.” The authorities let them go after further threatening them because they feared the crowds!

Now comes the most important point that the Pope wants us to see from Scripture. When Peter and John were released, they gathered immediately with their friends to report what the authorities had told them. Then they began to pray together. Look carefully at what they asked God to give them: “…when the first Christian community is confronted by dangers, difficulties, and threats it does not attempt to work out how to react, find strategies, defend itself or what measures to adopt; rather, when it is put to the test, the community starts to pray and makes contact with God.” (Pope Benedict)

I am certain that many people had ideas of what to do and to whom to speak and how to handle the problem. It is just like we often do when challenged or intimidated. But the Scripture is clear. They prayed—not a token prayer—“Oh God, bless us—now let’s get down to work” kind of prayer. This was clearly very different. It was a prayer of utter reliance upon God to show them the way. Yes, God would use their different gifts and abilities; neither the Pope nor I are encouraging passivity against the threats to our faith. But, we are to place all our ideas at the feet of the Lord, commend them to Him and ask for His wisdom—in quiet, over a period of time.

“Wait on the Lord,” Scripture tells us. Most of us are not good at this; we are action oriented. Action has its definite place but often, if we act without sustained prayer, and the harmony and trust it produces, we end in frustration. We need to know the mind of the Lord concerning the challenges we face to country and to Church. He will reveal that to those who are docile (teachable). He will not leave us orphans. But we have to put His will first.

Secondly and very important was the early Church’s unity in prayer and in action. Again, the Pope teaches us: “It is a unanimous, concordant prayer of the entire community which reacts to persecution because of Jesus—they were of one accord. If a group seeking to serve the Lord and to uphold biblical teaching is not united, the truth will be at least blurred if not fragmented. The cause can be lost for lack of unity!” I think I would be safe in saying that the early Christian community had to do a lot of giving and receiving forgiveness as they dealt with confusion and fear and anger in learning how to be beloved disciples of the Lord. So do we!

Finally and most importantly, the goal of the prayer was to be able to preach the word with all boldness. As the Pope underscores, they did not ask “to be protected or to be spared trials and hardship. It is not a prayer for success but only to be able to proclaim the word of God with boldness and freedom and courage.”

There is one additional petition they make in their prayer: that their preaching may be accompanied “…by God’s hand so that healing, signs and wonders may be performed. In other words that God’s goodness may be visible as a power that transforms reality; that changes people’s hearts, minds and lives and brings the
radical newness of the Gospel.”

When the disciples prayed with these intentions, in unity with one another, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness. This incident has been described, says Pope Benedict as “the little Pentecost” which took place at the height of a difficult phase in the life of the nascent Church.

Pope Benedict closes his article with these words: “Let us too renew our request for the gift of the Holy Spirit that warms hearts and enlightens minds, in order to recognize how the Lord hears our prayers, in accordance with His will of love and not with our own ideas. Guided by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, we will be able to live with serenity, courage and joy in every situation in life and with St. Paul boast: ‘we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that this suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character and character produces hope, hope that does not disappoint us because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given us.’” (Romans 5:3–5)

May we heed the words of Scripture and the truths revealed in this passage. May we humble ourselves to do God’s work, God’s way—that all our service in the political arena, the ProLife movement and all other activities in which we are involved, be genuinely placed under the penetrating light of His will through united prayer so that our service within the Church may bear fruit a hundredfold for the glory of His Name. 

Please Pray...

+ for our international missions this month to Hungary, Tanzania, Samoa, Papua New Guinea, and Mexico. May the name of Jesus be lifted up and may many know the joy and freedom of life in Christ.

+ for the Church in Canada and the U.S. as we face increasing difficulties and opposition in the political and social realms.

+ 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.
Mission to Kenya
By Peter Thompson

Renewal Ministries’ mission journey to Kenya this year encompassed the three dioceses of Nairobi, Ngong and Mombasa. This was the first time we had chosen to come at this time of year which is at the heart of the heavy rains. The mission to Kenya coincided with a request from the Ugandan bishops to come to their country and give teachings on defending the Faith. The bishops are concerned with the ongoing problem of Catholics leaving the Church, often due to a lack of knowledge about how to answer typical challenges to Catholicism made by Protestant Evangelical and fundamental sects. This three-day presentation was held at Emmaus Renewal Centre north of Kampala.

Returning to Nairobi in Kenya, we undertook a series of visits to five different prisons in the area: three men’s prisons, one prison for young male offenders and another women’s prison. The focus of these visits was to remind the inmates that God had not forgotten them, and to proclaim the message of God’s personal love and mercy and their inherent dignity as human beings.

The prison conditions were deplorable but I was advised that conditions have improved over recent years and there is a new openness to allow NGOs to visit and minister to the needs of these men and women who are often incarcerated for months or years awaiting trial. The time they spend waiting is not deducted from whatever sentence is finally imposed. With their practical needs in mind I had received donations from a number of generous people who knew that prison outreach would be part of our mission. We were able to purchase and distribute 1300 bars of soap plus toilet tissue. These most basic needs are only met if a relative or friend brings these items for an individual prisoner. In the women’s prison there were many mothers with young children and we gave them two bars of soap.

