Even though many of us have not yet met, I feel deeply grateful for your interest and for your faithful support of this mission all these years. Each month, when I review our financial report and thank you letters, signing many of them, I say prayers of gratitude that the Lord works through you so effectively to reach souls throughout the world and prayers of intercession that the Lord would bless and protect you as you faithfully serve Him in so many difficult circumstances. We were particularly blessed this past year when one of our longtime supporters who is now with the Lord left us more than $90,000 as a bequest in her will. During these early months of the year a boost like that is really helpful in enabling us to proceed with confidence and boldness in carrying out this multi-faceted mission. Thanks be to God for her and for you!

This month we launch our new season of The Choices We Face with 26 new programs which will be repeated once during the next 12 months. This will be our 30th anniversary of producing and distributing The Choices We Face. It is the longest running program with the same host, in Catholic television. You can read about the new programs in this newsletter. The launch this month on EWTN and other channels as well, is the culmination of a long process that began more than a year ago when we began to plan the new programs, contact potential guests, update the set, and contract with the studio here in Ann Arbor, all the way through the production work, and post-production editing processes, which include content and quality reviews, closed captioning for the hard of hearing, and many other things as well!

Occasionally, I’ll look back on a previous year’s production and marvel at how inspiring so many of our guests have been and what a strong and consistent witness to Christ and life in the Spirit the Catholic Church has been given during these past 30 years. Thank you for your part in making all this possible and continuing to make it possible.

continued on page 2
Dear Friends in Christ, continued from page 1

And with your help we’re launching 34 missions to 26 different countries in 2014. A number are already underway.

And recently while at a consultation on the New Evangelization in Baltimore with Bishops, priests and lay people, I was honored for my (our) work in evangelization along with Archbishop Wenski of Miami and a leader from a religious freedom organization.

Indeed, the darkness is getting darker and the light is getting lighter! This is remarkably illustrated in some reflections from a young Fr. Joseph Ratzinger (now Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI) that I thought were particularly meaningful, prophetic even. We are reprinting them for your reflection.

Let’s all keep on keeping on! One of the secrets of progress in the spiritual life is to just keep showing up, just keep putting one foot in front of the other!

Your companion on the journey,

Ralph

---

**EWTN Distributes Food for the Journey and Fire on the Earth**

EWTN now makes *Food for the Journey* with Sr. Ann Shields and *Fire on the Earth* with Peter Herbeck available on their new EWTN 2 affiliate feed. That means local Catholic radio stations can now easily pick up the programs and broadcast them each weekday.

*Food for the Journey* and *Fire on the Earth* can still be heard by visiting: www.renewalministries.net or www.avemariaradio.net/programs. Archived programs can be heard using a computer, smart phone, tablet or any device with an internet connection. The Smart Device APP from Ave Maria Radio has a “Share” option so listeners can quickly and easily share a link to a program via e-mail, Facebook, or Twitter.

---

**UPCOMING EVENTS...**

**22nd Annual Lift Jesus Higher Rally**

Saturday, March 1, 2014
9:00 AM - 5:30 PM
Metro Toronto Convention Center
North Building, 255 Front Street West

Special Guests: Cardinal Thomas Collins, Fr. Michael Gaitley, MIC
The Renewal Team: Ralph Martin, Sr. Ann Shields, SGL, Fr. Scott McCaig, CC

---

**Renewal Ministries Gathering**

June 6-8, 2014
Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti Marriott Hotel & Conference Center
Call Kathleen at 734-662-1730 ext. 132 for more information.
Register online at www.renewalministries.net
How will the Church Look in the Future?

THE FOLLOWING is an excerpt from Faith and the Future, a book by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. The book’s five chapters were originally presented from 1969-70 by then Fr. Ratzinger as radio addresses on German and Vatican radio.

From the crisis of today the Church of tomorrow will emerge—a Church that has lost much. She will become small and will have to start afresh more or less from the beginning. She will no longer be able to inhabit many of the edifices she built in prosperity. As the number of her adherents diminishes, so will she lose many of her social privileges. In contrast to an earlier age, she will be seen much more as a voluntary society, entered only by free decision.

As a small society, she will make much bigger demands on the initiative of her individual members. Undoubtedly she will discover new forms of ministry and will ordain to the priesthood approved Christians who pursue some profession. In many smaller congregations or in self-contained social groups, pastoral care will normally be provided in this fashion. Alongside this, the full-time ministry of the priesthood will be indispensable as formerly.

But in all of the changes at which one might guess, the Church will find her essence afresh and with full conviction in that which was always at her center: faith in the triune God, in Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, in the presence of the Spirit until the end of the world. In faith and prayer she will again recognize her true center and experience the sacraments again as the worship of God and not as a subject for liturgical scholarship.

