Dear Brothers and Sisters,

A letter from Sr. Ann Shields, S.G.L.

I am writing to you on behalf of Ralph who, at this writing, is still in Rome working very hard at the Synod for the New Evangelization. As a designated expert, Ralph has been involved in drafting some of the proposals of the Synod Fathers that will be presented to the Holy Father. From these proposals, Benedict XVI will draft his document which will be available sometime in the next year for all of us to read. There are so many countries represented, and so many languages in play, that it takes a while to sift and sort and listen to the Holy Spirit. Even though the Synod itself will be over by the time you receive this newsletter, the major work continues and needs our prayer.

This past year has been amazing. As most of you know, Ralph received his doctorate with highest honors, from the Angelicum in Rome. His edited thesis *Will Many Be Saved?* is now available in book form and is currently high on Catholic book sales lists. It can be ordered through our website: www.renewalministries.net. We continued to support the Church and its work of renewal and evangelization in North America, Renewal Ministries sponsored 95 different events including missions, days of renewal, conferences, and retreats for clergy, religious, lay people, religious schools and parishes.

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Ralph was named by Pope Benedict XVI as an “expert” for the Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization that met in Rome during the month of October. His “News from the Synod” has been posted on our website: www.renewalministries.net on the home page “Bulletins.”

this year. In North America, Renewal Ministries sponsored 95 different events including missions, days of renewal, conferences, and retreats for clergy, religious, lay people, religious schools and parishes. We were invited by many bishops to speak specifically to their priests and to the laity of their dioceses on the New Evangelization.

We taped 27 more outstanding episodes of *The Choices We Face* and produced another year of programming for *Food for the Journey* and *Fire on the Earth*. We launched *i.d.916* a ministry to Catholic young adults and distributed thousands of books, booklets, CDs and DVDs throughout the world.

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All of this would not have been possible without God’s grace and your help! Your prayers, your involvement in mission trips and your financial giving have produced an abundant harvest this year. Thank you so much for your faithful support. Our ability to continue this work in 2013 depends on your generosity. If you are able to include Renewal Ministries in your end of the year giving it would be greatly appreciated.

As we enter this season of Advent, let us enter it soberly, realizing that thousands upon thousands of our fellow Catholics, other Christians and people in our everyday lives, still do not know the personal love of God in their lives. As a result they have been unable to surrender to the infinite love of the Holy Spirit.

Let this Advent be a time for us to ask God to touch our hearts and others’ with new faith and hope. Let us pray that the God who became flesh for us may find a true home in many more lives! And may your Christmas celebration be filled with great joy and grace for the coming year.

“All Hail and Blessed be the hour and the moment in which the Son of God was born of the Most Pure Virgin Mary, at midnight in Bethlehem in piercing cold. In that hour, vouchsafe O my God to hear my prayer and grant my desire through the merits of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior, and of His Blessed Mother. Amen.” (Christmas Novena)

Renewal Ministries is blessed to have a wonderful US Board of Directors who help us in our mission of renewal and evangelization. The Board recently met in October at the home of Tim and Shann Patton. (Left to right) Tim Patton, Laurie Manhardt, Deacon Dan Foley, Sharon Doran, Bob Van Norden, Ellen Holian Mykrantz, Deacon Larry Oney, Nancy Timmis, Fr. Dave Pivonka, T.O.R., and Tom O’Brien. (Unable to attend: Archbishop Robert J. Carlson, Episcopal Advisor and Ralph Martin who was attending the Synod in Rome.)

Please Pray…

+ that the recent Synod on the New Evangelization will provide new and effective means to transmit the Christian faith amidst the challenges confronting believers in today’s world.

+ for a fresh and powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Church, especially its young people, and for a personal and life-changing encounter with the Person of Jesus.

+ for all those who are laboring for the Gospel, that they would be strengthened, encouraged and protected as they bring God’s truth to others.

+ for the prayer intentions of all our supporters and their family members, especially as they face the challenges of illness and economic uncertainty.
No One Can Escape

As I write this article Ralph is in his second week at the Synod on the New Evangelization in Rome. In an interview with Zenit.org, a prominent non-profit news agency, Ralph was asked about his impressions of the Synod after the first week. I’d like to highlight a few of Ralph’s observations for this article.

Each day at the Synod is devoted for the most part, to a series of five minute interventions given by the Bishops or special guests. The international representation gives those in attendance a good look at what is happening in various parts of the Church throughout the world. In his interview Ralph noted the following:

“It gives you a tremendous feel for the challenges that the Church is facing in many different countries, and some of the approaches in responding to those challenges that are happening. [Yesterday] we heard pretty devastating news from some countries where the social fabric is just disintegrating, and the fabric of Catholic life is disintegrating.”

