I must say things are getting crazier – wicked crazier. Recently, I’ve heard of two different sets of parents, who, when asked whether their only child was a boy or a girl responded: “Well, he’s biologically a boy but we are letting him choose his own gender as he grows up.” And a recent headline in our local newspaper read: “Schools Struggle with How to Accommodate the Transgender Community in School Restrooms.”

As our culture turns away from God the prophetic revelations of scripture become more and more applicable. We are seeing a profound rebellion against the gender that has already been assigned – by God! In addition, human beings in ever larger numbers are being sucked into the deception of our culture. They are joining in a profound and foolish rebellion against the God-ordained order of nature and divinely revealed laws of eternal life and everlasting death.

As the Apostle Paul said in his letter to the Romans:

The wrath of God is indeed being revealed from heaven against every impiety and wickedness of those who suppress the truth by their wickedness...they became vain in their reasoning, and their senseless minds were darkened...Therefore, God handed them over to degrading passions. Their females exchanged natural relations for unnatural, and the males likewise gave up natural relations with females and burned with lust for one another. Males did shameful things with males and thus received in their own persons the due penalty for their perversity. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God handed them over to their undiscerning mind to do what is improper...Although they know the just decree of God that all who practice such things deserve death, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them. (Rom 1:18-32, NAB)

Consider the recent UN Committee report that requested in scornful language that the Catholic Church change its teaching on sexual morality and abortion. Governments of what used to be the “Christian West” are becoming increasingly bold in forcing the Church to get with the secular program or face penalties and persecution. We are heading towards confrontations and difficult decisions that only show signs of intensifying in the years ahead. The “world”
sees the Catholic Church as the main obstacle standing in the way of a “brave new world” of liberation from the laws of God. How ironic that the oppression of atheistic communism that sought to do away with God and build its own “brave new world,” collapsed under the weight of its unreality. Now the “Christian West” is abandoning reverence for God and increasingly compelling Christians and the Church to be quiet about certain parts of God’s word, labeling it as “hate speech.” They are rewriting the laws of nature and God. Rather than lead people to a “liberated happiness” these laws lead a pitiful darkening of the mind, a weakening of the will, and slavery to sin.

It seems like the gates of hell have opened wide and the demons are flying out to wreak havoc wherever they can. It seems the “restrainer” on evil mentioned in Thessalonians has been definitively removed.

Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you this? And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, and the Lord Jesus will slay him with the breath of his mouth and destroy him by his appearing and his coming. The coming of the lawless one by the activity of Satan will be with all power and with pretended signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are to perish, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore God sends upon them a strong delusion, to make them believe what is false, so that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

(2 Thes 2:3-12, RSV)

What shall we do? Has Satan been unleashed? Will the persecution and social pressure to deny Christ and His saving truth increase? It certainly looks like we are now facing this situation. But let’s remember:

He who sits in the heavens laughs;
the Lord has them in derision.
Then he will speak to them in his wrath,
and terrify them in his fury, saying,
“I have set my king
on Zion, my holy hill.”
I will tell of the decree of the Lord:
He said to me, “You are my son,
today I have begotten you.
Ask of me, and I will make the nations
your heritage,
and the ends of the earth your possession.
You shall break them with a rod of iron,
and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.”
(Ps 2:4-9, RSV)

We have to remember that all of this is happening under the providential hand of God. God is permitting the apparent triumph of evil to reveal the secrets of hearts, just as it was prophesied by Simeon at Jesus’ presentation. God is permitting His judgment to fall on those who have “suppressed the truth, without excuse” and have exchanged the truth of God for a lie. The judgment is that very darkness of mind and slavery to sin that puts its unfortunate recipients in close proximity to final condemnation, unless they repent while there is still time. If there is
no repentance before death or before the final conflict, there will be the terrifying reality of Satan’s harvest. He will gather those who have refused to open their hearts to the truth in order to be saved and have come under satanic deception and bondage through a culpable rejection of the truth in the depth of their hearts.

These are weighty matters. But we need to remember that “all his ways are true, all his ways are just, all his ways are merciful.” He reveals these truths to us out of compassion for us, out of a desire that as many as possible be saved. How shall we respond?

