Dear Fellow Disciples,

Have you ever considered that what we normally call our “bad days” could actually be good days in disguise?

Yes! Our bad days—days when we receive disappointing news, things don’t go as planned, we don’t get anything done, we are in physical pain, we can’t sleep well, we don’t have enough to eat, etc.—can actually be opportunities to trust more, love more, and offer our sufferings in reparation for our own sins and the salvation of others.

The spiritual battle that has been raging since the great temptation, the great fall, and the subsequent promise of redemption, confronts us on a daily basis. It is imperative that we stand firm (as Ephesians 6:10-20 counsels us), trusting God in the midst of difficulty, trusting His Providence, trusting His wisdom, and trusting His love, despite everything.

It is remarkable how often Sacred Scripture gives us glimpses into this battle. We see the main elements of the battle revealed in so many incidents of the Old Testament. When God’s people lost trust in Him and turned to “other gods,” things went badly for them over a period of time. When God’s people remained faithful to Him in the midst of difficulty, things eventually went well.

For example, in some of the daily Mass readings this year (2 Kings 11: 1-20; 2 Chronicles 24: 17-25), we read the story of the spiritual battle raging in the time of the wicked queen-mother Athaliah who tried to kill off all the princes of the royal family in a power struggle of revenge and control. But one of the princes, Joash, was concealed in the temple for six years, hidden from the rule of Athaliah, until at the right moment, the priest who was protecting him brought him forward to announce him as king and to overthrow and kill Athaliah. This was accompanied by a renewal of the covenant and a pledge of fidelity to the Lord.

A heavy price was paid for the rescue and restoration of King Joash and the renewal of the covenant—but that price was paid in vain. Apostate advisors convinced the king to forsake “the temple of the Lord, the God of their fathers, and . . . to serve the sacred poles and the idols; and because of this crime of theirs, wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem. Although prophets were sent to them to convert them to the Lord, the people would not listen to their warnings.”

In particular, the urgent warnings of the prophet Zechariah are mentioned, which boldly proclaimed: “God says, ‘Why are you transgressing the Lord’s commands, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have abandoned the Lord, he has abandoned you’” (2 Chr 24:20).
Are we not seeing the same dynamic unfold in our own countries today? Are we not seeing a shockingly small number of people overturn respect for the moral law, and the Church—leading the majority seemingly powerlessness to stop this radical overturn of our countries’ traditions?

And yet here is where the Gospel that accompanies these readings comes in. It calls for complete trust in the Providence of God, repentance, preparation, and fidelity in the face of difficulty.

“Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is any of you able by worrying, add a single moment to your lifespan? (Mt 6:27). Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation pray and ask for what you need, through prayer and requests, with thanksgiving (Phil 4:6). Do not worry about the future. The Father knows how to take care of you (Mt 6:29-30).

Dearest fellow disciples, let us continue trusting in the Providence of God and in the promises of Mary, which are so similar. Let nothing discourage you, and let the heart of Christ be your life.” — December 12, 1531 —

Dear fellow disciples, let us continue together, seeking first His Kingdom and His holiness, and reaching out to others. Let us continue trusting in the Providence of God and in the promises of Jesus and Mary.

All of us here at Renewal Ministries are standing at your side in the battle.

Ralph Martin

Please Pray...

“Lord, do not let our loved ones lose this earth without knowing Your forgiveness for their sins and being at peace with You, so they can know Your salvation.” (Thank you to Veronica Robertson for this prayer, which is part of his book Seminar of Hope: How to Pray for Your Sons, Daughters, and Loved Ones.)

For all grandparents who desire to help lead their grandchildren to a closer relationship with the Lord. May the Lord hear their prayers, increase their faith, and grant them the grace to persevere in love.

For the prayer intentions of all our supporters and their family members, especially as they face the challenges of illness and economic uncertainty.

The fulfillment of all desire is continuing to spread worldwide!

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The Most Important Job in the Entire World

Debbie Herbeck reflects on her meeting with Mother Teresa, whose canonization is Sept. 4, 2016.

Twenty-seven years ago, I was a young wife and mother, struggling in my vocation. I loved my husband, my two-year-old daughter, and my six-month-old son, but the mundane and repetitive tasks of daily life, and the powerful messages of the women’s movement, made my hidden and often thankless life as a mother seem insignificant and unimportant.

I was thrilled when Peter announced one day that we had been invited to give workshops at a large family conference in Bonn, Germany. It would be a short trip, with our nursing baby in tow, but it would give me a chance to express some of the gifts I had previously used in full-time youth ministry. Little did I know, this trip was not going to be about what I could do for God, but what He wanted to do for me.