Ralph’s words, and those of some representatives at the Synod, echo Pope John Paul II when he said, “Even in countries evangelized many centuries ago, the reality of a ‘Christian society’ which, amid all the frailties which have always marked human life, measured itself explicitly on Gospel values, is now gone.” (Novo Millennio Ineunte, 40)

It’s a sobering thought; Christian society in many of the formerly Christian countries is now gone. In the past fifty years we’ve witnessed a dramatic collapse of faith in many countries. The same patterns of social and spiritual disintegration are happening here in the United States and in Canada also. According to a recent Pew Forum poll, for the first time in our history, 1 in every 5 adults in America now identify themselves as having no religious affiliation at all. Among the general population of adults that number has increased from 5% to 19.6% since 2007. The number reaches 33% among adults under the age of 30. (Pew Forum, “Nones on the Rise: One-in-Five Adults Have No Religious Affiliation” October 2012)

In the same study, 58% of Americans still say that “religion is very important in their lives,” but that number too is in decline. Yet it seems robust when compared to some of the formerly Christian countries of Europe: Britain-17%, France-13%, Germany- 1%, and Spain-22%. The disintegration of Catholic life in the United States is particularly obvious when considered in light of three key indicators of faith: worship, morality and mission. A healthy Catholic life, one lived as a disciple of Jesus, is characterized by a zeal to “give to God what belongs to God,” by honoring the commandment to “Keep holy the Lord’s Day,” to embrace the call to holiness, “Be holy, for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16), and to directly engage the Great Commission, “Go make disciples of all nations.” (Matthew 28:19)

Worship

A 2007 poll conducted by Georgetown University’s Catholic Center for Applied Research (CARA) included the following results regarding weekly Mass attendance among four demographic categories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Builders</td>
<td>Ages 65+</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boomers</td>
<td>47-64</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gen X</td>
<td>26-46</td>
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<tr>
<td>Millennials</td>
<td>18-25</td>
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In her recent book, Forming Intentional Disciples, Sherry Weddell said: “More than fifty percent of Catholic adults are now either Gen Xers or Millennials, and that percentage will only grow. Both groups are teetering on the brink of single-digit weekly Mass attendance. If younger Catholics are not going to Mass or getting married in the Church, why would they bother to raise their children in the faith?” (p. 39)

Morality

In 2010 the Knights of Columbus conducted a poll of Catholic Millennials (18-25 year olds) who self-identified as Catholic. The study found that 80% of those polled said that “sex between unmarried” was either morally acceptable or not a moral issue at all. Only 20% considered it immoral. In addition, 63% said that same-sex marriage was either morally acceptable or not a moral issue at all, and 67% of Catholic Millennials did not see a moral conflict with embryonic stem-cell research.

Mission

Finally, in her 2005 book Pillars of Faith, Nancy Ammerman reported the rather shocking data about Catholic engagement in the work of evangelization. In response to the question, “Is spreading the faith a high priority for your parish?” only 6% of Catholic parishes considered it a high priority, while 75% of Conservative Protestants and 57% of African American parishes identified it as such. When asked if they actually sponsor evangelistic activities, 39% of Conservative Protestant and 16% of African American parishes answered in the affirmative, while only 3% of Catholic parishes said they did. These numbers clearly reflect that this spiritual disintegration is happening here in the United States. Archbishop Charles Chaput summarized the problem succinctly...
From the Field
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when he said, “By our actions, many of us (Catholics) witness a kind of practical atheism: paying lip service to God, but living as if he didn’t exist.” (Render Unto Caesar, p. 182)

 Silent Heresy
The recent Popes have identified this decline in Catholic worship, morality, and mission as a “silent apostasy.” Apostasy is the willful falling away from the faith, a rejection of the faith once received. How did this “silent apostasy” come about? The answer is varied, but Ralph puts his finger on one very important factor that has undoubtedly contributed and continues to figure in this decline: “I think there’s also a silent heresy – in that, cloaked in the apostasy there’s a presumption about universal salvation: ‘Just be a good person and you’ll be saved.’ The Synod’s going to come out with some strong calls for evangelization, but the average Catholic in the back of their mind is thinking: ‘Everybody’s a good person. God’s so merciful, does it really matter?’ Ralph points out in his new book, Will Many Be Saved: What Vatican II Actually Teaches and its Implications for the New Evangelization, that the “silent heresy” is rooted in a misinterpretation of paragraph 16 of the document Lumen Gentium. In it the Church states clearly that it is possible for someone who “through no fault of their own” never comes to explicit faith in Jesus to be saved. But, as the document clearly stipulates, it can happen if only certain conditions are met.

