Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As summer began to turn towards fall I spent time in Brazil and I’d like to share with you some of what I experienced and learned. I gave talks at the 7th Annual Seminar for Preachers for the State of Ceara in the main city of Fortaleza – on the Northeast coast of Brazil where it juts out a bit into the Atlantic Ocean. It’s a tropical climate that remains the same temperature most of the year with a rainy season during several of the months. Fortaleza is the fifth largest city in Brazil with a metro area population of over three million.

I spoke on the new evangelization, the content of our message, and the link between holiness and evangelization. One night after dinner some of the leaders asked me questions about the “early days” of the renewal. As I told some of the stories, they seemed particularly interested in Cardinal Suenens’ incognito visit to Ann Arbor in the early 1970s that led to his major role in facilitating the reception of the renewal by the wider Church. They said that they were experiencing “goose bumps”. They were so struck by the Providential hand of God in caring for the renewal and bringing it into the heart of the Church that they decided to change the program the next morning and set up a panel for the preachers to ask me questions about these important events.

These are lay preachers, trained and recognized by the Catholic charismatic renewal in Brazil, which is impressively organized and dynamically alive. There were perhaps 350-400 of these preachers at this seminar and about 15,000 of them in Brazil.

Most prayer groups have at least one preacher who is not necessarily the leader of the group but manifests the charism of preaching and teaching and has received some training. The preacher’s job is to preach and teach in the prayer group, give Life in the Spirit Seminars, retreats, etc. A recently new task is evangelizing in neighborhoods where the Catholic Church is not present.

I first heard of this concept when Pope Francis described what he had encouraged when he was Archbishop of Buenos Aires. As you know, one of his main emphases is the need for us to get out of our Church circles and reach out to those who don’t know Christ or the Church and aren’t living as disciples. He encouraged lay preachers in Argentina to go out to regions of the...
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

He encountered the Lord in a conversion similar to St. Paul and received at the same time a call to preach. He began to do this at the age of 16. At the next Life in the Spirit Seminar he invited nine of his brothers to attend and all them were set free from very great problems and brought to the Lord.

Ralph met a young priest from a rural diocese who has a parish of 100,000 people and 28 mission stations.

The worldwide phenomenon of the migration of rural peoples into larger urban conglomerations has sparked the spread of huge neighborhoods, which usually have no presence of the Church, but which the more nimble Evangelical and Pentecostal churches are able to quickly serve. Since the Catholic Church is more building focused and it takes so long to recruit and train priests, she is not able to move as quickly to respond to these new situations. This all came up in a conversation with the auxiliary bishop of Fortaleza over lunch one day when one of the lay leaders pulled out his electronic tablet. He showed us an aerial view of one of these vast new neighborhoods with more than 200,000 people, where there are no Catholic churches or priests but five Pentecostal congregations that have sprung up. He shared with the Bishop how some of the lay preachers from his group are beginning to be present there and preach as Catholic evangelists. The Bishop agreed that this was a good development. He said it wasn’t that so many Catholics have left the Church as that the Church has left them uncared for and the Pentecostals have stepped into the gap to care for them. A whole new ministry for these trained lay preachers may be opening up so that in addition to serving their groups they may be the vanguard of the Catholic Church’s response to these new situations and become evangelists in these unserved populations.

Here are a few of the personal stories that I heard that were so inspiring. I met a young priest from a rural diocese who was just ordained a few months ago. He traveled many hours by public bus to get to the seminar and traveled back the same way all Saturday night so as to be with his people on Sunday. Immediately after ordination he was appointed pastor of a parish, serving by himself with 100,000 people in the “interior” as they say in Brazil, many miles from the next parish. Besides the central parish he has 28 mission stations to attend to as well. He visits a different one every day! In this rural diocese it is a common situation. He told me about one of his fellow priests who has a parish with 70 mission stations. Full of zeal, I admire him and pray that God would sustain and protect him and send him reinforcements!

Some measure of reinforcements is already there as the Church in Brazil makes great use of lay catechists in a similar way as the Church in Africa. Many of these mission stations have lay men and women appointed as catechists who hold services of the Word in the absence of the priest and who also are delegated to handle funerals. All other sacraments have to wait for the priest to arrive. Permanent deacons are just beginning to be developed in some of the dioceses.

Another man I met was my fellow preacher at the seminar. He also has a role in the training of lay preachers on the national level. His preaching was excellent, with theological depth and passion and yet he has never had formal theological training. He is the youngest of 13 children. His father died when he was one month old and his mother when he was six years old. His family began to disintegrate and they were very difficult years until he was 16, when the girl he would later marry invited him to a charismatic prayer meeting. At 16 he encountered the Lord in a conversion similar to St. Paul and received at the same time a call to preach. At the next Life in the Spirit Seminar he invited nine of his brothers to attend and all of them were set free from very great problems and brought to the Lord. Later, with much prayer and fasting, he was also able to lead to the Lord his two sisters who were undergoing training to...
become practitioners in a spiritism religion. At the age of 19 he married this girl and today they are mightily serving the Lord.