The Church will be a more spiritual Church, not presuming upon a political mandate, flirting as little with the Left as with the Right. It will be hard going for the Church, for the process of crystallization and clarification will cost her much valuable energy. It will make her poor and cause her to become the Church of the meek.

The process will be all the more arduous, for sectarian narrow-mindedness as well as pompous self-will will have to be shed. One may predict that all of this will take time. The process will be long and wearisome as was the road from the false progressivism of the eve of the French Revolution—when a bishop might be thought smart if he made fun of dogmas and even insinuated that the existence of God was by no means certain—to the renewal of the nineteenth century.

But when the trial of this sifting is past, a great power will flow from a more spiritualized and simplified Church.

Men in a totally planned world will find themselves unspeakably lonely. If they have completely lost sight of God, they will feel the whole horror of their poverty. Then they will discover the little flock of believers as something wholly new. They will discover it as a hope that is meant for them, an answer for which they have always been searching in secret.

And so it seems certain to me that the Church is facing very hard times. The real crisis has scarcely begun. We will have to count on terrific upheavals. But I am equally certain about what will remain at the end: not the Church of the political cult, which is dead already with Gobel, but the Church of faith. She may well no longer be the dominant social power to the extent that she was until recently; but she will enjoy a fresh blossoming and be seen as man’s home, where he will find life and hope beyond death.

And so it seems certain to me that the Church is facing very hard times. The real crisis has scarcely begun.

“...that many young people respond wholeheartedly to the call to proclaim the Gospel.

that God will work powerfully to bring deeper conversion through all the parish missions, re-treats and conferences during Lent.

that Renewal Ministries’ mission trips to Haiti and Serbia will draw many souls to Christ.

for the prayer intentions of all our supporters and their family members, especially as they face the challenges of illness and economic uncertainty.
St. Francis the Preacher, Part 2

IN THE JANUARY NEWSLETTER, I refuted the myth that St. Francis of Assisi seldom used words to preach the Gospel. In this second of a three-part series, I focus on the content of St. Francis’ message. Next time, I will share the important lessons we can learn from St. Francis’ preaching of the Gospel.

A Commission to Preach

There was a time when St. Francis wasn’t sure if he should preach. He was torn by an internal struggle over the question of which pattern of life would best conform him to the life of Jesus. He sought the help of his brothers asking them, “Which do you think is better? That I should devote all my time to prayer, or that I should go about preaching.” After a few days of wrestling with the problem he sent one of the brothers to pose the question to both Brother Silvester, a friar who spent all of his time praying on the mountain above Assisi and to St. Clare. According to St. Bonaventure, they both came to the same conclusion by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that, “…it was God’s will that Francis should go out to preach as a herald of Christ” (St. Bonaventure, Major Life, Chapter XII, no. 1 and 2).

Pope Innocent III gave Papal confirmation to that word as he blessed and commissioned St. Francis and his small band of brothers: “Go with the Lord, brothers, and as the Lord will deign to inspire you, preach penance to all” (Thomas of Celano, First Life of Francis, Book One, Chapter XIII, no. 33).

Content of His Preaching

St. Francis sought to simply preach what Jesus and the apostles preached. He instructed his brothers to do the same:

Moreover, I advise and admonish the friars that in their preaching, their words should be examined and chaste. They should aim only at the advantage and spiritual good of their listeners, telling them briefly about vice and virtue, punishment and glory, because our Lord himself kept his words short on earth. (Second Rule)

Thomas of Celano gives a beautiful description of what the preaching of “vice and virtue, punishment and glory” looked like from the lips of St. Francis:

Francis, therefore, Christ’s valiant knight, went round the cities and fortresses proclaiming the Kingdom of God, preaching peace, teaching salvation and repentance for the remission of sins, not with plausible peace, teaching salvation and repentance for the remission of sins, not with plausible words of human wisdom, but with the learning and power of the Spirit.

His commitment to preaching for the “advantage and spiritual good of their listeners” shaped the content of his preaching. And it was the fundamental biblical worldview, the basic Gospel message that was at the heart of his message. His biographers present an account of his mode of preaching that doesn’t easily conform to contemporary images of St. Francis:

The Apostolic authority which had been granted him enabled him to act in all things with greater confidence, without using flattery or seducing blandishments. Incapable of caressing the faults of certain men, he could pierce them; incapable of showing favor to the lives of sinners, he could smite them with sharp reproof because he had first persuaded himself by practice of that which he endeavored to commend to others by his words; and without fear of any reprover he uttered the truth most confidently, so that even the most learned men, mighty in renown and dignity, wondered at his discourses and were smitten by his presence with wholesome fear. (Celano, First Life of Francis, Chapter XV, no. 36)

He preached with confidence that flowed from “Apostolic authority,” and from the experience of his own life. He lived what he preached. He wasn’t afraid to call people to the high standard of biblical discipleship because he held himself to the same standard.