 Over the past fifty years influential voices within the Church have turned what the Fathers of the Vatican Council called a “possibility” to a presumption of near certainty that all people will be saved. As Ralph points out, this ignores the clear warning and exhortation given in the last few sentences of LG 16: “Very often, human beings exchange the truth of God for a lie and worship the preacher rather than the Creator. And therefore, for the sake of people’s salvation, it is urgent that we carry out evangelization.”

 High Stakes
Presumption kills faith. It feeds our pride and appeals to our flesh. It cools our zeal for God, holiness and mission. The presumption that the road to heaven is wide and clear and many, if not all, are traveling it is a deadly lie. Jesus said without equivocation that the road to heaven is narrow; it is a hard road to travel. Presumption blinds us to our true condition and to what is really at stake.

 A healthy, mature follower of Jesus is characterized in part, by a profound sense of urgency, by a zeal for the salvation of souls. That urgency is rooted squarely in Jesus’ perspective about the human condition and his diagnosis of our need for salvation. His command (not a suggestion) to each one of us is clear. Meditate on his words and you will begin to feel his passion for souls. “Go into the whole world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” (Mark 16:15-16)

 The apostles caught the fire. They understood the stakes. They gave it all for the Master’s Great Commission. They lived and died as witnesses to the one Truth that all men and women must hear: “And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who has not the Son of God has not life.” (1 John 5:11-12)

 This is our call. As Cardinal Dolan stated during the Synod, evangelization is “a charge from which no one escapes…such a call is implicit in our baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, and sacrament of penance.” (Zenit.org, 10/15/12)
Mission to Papua New Guinea

By Nancy Greenhaw

OUR TRAVELS HALFWAY around the world to Papua New Guinea via Hawaii, Guam and Australia were not without the usual drama of sprinting through airports, lost luggage and a very long day—all part of the missionary adventure! We were blessed on this mission to work with our longtime friend and mission partner, Fr. Scott McCaig, the head of the order of the Companions of the Cross.

The day after our arrival we departed in a small pickup truck for the three hour drive to the Wabag Diocese in Enga Province. It is only 116 km/72 miles but we soon realized that we’d be going round and round the mountains to get to our destination. We were told this road is as far as the pavement goes in the Highlands. There are no roads after this town down to the Pacific. This area is one of the least explored on the earth because of its inaccessibility. We finally arrived, 6500 feet above sea level and settled into the beautiful Pastoral Center for a rest.

Sunday morning Fr. Scott was asked to do Mass for the five Poor Clare cloistered nuns and we were allowed to join. That night 43 priests from the Dioceses of Mt. Hagan and Wabag began to trickle in. Before the retreat began our team prayed and did spiritual warfare against the forces that were trying to prevent the success of the priests’ retreat. Fr. Scott prayed the prayers of the Church and invoked many of the Saints by name. It was powerful and was exactly what was needed. By Sunday night most of the priests were present for the retreat which began with just a brief introduction, since most had already celebrated several Masses and traveled a long way to be there.

For the next five days the program was mostly the same. Fr. Scott took the first hour-long session. On the first day he spoke on the necessity of prayer specific to the priest’s vocation. Over the next several days he taught about the need for unity among the brothers, the Mass, Mother Mary, intercession, and the dignity of their call. It was evident from their faces that Fr. Scott had pulled back a curtain to allow them to see their unlimited potential and value. Day by day you could see their growth. Several priests remarked that this was the first time they had ever heard these things!

I spoke at the next session and I gave the series of talks on getting and staying free. The priests eagerly listened to my talks. I don’t know if it was the spiritual warfare we had done prior to their arrival, but it was evident that many had some deep problems and for the first time saw a vehicle to help them get free. From then on and for the next several days, priests began to come to all of us for prayer and to Fr. Scott for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

After another break Lloyd began a series of talks on knowing and defending our Catholic faith. Once again we were told that they had never received training on apologetics at the seminary and that there was a furious attack by other denominations and many were leaving the Church. At the following sessions he talked about the Eucharist, the Bible, the Church, and Momma Maria. The priests were furiously taking notes and you could see their new-found confidence grow at each session.