First, we need to definitively turn away from sin in our own lives and live close to the Lord Jesus, paying attention to him in prayer and the Word. Featured on our Product Reply Card are some resources that will help in turning away from sin and staying in close union with Jesus.

Second, we need to pray, sacrifice and offer our suffering for the salvation of souls – those we know and those we don’t know. It is urgent that we say “yes” to the Lord’s call to participate with Him in His ongoing mission to “seek and save those who are lost.” My new book, The Urgency of the New Evangelization, and a book by Terry Barber, How to Share your Faith with Anyone, are good resources for understanding more fully and embracing more deeply our call to participate in the salvation of souls.

Do not be afraid! God is with us and will give us every help we need to fulfill the mission He has entrusted to each of us. Mary and the saints are with us as well; really and truly with us and for us.

With you in the heart of Christ,

Ralph

P.S. Just got word that Pope Francis will be celebrating with the Catholic Charismatic Renewal at an international conference in Rome on June 1-2, 2014. Patti Mansfield and I have been invited to speak. We’ve posted a link to the information on the home page of our website (www.renewalministries.net) under “Bulletin.”
REFLECTING ON THE EPISODE from the Second Book of Samuel in which “David danced with all his might before the Lord,” Pope Francis recalled that the whole people of Israel were celebrating because the Ark of the Covenant was returning home. He went on to say that David’s prayer of praise, “led him to move beyond all composure,” adding, “this was precisely a prayer of praise.”

He said that it is easy to understand a prayer of petition – asking something of the Lord – and prayer of thanksgiving, as well. Even prayer of adoration, he said, “is not so difficult,” to understand. Prayer of praise, however, “We leave aside – it does not come to us so easily.”

“But, Father! This is for the Renewal in the Spirit folks, not for all Christians!” No: prayer of praise is a Christian prayer, for all of us. In the Mass, every day, when we sing the Holy, Holy, Holy. This is a prayer of praise. We praise God for his greatness, because He is great. We say beautiful things to Him, because we are happy for His greatness. ‘But, Father! I am not able...I have to...’ Well, you’re able to shout when your team scores a goal, and you are not able to sing praises to the Lord? To come out of your shell so slightly to sing His praise? Praising God is completely gratis. In it we do not ask Him to give us anything: we do not express gratitude for anything He has given; we praise Him!”

We need to pray “whole-heartedly,” he said. “It is also an act of justice, because He is great! He is our God.” David, Pope Francis went on to observe, “was so happy, because the ark was returning, the Lord was returning: his body, too, prayed with that dance.”

“Here is a good question for us to pose to ourselves today: ‘But how am I doing vis à vis prayer of praise? Do I know how to praise the Lord? Do I know how to praise the Lord when I pray the Gloria or the Sanctus? Is my whole heart really in it, or do I merely mouth the words. What does David dancing here say to me, and Sarah, dancing for joy? When David enters the city there begins another thing: a party!”

“The joy of praise,” said Pope Francis, “leads us to the joy of the feast - the feast of the family.”

The Pope went on to recall how, when David returned to the palace, Michal, the daughter of King Saul, scolded him and asked him if he did not feel ashamed for having danced like that in front of everyone, he, who is the king. Michal “despised David.”

“I wonder sometimes how many times we despise good people in our hearts, good people who praise the Lord as it comes to them, so spontaneously, because they are not cultured, because they do not follow the formalities. I mean really despise them? The Bible says that, because of this, Michal remained sterile for the rest of her life. What does the Word of God mean, here? It means that joy, that the prayer of praise makes us fruitful! Sarah danced in the great moment of her fecundity – at the age of 90! The fruitfulness that praise of the Lord gives us, the gratuity of praising the Lord: that man or that woman who praises the Lord, who prays praising the Lord, who, when praying the Gloria is filled with joy at doing so, and who, when singing the Sanctus in the Mass rejoices in singing it, is a fruitful person.”

On the other hand, warned Pope Francis, “Those, who are closed in the formality of a prayer that is cold, stingy, might end up as Michal, in the sterility of her formality.”

The Pope asked, then, that we imagine David dancing, “with all his might before the Lord,” and that, “we think how beautiful it is to make the prayer of praise.” It will do us good, he said, to repeat the words of Psalm 23: “Lift up your gates, o ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates: and the King of Glory shall enter in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of Glory.”