I was very impressed with the renewal in Brazil. Many, many young people are involved, wearing their colorful tee shirts to represent their own group. Brazil is a country of many different races and nationalities and this diversity is represented in the renewal. The music group at our seminar was truly excellent – an amazing blend of voices and musical instruments in the service of worship; I am told that there are hundreds of music ministries like this throughout the country. I also met members of many different charismatic communities that provide serious service to the Church through TV networks and publishing houses. The challenges to the Church in this country are great but the Lord is truly raising up laborers for the harvest. May he continue to do so in our own countries as well!

Your brother in Christ,

Ralph Martin

More of the Holy Spirit

THE YEAR OF FAITH draws to an end—or does it? This has been a year of great grace but we need to ask ourselves: has our faith grown?

Repeatedly I hear in my own mind, “Read the signs of the times!” We are on a perilous journey in North America and in the Church at this time, but if we are walking in Christ, with Christ, and for Christ, we have nothing to fear. The question remains, have we genuinely opened ourselves to the action of the Holy Spirit so that doubts and fears can be addressed and the light of true faith can enter our hearts as well as our minds?

Hebrews 11:1 tells us: “Faith is the confident assurance concerning what we hope for and conviction about the things we do not see.” Do we possess that confident assurance, that conviction? If not, how do we receive such graces? Sr. Ruth Burrows, an English Carmelite cloistered nun addresses such concerns: “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 forgo self interest and to make his interests, his will, our sole concern…” (The Essence of Prayer, Ruth Burrows, OCD, New York, Paulist Press, 2006, p. 21)

We are incapable of making such a shift on our own. We need the Holy Spirit. But if we ask and cooperate with the grace that will be given (mainly by practicing unselfishness in thought, word and deed), we will know a radical change in our daily living which puts God at the center of our lives and at the center of our daily choices. Such a shift will be seismic but God can do it if we are willing and cooperate with the grace that will be given to those who ask in sincerity and truth. At first, such an approach will show us how selfish we really are, but if we persevere we will know a newfound freedom and a peace and an intimacy with the living God that outshines any gift this world can offer.

My new book, More of the Holy Spirit, published by The Word among Us Press is now available from Renewal Ministries and many Catholic bookstores. The book addresses some of the issues that have plagued the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, but it is also a call to everyone in the Church to live as true disciples, fueled by the grace of the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation.

God is pouring out living water, inviting every one to believe in and choose to follow him more deeply. He is doing this because the blind, confused, and bitterly angry are stumbling around in the darkness and are truly lost! Heed these words of the Lord to St. Paul in Acts 26:16-18: “…Rise and stand upon your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you to serve and bear witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, delivering you from the people and from the Gentiles—to whom I send you to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.”

I want to share with you one very profound example of someone who in very challenging circumstances has put the Lord first and allowed Him to be at the center of his will. Recently, I received a letter from a man on death row for 23 years who just learned that his sentence has been commuted and he may at some point be eligible for parole. This is great news but it was his response that profoundly affected me. In summary he wrote, “I just want God’s will in my life. I sure would like to go fishing again, but even more, I want His will. If I can do more for God here in prison, then I willingly choose to serve Him that way.”

As we officially close this Year of Faith, let us choose to grow more deeply in our faith, using Sr. Ruth’s comments as a guide, that we may truly be God’s light for those who stumble in the darkness.
THE FOCUS FOR THIS YEAR’S CAMP was on the New Evangelization. We spent time teaching on some of the basics: God’s love, human dignity, loving God and each other, seeing Him in one another, surrendering one’s life to Him, and being equipped for mission to be Christ to everyone, with the realization that each child of God is the future of the Catholic Church.

For the third year in a row we were invited by Sister Angela Barta, the leader of the Hungarian Catholic Charismatic Renewal to help at their camp, Lelkes Napok, which literally means “Days of the Spirit.” In attendance were 142 young people and 30 staff. The core team consisted of several young men and women who are on fire for the Lord and work tirelessly to make this camp such a huge success each year. Many lives are touched, changed and healed.

Unlike past years, the venue was a radical change. The “camp” actually took place in a refurbished castle, in the village of Vajta, south of Budapest. It is owned and operated by Calvary Chapel, begun in the sixties by Chuck Smith. It gave us an unexpected opportunity for ecumenism. The castle also serves as a for-credit Bible school. The grounds were beautiful, spacious, and offered a unique opportunity for personal prayer and peace. Instead of tents or classrooms for lodging, we had clean beds and service. There was some discussion about the change, but overall, the reception was good. Our meeting hall, in the attic of the castle, also served as chapel and church. The coffee shop was a big hit...coffee is not served with breakfast because of the cost.