From the moment our plane was airborne, everything seemed to go wrong. Michael cried for most of the flight, slept when everyone was awake, and was awake when we all needed to be asleep. I was exhausted, with a horrible migraine. Our luggage was broken into, with jewelry stolen, and baby food, toys smashed. So the conference organizers announced that they now only needed one of us to speak, and Peter was chosen. Amidst my fatigue and disappointment, I asked the Lord, “Why did I come? Wouldn’t I have been easier to just stay home?”

On the last day of the conference, as we made our way to the large auditorium to hear the keynote speaker, one of the helpers stopped us. “Excuse me, but I noticed you have your baby with you. Mother Teresa would like all the mothers here with babies to sit on the stage with her as she speaks today.” Stunned, I followed her backstage and onto the stage with Michael, as Peter made his way to his balcony seat. A sea of white and blue-clad sisters escorted Mother Teresa down the center aisle and onto the stage.

I sat with fifteen other mothers and babies, just a few feet away from Mother. As she spoke about the dignity of the unborn child, you could have heard a pin drop. When the session ended, the same conference worker approached me:

“Mother Teresa would like to personally meet each mother and baby.”

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“Mother Teresa would like to personally meet each mother and baby.”

Just then, a Most Important Job in the Entire World

I wasstairs to his balcony seat. A sea

drop. When the session ended, the same conference worker approached me:

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Danny and Claudia Abramowicz exemplify what might be termed intentional grandparenting.

The two, who celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary last month, are no strangers to service. Danny—who has had a long history with the NFL as a player, coach, and broadcaster—appears on EWTN’s Crossing the Goal, is actively involved in evangelistic outreach to Catholic men, and wrote the book Spiritual Workout of a Former Saint. Claudia also serves on EWTN’s Board of Directors. Claudia was a stay-at-home mom while raising the couple’s three children.

Danny and Claudia also put a lot of effort into fostering their relationship with their grandson from Colorado, who they see two to three times per year. Danny said that in order to be a long-distance grandparent, “you’d better be in social media—FaceTime, text, and send pictures. We dote over him, and they send us updates about what’s going on in his life. We have the option to talk, just him and us. When we’re around him, it has to be quality time.”

Claudia added: “We always try to hold on to the information we get about what he’s involved in, and bring it up with him. (Two of our grandchildren) have similar interests. We share with them what each other are doing and what books they are reading. We want to make him feel a part of our lives.”

In fact, he is flying to Chicago to spend time with his grandsons this summer. In fact, he is flying to Chicago to spend time with his grandchildren. “For birthdays, instead of gifts, we let them choose to bring the moment to bring in the faith.” She finds many simple ways to bring the faith into discussions. “If I come across something—a song or an article they can relate to—I save it so we can use it to bring to life at home.”

She added, “You can only give what you possess—a prayer life, virtues, knowledge of the faith.”

Danny’s oldest grandson recently chose him as a Confirmation sponsor. He told Danny, “I knew you would take it seriously and you would hold me to it.” Danny said, “He didn’t make that choice in a day. He had to see something about how I live my life. How you live, how you treat other people, and what you do is an important part” of helping educate your grandchildren in the faith.

Perhaps the best byproduct of this form of evangelization is that their “kids see and hear the message too,” Danny noted.

Danny and Claudia Abramowicz’s newest book, Crossing the Goal, A Saint Goes Marching On, will be released later this month. Watch our online store for details!

“Everything’s a reflection back on my life, my weaknesses, and how the Lord turned my life around.” - Danny Abramowicz

“Keep the lines of communication open.”

To anyone with an older grandchild making potentially harmful choices, Danny offered the following advice:

“Pray for the child and ask the Holy Spirit to come down upon them. Sometimes a grandparent can have more influence than parents at this particular rebellious stage. Remind them their parents love them. I would show them they are off track—through examples, for instance, of how in my own life I was off-track. And finally, love them back into the fold. That’s your best chance to break through.”

Danny and Claudia both say their own faith has grown through being grandparents.

“Being a grandmother has helped me grow in reflection,” said Claudia. “I have to keep tabs—where is my faith? What is my demeanor for the day? Do I need to be praying for different virtues for today? Do I need to be praying for my grandchildren? I want to be a prayer warrior on their behalf. It keeps me on my faith toes.”

Danny added, “I’ve seen how grandparents can have a tremendous influence on the grandchildren and children’s lives. But the only way we can stay on target with this is to intensify our prayer time. Prayer is key. We can’t be afraid to evangelize in our families—but you can’t evangelize if you don’t have it in your heart.”