Reprinted with permission from Vatican Radio.
Meditation in Gethsemane

By Patti Gallagher Mansfield

Note: Patti was a participant in the February 1967 “Duquesne Weekend” which marked the beginning of the Charismatic Renewal. She is a long-time friend of Renewal Ministries and a frequent guest on The Choices We Face. This is a meditation she gave while on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land seeking God’s prophetic word for the Church.

WE ARE IN THE GARDeN with Jesus. He has called us friends and He has a prophetic word to speak to us. Let’s begin by reading Mark’s account of the agony in garden.

And they went to a place which was called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, “Sit here, while I pray.” And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch.” And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee; remove this cup from me; yet not what I will, but what thou wilt.” And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (Mk 14:32-39, RSV)

In Luke’s account we read, “And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down upon the ground.”

Watch and Pray!

Jesus is true God and true man. Here in the Garden we hear the cry of His human heart, reaching out to His friends to stay with Him, to be close to Him, to support Him by their presence, by their love, by their prayer. Even the three who were with Him on Mt. Tabor, who witnessed His glory, fell asleep and left Him alone in His agony. Soon, we’ll be going to Calvary where Jesus was crucified and shed His blood. But He began shedding His blood here in the Garden.

“Watch and pray!” Jesus cries out. “Be on the alert! The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. Could you not watch one hour?” This cry of Jesus is a prophetic word for us. One hour! One hour to be with Jesus. One hour to strengthen the bonds of love and friendship. One hour for intimacy with the Lord. If we’re not faithful to spending at least one hour a day watching and praying, how will we ever be able to withstand what is to come?

Get Ready!

The Lord still has much to do with and through us and He wants us to get ready. How? First, we must be humble and pure of heart. We must desire Jesus above everything. Isaiah 26:8 says, “Your Name and your title are the desire of our souls. O Lord, it is you who have accomplished all that we have done.”

Two concrete ways to grow in humility and purity of heart is to appropriate the blood of Jesus in the sacrament of reconciliation and the Holy Eucharist. Get ready to be useful.

Settle It Now!

St. Alphonsus Ligouri tells us that we should determine ahead of time to accept the manner of our death. “If we live, we live to the Lord and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s” (Rom 14:8). Settle it now.

Blessed John Paul II said, “The believer who has seriously pondered his Christian vocation, including what Revelation has to say about the possibility of martyrdom, cannot exclude it from his own life’s horizon.” Whether or not we shed our blood, every one of us will be called to be a martyr, a witness.

Tremble!

“Tremble before him all the earth” (Ps 96:9). In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus asked the guards, “Whom do you seek?” They replied, “Jesus of Nazareth.” When he said, “I am he,” they fell to the ground like dead men. Tremble before Him all the earth. The Lord says, “This is the man to whom I will look, he that is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word” (Is 66:2). Trembling before the Lord refers to much more than a physical response; it’s a spiritual response that acknowledges His holiness. “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb 10:30).

Jesus is saying to us today, “My friends watch and pray. Get ready by purifying yourselves in my blood. Settle it now. Alive or dead, you belong to me. Be in awe of me. Tremble before me. Be afraid of touching my glory and spoiling the beauty of my work. Keep your head to the ground just like I did when I knelt in this Garden and said, ‘Not my will, but yours be done.’”

+
There is a need for us in the fullness, joy and enthusiasm which comes from the Holy Spirit to take on the task which is more urgent than any other; that of making the unfathomable riches of Christ known to our brothers and sisters.
— Blessed Pope John Paul II

THIS MISSION TO GHANA was especially fruitful. The team comprised of Brent Heiser and Cecilia Ritchie from the U.S. and Fr. Ben St. Croix from Canada ministered in Accra, Donkokrom, and Kumasi. Here are the highlights:

Province of Accra

In the Ecclesiastical Province of Accra, we conducted a program for 60 prayer group leaders from six dioceses. The teachings were designed to help them live in the power of the Holy Spirit and to embrace the New Evangelization.

At the University of Ghana we hosted a camp for 150 youth.

Donkokrom Vicariate

In Donkokrom, we conducted a three-day program designed to help 45 catechists encounter the person of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. For the next three days, we conducted two simultaneous programs; one for 50 prayer group leaders and a second for 120 youth. During the evenings, we hosted an open air rally in Sakora Park for more than 600 people. We were joined by a local team from the Renewal Centre in Kumasi.