When needed, he would “pierce” and “smite…” with sharp reproof,” and would speak the truth confidently, without being controlled by the fear of men, not even the “learned” and the “mighty.” Like Jesus and the apostles, St. Francis preached “in the power of the Holy Spirit,” which enabled him to know what to say, how to say it, in order to break the spiritual strongholds the Devil had sown in people’s minds and hearts. Thomas of Celano tells us why he chose, at times, to preach in this way. He sought to:

…scatter…the darkness that so seized…the whole of that region… For such depth of forgetfulness of God and such slumber of ne-
glect of His commandments had oppressed almost all that they could scarce endure to be roused, even slightly, from their old and inveterate sins.  (Celano, First Life of Francis)

In an open letter to “Rulers of the People,” St. Francis addressed political leaders throughout the world in the same way:

To all magistrates, and consuls, judges and governors, in whatever part of the world, and to all others to whom this letter may come, Brother Francis, your little and contemptible servant, wishes health and peace to you.

Consider and see that the day of death draws nigh. I ask you, therefore, with such reverence as I can, not to forget the Lord on account of the cares and solicitudes of this world and not to turn aside from His commandments, for all those who forget Him and decline from His commandments are cursed and they shall be forgotten by Him. And when the day of death comes, all that which they think they have shall be taken away from them. And the wiser and more powerful they may have been in this world, so much the greater torments shall they endure in hell.

To modern ears his words may seem harsh, judgmental or even extreme. After all, who is he to judge? St. Francis knew the opposite was true. These are words of love, compassion and truth, given in the form of a warning. They are words of a good shepherd who knows the types of temptations that befall politicians, rulers and kings—to forget God, to be caught up in the “lust of the eyes and the pride of life” (1 Jn 1:16).

Jesus gave many such warnings:

“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him.”  (Jn 3:36)

“If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, and thrown into the fire and burned.”  (Jn 15:6)

These are hard words, but Jesus thought them necessary. The important thing to see is that they are motivated by love and mercy. Like every word Jesus ever spoke, they are perfect expressions of his infinite love.

Francis’ preaching was rooted in the same love. He knew that if men lived for this world only, forgetting God and his commandments, they would be lost. So he warned them. The anointing of the Holy Spirit, apostolic courage, the fear of the Lord and a passion for souls provided him the freedom he needed to speak the truth in love.

Today we are facing a situation much like the one St. Francis confronted in his day, probably worse. He and his brothers were called to face the darkness that had “seized the whole region,” which meant they needed to directly confront the fact that many people had simply forgotten God and had rejected his commandments.

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI characterized our times in this way:

In vast areas of the world the faith is in danger of dying out like a flame which no longer has fuel…the real problem at this moment of our history is that God is disappearing from the human horizon, and, with the dimming of the light which comes from God, humanity is losing its bearings, with increasingly evident destructive effects.  (Pope Benedict XVI, Letter to Bishops, March 10, 2009)

Who will help the men and women of our time reset their course, to know where they stand before God? Who will tell them what is at stake? Who will warn them about the eternal consequences of forgetting God and ignoring the offer of salvation He has given in Jesus? +

“Today we are facing a situation much like the one St. Francis confronted in his day, probably worse.”
Brandon Vogt
*Catholicism & New Media*
Brandon Vogt converted to Catholicism in 2008 and quickly became recognized as a Catholic new media expert. This award winning writer, blogger and speaker discusses ways of using new media for evangelization and how you can get involved.

Fr. John Riccardo
*Grieving with Hope*
A regular guest and popular speaker, Fr. Riccardo discusses the importance of grieving with hope and praying for those who have gone before us.

Dr. Peter Kreeft
*Encountering Jesus*
Fr. Riccardo reflects on his decision to become a priest and the beauty and power of encountering Jesus.

Sister Maria Catherine, PVMI
*Parish Visitors of Mary Immaculate*
Sr. Maria Catherine, Novice Director, shares about this contemplative order’s unique apostolate of seeking souls for Christ, one person at a time.

Tom Corcoran
*Rebuilt*
Tom Corcoran, co-author of *Rebuilt: Awakening the Faith, Reaching the Lost, and Making Church Matter*, shares the Church of the Nativity’s journey to revitalize their church community. He serves as associate to the pastor and is responsible for weekend message development, strategic planning, and staff development.