After Lloyd’s talks we broke for lunch and rested until 3:30, followed by another talk by Fr. Scott, then Mass and dinner. We had wind, rain, sun, fog, and one day an earthquake that measured 6.3, all in a few minutes! One night we had Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, another evening we had Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, another evening we

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showed videos of our many Renewal Ministries’ outreaches around the world. The priests especially enjoyed seeing all the priests dancing at the Ggaba Seminary retreat in Uganda, and the video on Uganda praise and worship. We also showed the Passion of Christ movie.

We left Good Shepherd Seminary and made the 1½ hour trip to Notre Dame Secondary School, where we spent two days singing, teaching, and praying with over 700 beautiful young women. A significant portion of these young women are not Catholic, but the sister in charge said that Notre Dame was a Catholic school and for us not worry about teaching and preaching the Catholic faith. I shared our music with them. It was a lot of fun and the young women really enjoyed it. Lloyd gave the basic Gospel message the first evening and after a skit on crucifying the Lord he led them in a prayer of commitment to Jesus.

The next day I taught several sessions on freedom, and talked about the ways the devil can gain access to our lives. I then talked about renunciation and led the young women in a prayer to take back their lives and destiny. Between breaks many of the young women came to me for prayer and it was obvious that promiscuity is a big issue in this society. All that came to me had numerous sexual partners, some beginning at age 13. Lloyd gave several exhortations during my talks, telling them how wonderful and precious they are in God’s eyes, and that they hold their future and the future of PNG in their hands. These young women, most of whom had never experienced the love of a father, were deeply touched.

That evening we showed videos of Renewal Ministries’ outreaches and the Lift Jesus Higher video. They were cheering and laughing so much we couldn’t hear the audio. They asked us to play it again. We challenged them not to limit God and that they may be called to the New Evangelization, just as we had been. It was a fun night.

The next day I spoke on forgiveness and led them in a prayer to forgive all others so they could be free. Fr. Scott celebrated the closing Mass and after many thank you speeches by some of the young women, the principal, and several teachers, we prepared for the beginning of our journey home.

When we came out of the convent there was a line of sobbing girls several hundred yards long on both sides of the driveway leading out of the compound! They just wanted to touch our hands and say “we love you” as we slowly moved past them. I truly believe that the Lord, through the weak servants we are, gave them a glimpse of their dignity, value, and destiny.

Here are a few of their reflections on the retreat: “Your words were very powerful and inspiring. It really touched my heart. I was really blessed, healed and forgiven. I thank God for sending such a person like you to help a poor girl like me to accept God and take him as my own personal savior. It is like a seed that you plant in our hearts.”

“Praise God for the wonderful gift that he has given to you. Thank you God for bringing such a wonderful couple into my country and I am privileged to take Jesus with my life as my personal savior. It seems as if every word that you have spoken would come to me. I found it difficult to forgive others, every time I prayed. I think it was just a matter of true forgiveness in my heart. I was sexually molested when I was a child. I never knew what was going on but as I grew up I realized it and I was very angry when I saw that guy around but today I forgive him and I forgive myself for taking it as if it was my fault. I know the Lord has changed me completely and I am not the same as before. I will praise him all the days of my life until it ends. I forgive those who have hurt me in one way or another and I know the Lord will forgive me.”

Heading home, we flew to Port Moresby and had the privilege of dining with Bishop Tatamai of the Diocese of Bereina and the priest who is Secretary General of the Bishops Conference. They were eager to talk with us and they seemed really excited to see if Fr. Scott could come sometime in the future to give a course on exorcism to the priests there.
Mission to Ghana

By Brent Heiser

THIS YEAR’S MISSION to Ghana focused on the three dioceses of Ho, Donkorkrom, and Koforidua. Our team was made up of nine people, four from the US and Canada, and five from the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Ghana.

We began in the diocese of Ho with a two day event entitled, “Called and Chosen to Bear Fruit that Will Last,” taken from John 15:15-16. The session brought together fifty-five catechists from the dioceses of Ho and Jasikan in the Volta Region. In addition to the talks and prayer, Rev. Fr. Theodore Hevi, Catechetical Director of the diocese celebrated Mass each day. On Friday afternoon the team paid a visit to the bishop of Ho Diocese, Most Rev. Francis Lodonu and we had a fruitful meeting with him.

The weekend session in Ho was for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal leaders in the Volta Region and forty-eight leaders participated from Ho, Keta-Akatsi and Jasikan dioceses, focusing on the same theme from John 15.