Our schedule was quite full: team prayer at 7:30 a.m., breakfast from 8-9; prayer and worship until 9:30; small groups until 10.30, free time and then lunch at 12:30. After lunch there were either workshops or talks, depending on the day. Opportunities for personal counseling and/or prayer, were available at all times.

There were eight activities available for campers to participate in on different days. At 5:00 p.m. each day we all gathered for Holy Mass. It was a very special time for all. Visiting priests came to celebrate, some new and some we already knew and Deacon Steve assisted at these liturgies. Our “in house priest,” Tibi Atya has a prophetic gift and often had words of knowledge at the end of each Mass. Some had to do with physical healing, others with spiritual healing.

Each evening began with praise and worship, then a talk, prayer ministry, more free time, and then bedtime. Deacon Steve gave two of the main talks, one on God’s love and the other on Reconciliation.

Here is the testimony of one of this year’s participants, one Deacon Zoli’s daughters.

My name is Eszter Kunszabo. I am 17 years old. This is the fifth time I’ve come to Lelkes Napok. The Charismatic Renewal has been a part of my life since I was born because of my family. God gives us special presents each year. Every time I come, I can build my relationship with God and get closer to Him. This week I also got a lot. For the first time in my life I got to see Him, and during a prayer time I could feel Him physically. I made important commitments regarding my prayer life and purity. I could even serve God because the team asked me to pray with others. It was good to see that God could also use me to bring others close to Him. This was the first time in my life that I heard Him the clearest. Next year I would like to take part as a team member. Everyone in the camp was so blessed. +

The Lelkes Napok camp, attended by 142 young people was a week of deeper conversion, healing, and empowerment.
Many inmates had their small children with them. Life is hard there, but they praised the Lord with great fervor and listened as we taught on the love of God and His beautiful plan for all their lives.

WE WERE INVITED TO UGANDA by Bishop Christopher Kakooza to speak at the week-long Conference for the Celebration of 40 years of Catholic Charismatic Renewal and the Year of Faith at Namugongo, the Ugandan Martyrs’ Shrine. We began the week by speaking to about 150 workers for the conference—the worship team, intercessors, ushers, advertising personnel and interpreters. They were a very committed group. We were asked to minister so they could in turn minister at the conference. That night we met with around 150 people, mostly from the business world, who would not normally go to a Catholic charismatic conference. Lloyd spoke about Renewal Ministries and afterwards I gave my testimony. One of the other speakers for the conference, Fr. Perpetus Igwe from Nigeria, gave an excellent teaching and then Lloyd did a healing service. It was very powerful as Lloyd spoke out words of knowledge and Fr. Igwe, Andrew, and I walked through the crowd and prayed for people. A number of them came to us afterwards to report they had been touched and healed.

On Monday we were taken to U.G. Prison Kigo Women’s prison. On the way we stopped to pick up Edmary Mpagi, Uganda Project Manager for Dream One World, Inc. The reason he is so familiar with these prisons is that he spent 18½ years on death row in Ugandan prisons. He was accused of murder, but years later the man was found to be alive! He and his brother, who was also imprisoned, were victims of the Idi Amin regime and its political maneuvering. He visits the inmates every week. He also started a school for prisoners so they can read the Bible. It was a huge privilege to minister to those beautiful women in the prison. Many inmates had their small children with them. Life is hard there, but they praised the Lord with great fervor and listened as we taught on the love of God and His beautiful plan for all their lives. We were able to pray with them and you could see they were touched that people from outside had cared enough to come to them.

The next morning Lloyd opened the conference and spoke on “Faith Comes Through Hearing.” He then led the people in a recommitment to the Lordship of Jesus and asked the Holy Spirit to move through the crowd with healing. It was a powerful time in the Lord! At noon a huge monstrance was carried to the altar by an Indian priest and the women laid down their wraps, coats, towels, and whatever they had so that Jesus would not have to walk on the ground.

In the afternoon we had the privilege to go to the U.G. Prison Upper. We ministered to about 60-80 different women. Most of the women wore yellow, but a few of the condemned prisoners wore red checkered, including the inmate catechist who was the most joyful, peaceful person I’ve ever seen. Her total concern was that the other prisoners receive more of Jesus.

The next day I began the conference with a talk entitled, “Faith is Your Key to Freedom.” I then led them in more ministry and prayer. Afterwards we travelled to U.G. Prison Luzira where we ministered to around 70 men. They seemed very grateful that we spent our time with them. We preached the Gospel and then prayed for freedom and healing. I am always amazed at the faith of these people!