Patti Mansfield
*Let Your Blood Be upon Us*
Author and speaker, Patti Mansfield draws on Scripture and the wisdom of the saints, to teach about the healing and saving power of Jesus’ blood.

*His Praise Shall Continually Be in My Mouth*
In this segment, Patti explains the importance of praising God and how to grow in the practice of praise.
Luigj Perkaj
*Live in Him*
Luigj Perkaj describes the persecution of the Albanian people and his personal encounter with Jesus that led him into evangelism.

Mary Bielski
*All4Him*
As a college student, Mary Bielski encountered the intimate love of Jesus and the call to live a life totally for Him. Bielski now spreads the Gospel to youth through her ministry All4Him.

Tom Peterson
*Bringing Catholics Home*
In 1997, Tom Peterson had a profound reversion experience in his Catholic faith. Later, he founded the apostolates, Catholics Come Home and Virtue Media, to promote Catholic evangelization and the sanctity of human life.

Deacon Bob Ervin
*New Leaven*
In 2003, Bob Ervin was ordained a permanent deacon for the Archdiocese of Detroit. He recounts God’s call to become a disciple and explains New Leaven, a ministry he co-founded.

Joey McCoy
*Generation for Christ*
Joey McCoy is a cradle Catholic whose faith came alive late in high school while participating in mission trips to Mexico City and when he encountered the Holy Spirit.

Dr. Jonathan Reyes
*Christ in the City*
Dr. Reyes is the executive director of the Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. He also founded Christ in the City, a national volunteer and formation program for college students.

Other inspiring shows feature Dr. Dan Keating, Deacon Mike Thoennes and Mary Hagar. Of course, many shows will feature Ralph and Peter addressing important topics such as *Faith that Overcomes the World, The New Evangelization* and *Putting on the Armor of God.*
Renewal Ministries is a Catholic ministry committed to renewal and evangelization in the Church. It seeks to proclaim Jesus Christ through its TV and radio outreaches, as well as through books, tapes, conferences, retreats and other international evangelistic events.

Editor  Rose Wingfield

Design  Cynthia Rutherford

© 2014 by Renewal Ministries

In the United States

Episcopal Advisor
Archbishop Robert J. Carlson, St. Louis, MO

President
Ralph Martin

In Canada

Episcopal Advisors
Cardinal Thomas Collins, Toronto
Bishop M. Pearse Lacey, Ret. Auxiliary, Toronto

Chairman of the Board
Msgr. Gregory Smith, Vancouver

facebook.com/CatholicRenewalMinistries
facebook.com/id916

@srannshieldssgl
@DebbieHerbeck
@id916

Know that the greatest service that man can offer to God is to help convert souls.
— St. Rose of Lima

On the Road

March 2014

Toronto, CAN
Lift Jesus Higher Rally
March 1
Ralph Martin, Sr. Ann Shields, SGL, Pete Burak
Contact: www.lift-jesus-higher-rally.org

Ann Arbor, MI
i.d.916 Disciples’ Night
March 6
Speaker: Sr. Ann Shields, SGL
RSVP on i.d.916 Facebook page, pburak@gmail.com or intentionaldisciples916@gmail.com

Mission to Haiti
March 7-15
Lloyd & Nancy Greenhaw and Team
Contact: Kathleen at 734-662-1730 ext. 132 or kkittle@renewalministries.net

Detroit, MI
Sacred Heart Seminary Fellowship of St. Paul
March 14
Debbie Herbeck
Contact: fellowshipofstpaul.blogspot.com

Mission to Serbia
March 18-20
Dcn. Zoli Kunszabo
Contact: Kathleen at 734-662-1730 ext. 132 or kkittle@renewalministries.net

Portland, OR
Parish Renewal, St. John the Apostle
March 14-15
Sr. Ann Shields, SGL
Contact: www.sisteranninoregoncity.com

Cleveland, OH
Men’s Conference
March 22
Peter Herbeck, Pete Burak
Contact: www.cmfneo.com

Mission to Serbia
March 18-20
Dcn. Zoli Kunszabo
Contact: Kathleen at 734-662-1730 ext. 132 or kkittle@renewalministries.net

Lincoln, NE
FOCUS Prayer Breakfast
March 19
Peter Herbeck
Contact: Tess.Stone@focus.org

Oberlin, OH
Parish Mission, Sacred Heart
March 23-25
Peter Herbeck
Contact: Joe Palmieri at 440-774-1191

Houma-Thibodaux Diocese, LA
Men's Conference
March 28
Peter Herbeck
Contact: www.htdiocese.org

Evansville, IN
Diocesan Conference
March 14-15
Ralph Martin
Contact: gshetler@evdio.org