From Nairobi we moved to the Ngong diocese, staying at Embulbul Catholic Church where we were warmly welcomed by Fr. Joseph Dadiri, SMA, the recently appointed pastor of this large, vibrant, and welcoming parish. We also visited with Bishop John Oballa Owaa who was installed only ten days earlier. We shared with him the long history of Renewal Ministries’ involvement with the Ngong diocese which is the largest in Kenya and covers a vast yet sparsely populated region. Bishop John encouraged us to continue responding to the great commission to evangelize all nations by quoting from Evangelii Nuntiandi: “The Church exists to evangelize.” He asked us to consider going to the furthest part of his diocese in the far west, a full day’s drive away, to assist these remote parishes in their task of proclaiming Christ. We hope to do this at some future date.

For the next two days we gave a series of presentations at the Pastoral Centre to lay leaders, parish council members, religious sisters and others. This included 16 hours of instruction covering many areas of our Catholic faith, including doctrine on faith and morals, sprinkled with Church history and Catholic apologetics, and we allowed plenty of time for Q & A. Attendance for the two days was between 80–100 people. Our last day in Ngong was at the Embulbul parish where we spent a morning teaching on the Call to Holiness and how to deepen our prayer life.

Each day we were subjected to torrential rains causing flooding and chaos on the streets as cars stalled in water and drifted through the muddy streets. Blackouts followed nearly every day sometimes lasting through the night, with the inconveniences of no electricity or pumps. I was reminded of the words of St. James:

“... The focus of these visits was to remind the inmates that God had not forgotten them, and to proclaim the message of God’s personal love and mercy and their inherent dignity as human beings.”
“Count it pure joy when you suffer all kinds of trials.” It is in these circumstances that we can grow in our journey towards holiness, utilizing these trials to die to self.

Monday evening we flew to Mombasa for a conference targeting catechists, lay leaders and religious. Stephen Mbugua Thoithi, recently appointed as chair of the Kenya National Service Committee for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal welcomed us to the heat of Mombasa. Over the next three days we repeated the series that I had given in Uganda and in Ngong in an attempt to equip these leaders to combat the daily challenges to their faith from a multitude of fundamentalist sects that are springing up throughout Africa, including a rise in the presence of Mormons and Jehovah Witnesses. An estimated 300 attended all or part of the series. From the response that I received in every location there is a profound hunger for clear and undiluted teaching of the Catholic Church, especially in the area of morals.

Mission to Kazakhstan
By Bohumir Zivcak

Despite significant challenges in procuring the necessary missionary visas now required to enter Kazakhstan, our time there was excellent and very fruitful. We began our trip by speaking to all the bishops and the Nuncio, and ended our time there with all the priests of Kazakhstan and the sisters. I spent a good amount of time with every bishop there, and three days with Fr. Janush Kaleta, the new bishop of Karaganda.

On the first weekend we conducted a men’s retreat with twelve men. In Kazakhstan it is quite uncommon for men to attend a retreat unless they are priests or seminarians. Four of the men were brought by the Missionaries of Charity sisters in Timertau where they work with totally broken men. The fruits of their work and God’s grace are incredible as those men are like angels. All of them want to create a special men’s group that would meet regularly, probably in the Prischachitsk parish under the leadership of Fr. Vladimir Nemec. Observing us during the weekend were some priests, as well as Fr. Jevgenij, who is responsible for the pastoral care of seminarians. Afterwards, he asked us to lead three days of sessions for all the seminarians of Kazakhstan. We also visited all the parishes of Karaganda and met all the priests working there.

The sisters’ retreat started on Wednesday and the bishop gave us time to share with all of them. The retreat was led by Msgr. Tadeusz Wojda, S.A.C., the Bureau Chief at the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples in the Vatican. To meet this man and to have the chance to share our hearts both ways was a privilege for me. We ended our time with a youth meeting where there was a good balance of men and women, which again was a pleasant surprise for me.

Regarding the future work in the Karaganda diocese there are a lot of changes—a new bishop, new places, new priests, and new priorities. Right now the situation is rather unclear but in September I hope to have a clearer picture of the next steps. We are preparing lay missionaries from Slovakia to go live there and they are awaiting the necessary visas from the government.
On the Road

“There is only one thing to do during the brief day, or rather, night of this life: Love Jesus with all the strength of your heart and save souls for Him, so that He may be loved!”

St. Therese of Lisieux

July 2012

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

Mission to Tanzania
July 5–21
Tom Edwards and Team
Contact Kathleen at: kkittle@renewalministries.net or 734-662-1730, x132

*Washington, D.C.
Congressional Catholic Staff Association
Friday, July 13
Ralph Martin

Portland, OR, Catholic Women Rejoice
Saturday, July 14
Sr. Ann Shields, SGL
Contact Heather Renshaw at: heather@realcatholicministries.com

Mission to Samoa
July 14–26
Lloyd & Nancy Greenhaw and Team
Contact Kathleen at: kkittle@renewalministries.net or 734-662-1730, x132

Nashville, TN
Mid-South Regional Conference
July 20–21
Ralph Martin
Contact: tseibert@bellsouth.net

Mission to Papua New Guinea
July 26–August 11
Lloyd & Nancy Greenhaw and Team
Contact Kathleen at: kkittle@renewalministries.net or 734-662-1730, x132

Steubenville, OH
Applied Biblical Studies Conference
July 27
Ralph Martin
Contact: www.franciscanconferences.com

Steubenville, OH
Defending the Faith Conference
July 27–28
Ralph Martin
Contact: www.franciscanconferences.com

Mission to Mexico
July 29–August 4
Jim Murphy and Team
Contact Kathleen at: kkittle@renewalministries.net or 734-662-1730, x132

August 2012

Scranton, PA. Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference
August 3–5
Ralph Martin
Contact Bob Valiante at: 570-344-2214 or cc lethewal.comcast.net

*Events not open to the public