There is a Catholic ministry that is taking “Jesus to the streets” of Kampala (it is actually taking Jesus to a shopping mall). Young Catholics have rented a small shop where they preach Jesus and thousands come to hear. The music ministry and the preaching are done out in the open on the fourth floor with fast food places, sewing and hair shops. They set up loud speakers on every floor as the people crowded in to listen. It’s an amazing thing to see. These are business people

More than 10,000 people gathered at the Shrine of the Ugandan Martyrs for the week-long celebration of the Catholic Charismatic
and professionals who are hungering for Jesus. They are not church people, but they want more in their lives.

We arrived at the mall an hour early and walked into a glass front office with a huge crucifix on the wall, candles, statues of Mary and a big basket of prayer petitions. Many people were kneeling and praying and waiting for personal prayer. Many lined up as they saw us praying over others, but we only got to a few in the hour before we were asked to go to the 4th floor to preach. Lloyd and I both took turns preaching for the next three hours. Lloyd then led the people in a healing and deliverance service. He also prayed that God would raise up godly husbands and fathers who would be faithful and turn the tide of AIDS in the country. He prayed for finances and for godly relationships. People were so tightly packed that we could barely move. It was one of the most fantastic nights we had ever participated in! This ministry is really reaching people where they live.

The next morning I began speaking on renunciation, forgiveness, and the entryways of Satan. It was not planned that way, but all the speakers independently pursued the theme of deliverance. Even though many of the adults there have never gone to the witchdoctor, they are affected by the witchcraft that was practiced by their relatives and ancestors. The idea that they can renounce these evil spirits for themselves is just now collectively beginning to sink in. Many in the crowd are leaders among the lay people and are taking the way forward to holiness.

In the afternoon we visited our fourth and last prison. These men were hungry for God. They praised with great fervor and listened closely to the teaching. We prayed for freedom, both physical and spiritual, and for peace and protection. Lloyd encouraged them to stick together and help one another in their Christian walk. We donated money to buy bibles for the prisoners because they desperately needed to be fed by God’s Word!

The next morning at the conference Lloyd taught the people how to counter attacks on the Catholic faith using the scriptures. The conference closed with Sunday Mass and the sea of people and colors were wonderful. Each day during the week there were over 10,000 people in attendance and on the weekend the numbers doubled. The entire event was a real faith builder for the people and for us as well.

Here is one of many stories from the week. Tuesday all the priests were gone so we went to Mass at a retreat center that was in walking distance. After Mass and breakfast a religious sister asked to see me. She was late for Mass because she was so distraught about her problems. She was ready to quit and had contemplated suicide. She said to herself, “Lord, if I could only talk to Fr. Igwe or Nancy I know they could help me.” As she walked in to Mass she saw me. Her brother had died and left his three kids in her care. They had not eaten in several days. All of her brother-in-laws have also died and she is trying to help her sisters raise their kids. She is caring for some elderly sisters and is also trying to raise funds through a small business project. We prayed and she forgave her brother for dying and leaving her with this great responsibility of food, clothing and school fees for his children. She then forgave the sisters of her order for refusing to help. She cried but was able to say the words of forgiveness. She renounced a number of things and appeared to get free. We then gave her some personal money to buy food for the kids and she was overwhelmed with the mercy of God. It was obviously a divine appointment!
“Everything is a gift from God: it is only by recognizing this crucial dependence on the Creator that we will find freedom and peace.”

– Pope Benedict XVI

November 2013
Mission to Turkey
October 31-November 11
John Kazanjian and Team

Mission to Kenya
October 31-November 12
Peter Thompson and Team

Crookston, MN, Diocesan Evangelization Event
November 1-2
Ralph Martin
Contact: www.crookston.org

Mission to Mexico
November 3-9
Jim Murphy and Team
Contact Kathleen at: 734-662-1730 ext 132 or kkittle@renewalministries.net

West Hartford, CT, 38th Annual Catholic Charismatic Renewal Retreat
November 8-10
Sr. Ann Shields, SGL
Contact: CatholicCharismaticRenewal6@gmail.com

Vicksburg, MI, St. Martin of Tours Parish Event
November 15-16
Ralph Martin
Contact: www.stmartinvicksburg.org

December 2013
*Toronto, Ontario, Renewal Ministries’ Canadian Board Meeting
Monday, December 2
Ralph Martin, Sr. Ann Shields, Peter Herbeck and Board Members

Pinckney, MI, St. Mary’s Advent by Candlelight
Monday, December 2
Debbie Herbeck
Contact number: 734-878-3161

Toronto, Ontario, Association of Hebrew Catholics
Monday, December 2
Peter Herbeck
Contact: mark.neugebauer@rogers.com

New Boston, MI,
St. Stephen’s Evening of Reflection
Thursday, December 5
Ralph Martin
Contact: Toneil3@ford.com

* Covington, KY, Diocesan Priests’ Study Day
Tuesday, December 10
Ralph Martin

*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.

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