In the Diocese of Donkorkrom we led a two day session for catechists and leaders of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal that included presentations on: Call to Faith, Call to Prayer, Call to Holiness, Call to Love, Call to Leadership, Call to Mission and the Unbound Method of Prayer and Deliverance. We also had an opportunity to meet Bishop Gabriel Edoe Kumordji, S.V.D., who welcomed us to the Vicariate and asked us to return in the future to help. In the evenings we led Parish missions featuring one for the youth, another led by the local prayer group, and the last night a parish revival focused on the power of the Holy Spirit.

We conducted a youth conference at Anyinam in the Diocese of Koforidua. The theme was: “Do not let anyone look down on you because you are young, but be an example for the believers in your speech, conduct, love, faith and purity,” taken from 1 Timothy 4:12. About 100 youth took part in the weekend session. After the closing Mass on Anokye.

Team member Christine Manuel shared her thoughts about the mission: “The work of evangelization by the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Ghana is exciting and fruitful. As we traveled with the Ghanaian team it felt similar to what it must have been like to live in the time of the Acts of the Apostles. It was exciting to see how the captives were set free with the teachings of Unbound Prayer and the wounded and the brokenhearted were restored. The Gospel was preached with authority and without compromise. People were healed and delivered of evil spirits. It was so obvious that the people were hungry for instruction; they avidly took notes on every talk that was given. Many people were empowered for leadership by the power of the Holy Spirit. I was also amazed by the youth who are incredibly on fire for Christ and mature in their faith. There were many being raised up in the Church to be a living example to their peers.

I was deeply affected by the Ghanaian people’s joy in adversity, their hunger for the gospel of Jesus Christ and their ability to daily live out their faith without reservation despite their material poverty. Since I returned home, I have been meditating on Revelations 3:17: ‘For you say, ‘I am rich and affluent and have no need of anything,’ and yet do not realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.’ For me it was a tremendous privilege to see what the Spirit is doing in Ghana and to learn lessons from it. The Spirit is being poured out in a powerful way in this country. I pray that this outpouring of the Holy Spirit will fall also upon us here in North America so that we can burn hot with the fire of Divine love.”

Brent Heiser teaches at a Catechist Formation session entitled, “Call to Conversion.”

The Catechists Training sessions in the Ho Diocese brought together for the first time, 55 catechists from the Volta Region.
On the Road

December 2012

*Worcester, MA, Diocese of Worcester Annual Dinner
December 1
Ralph Martin

*Toronto, Ontario, Renewal Ministries of Canada Board Meeting
December 2-3
Ralph Martin, Peter Herbeck, Sr. Ann Shields, Gary Seromik

Pinckney, MI
St. Mary’s Advent by Candlelight
Monday, December 3 at 7 pm
Debbie Herbeck
Contact number: 734-878-3161

Northville, MI
St. Andrew Kim Catholic Church
Wednesday, December 5
Sr. Ann Shields
Contact number: 248-442-9026

Detroit, MI
Archdiocesan Day of Renewal for Catechists
December 7, 9 am-3 pm
Sr. Ann Shields
Contact: 313-237-4683 or www.aod.org

Mesa, AZ
Advent Renewal
December 7-8
Ralph Martin
Contact: 480-775-5200 or www.sttimothymesa.org

Bridgeport, CT
St. Ann’s Parish Mission
December 8-11
Peter Herbeck
Contact Fr. Peter Towsley: 203-368-1607, ext 102 or frpjt@aol.com

Beaumont, TX
St. Anthony Cathedral Parish Mission
December 10
Ralph Martin
Contact: 409-833-6433

* Beaumont, TX
Clergy Study Day
December 11
Ralph Martin

*Steubenville, OH
TV Taping at Franciscan University
December 17-19
Ralph Martin

January 2013

Id916 Mission to Mexico
January 2-8
Jim Murphy, Debbie Herbeck and Young Adult Team

Ann Arbor, MI,
Heart to Heart Women’s Apostolate
Thursday, January 10
Ralph Martin
Contact: 734-930-7497 or www.hearttoheartcwa.com

Lincoln, NE
Diocesan Men’s Conference
January 11-13
Peter Herbeck
Contact: al-zach@cdolinc.net or 402-786-2705

Kansas City, MO
Day of Teaching on the New Evangelization
Saturday, January 12
Ralph Martin
Contact: sasso@diocesekcsj.org or www.diocese-kcsj.org

*Events not open to the public

Save the Date!
The 21st Annual Lift Jesus Higher Rally
Saturday, March 2, 2013
Metro Toronto Convention Centre
www.lift-jesus-higher-rally.org

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Keep the light of faith ever burning for Jesus alone is the way that leads to the Father. He alone is the life dwelling in our hearts.
— Blessed Teresa of Calcutta

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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.

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