Fr. Ben said that the crusade in Donkorkrom was a great opportunity to preach the Gospel in the town center. “I believe that many hearts were deeply touched,” he said. “One young Muslim man in particular publicly stated that he had decided to become a Catholic at the crusade. Please keep him in your prayers.”

Archdiocese of Kumasi

The team had a two-day session for 60 catechists in the Archdiocese of Kumasi. In addition, we had the opportunity to speak with Archbishop Gabriel Justice Anokye who praised the work of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Ghana. He said that before the renewal the Catholic Churches were dying; now they are growing abundantly.

Cecilia summed up this mission. “As we worked together with the Ghanaian team and learned to care for each other, something unexpected happened,” she said. “We became family.”

When the team arrived in Kumasi, the National Office of the Ghana Catholic Charismatic Renewal had just received a new car from Newfoundland, Canada. Christine Manuel, a team member in 2012, secured the donation of an AWD vehicle and raised the funds to ship it to Ghana. Ayeekoo (well done) Christine!
It was an impressive seminar on the New Evangelization. It has empowered us as ministers of the Faith and helped us to understand that once we are baptized, confirmed and filled with the Holy Spirit we can go out and bring Jesus to the people.

—Peter Fafanyo, Catechist for 34 years

Following are some of the mission trips planned for the remainder of 2014.

**April**
Mexico, Zimbabwe, Romania

**May**
Serbia

**June**
Kazakhstan, Papua New Guinea

**July**
Tanzania, Slovenia, Mexico, Ghana, Latvia

**August**
Romania, Gambia, Rwanda

**September**
Zambia, Serbia, Kenya, Ukraine/Belarus

**October**
Slovakia/Czech Republic, Vietnam, Mexico

**November**
Ghana

To learn more about our missions, please visit www.RenewalMinistries.net. Or contact Kathleen Kittle at kkittle@renewalministries.net.
On the Road

April 2014

Aliquippa, PA
St. Titus Parish Mission
March 30-April 1
Sr. Ann Shields, SGL

Ann Arbor, MI
i.d.916 Disciples’ Night
April 3
Speaker: Most Rev. Earl Boyea, Bishop of Lansing
RSVP on the i.d.916 Facebook page or intentionaldisciples916@gmail.com

Philadelphia, PA
FOCUS Breakfast
April 4
Ralph Martin
Contact: Mary Blaicher at 303-551-7416 or mary.blaicher@focus.org

Novi, MI
Holy Family Parish Mission
April 6-10
Ralph Martin, Peter Herbeck,
Sr. Ann Shields, SGL
Contact: 248-349-8847 or
www.holyfamilynovi.org

Ann Arbor, MI
Heart to Heart Women’s Apostolate
April 9
Debbie Herbeck
Contact: cwa@rc.net or 734-930-7497

Milan, MI
Immaculate Conception Parish
Morning for Women
April 12
Sr. Ann Shields, SGL
Contact: Dcn. Jack Flanagan 734-439-2030

Tecumseh, MI
St. Elizabeth Parish Men’s Retreat
April 12
Peter Herbeck
Contact: Todd Dahlberg 734-604-6907

Cincinnati, OH
St. Gertrude Parish Mission
April 14-16
Ralph Martin
Contact: www.stgertrude.org or 513-561-5954

FGR High School Mission to Mexico
April 22-28
Jim Murphy, Debbie Herbeck and Team
Contact: Kathleen at 734-662-1730 ext. 132 or
kkittle@renewalministries.net

Mission to Zimbabwe
April 23-29
Lloyd & Nancy Greenhaw and Team
Contact: Kathleen at 734-662-1730 ext. 132 or
kkittle@renewalministries.net

Mission to Romania
April 25-27
Tiberius “Tibi” Majoros and Team
Contact: Kathleen at 734-662-1730 ext. 132 or
kkittle@renewalministries.net

Fargo, ND
Clergy Convocation*
April 28-29
Ralph Martin

* Events not open to the public

Those who sincerely say ‘Jesus, I trust in You’ will find comfort in all their anxieties and fears.
—Blessed John Paul II

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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