Danny and Claudia also prioritize one-on-one time with their grandchildren.

“For birthdays, instead of gifts, we let them choose to go to something like the Art Institute or the zoo,” Danny explained. “We’ll spend the day together. We do a lot of listening and observing. They are three totally different kids. Once they feel comfortable, they will say things and get into conversations.”

Liking this groundwork enables the couple to talk about more serious topics with their oldest grandson. “He’s fourteen now, and we’ve got to speak to him in a different way,” said Danny. “We let him know we understand what it’s like to be fourteen, and also that it is important to keep your mind and conscience clear, and about the importance of Confession.”

They had a nine-year-old grandson who lives in Colorado. “We knew God was calling us here and that we must serve,” said Danny. “Just because your kids get old doesn’t mean your job stops.”
Spreading the GOSPEL in Eastern Europe

Slovakia, Romania, & Hungary

Thanks to invitations from fellow country coordinators, Tom Edwards was able to tie-in his recent mission to Slovakia with outreach in Romania and Hungary.

SLOVAKIA

We met with Mayor Andrea Turcanová shortly after our arrival in Presov, Slovakia. After her recent election, she helped restate the Fire Rally at a large, city-owned sports arena. Renewal Ministries first introduced the Fire Rally in the mid-nineties, and they occurred annually until 2007.

Renewal Ministries was invited to organize a team for this year’s rally. Fr. Graham Keep, from the Diocese of London, in Ontario, Canada, and Tom Edwards were designated speakers. Other team members were Jean Thompson, Steve Harrington, and Bohdan Novák, from Bishop Stanislaw Stolarik, of Rožnava, Slovakia, celebrated the liturgy and expressed his gratitude for the 5,000 people in attendance.

Our team held a morning of teaching in preparation for the rally. Fr. Graham gave the homily, and Tom spoke on principles of leadership from the Book of Joshua. We participated in a Jericho March, going seven times around the sports arena.

Talented musicians kicked off the rally by leading the crowd in a tremendous outpouring of praise and worship. A number of dignitaries attended the rally, including those from the mayor’s office and four members of the National Parliament—two of whom were dancing with joyous abandonment in the front row.

After the talks, hundreds of people streamed to the thirty prayer teams for personal prayer. Hundreds of teens and young adults committed their lives to Christ and worshipped with abandon. Mass was broadcast live on Slovak Catholic Television throughout the country. When I asked the mayor her perspective of the day, she answered, “Perfect!”

After the rally, we joined a man who has been a leader of the Life and Light Movement from his youth, in the days of secret meetings in the forest during the Communist oppression. During the evening gatherings, Steve and Jean shared moving testimonies, and Fr. Graham spoke on “Receiving the Holy Spirit.” As we moved into prayer ministry, the Holy Spirit descended gently upon many, with not a few moved to tears.

Jean, who has a powerful story based on years of fighting for the unborn, was invited to speak at a gathering of Slovak pro-life workers. She has participated in many of our Renewal Ministries’ missions in Eastern Europe and Africa. She represented the “pro-life” arm of our mission team and came prepared to preach and pray, while being well-equipped with posters, life-size fetal models, and other educational aids. Jean has also been active in prison ministry for many years.

ROMANIA

Tibi Majoros, the Romanian country coordinator for Renewal Ministries, had invited our team to visit. In Oradea, Romania, we gathered with people from Emmaus Ministries and several surrounding communities. Fr. Graham celebrated Mass, there was a testimony and talk, and then we moved into an extended time of personal prayer and empowerment ministry. Many had come with heavy burdens and concerns. We witnessed the Holy Spirit touching lives in profound ways.

The next day, we spent several hours producing programs for Ave Maria Radio, a powerful outreach tool of Romania. We produced a team interview and separate programs with Tom, Fr. Graham, and Jean.

We then departed for the city of Cluj—a three-hour drive. Our evening meeting was scheduled at a large university. These young Catholics valiantly gather as a faith community with an emphasis on renewal and evangelization, as Tíbi explained, “these students get little support, are often mocked in class and sometimes are labeled in very demeaning ways.”

We gathered with about twenty students. Our meeting began with five skilled musicians leading prayer and worship. For forty non-stop minutes, we entered into what could only be described as “high praise in the Spirit”—the room was rife with the presence of God.

Fr. Graham shared an excellent teaching on baptism of the Holy Spirit, the catechism, and the past five popes’ powerful support of the renewal. Tom shared a brief exhortation on “Stepping Out,” followed by a time of prayer and empowerment ministry to these students who received it all like thirsty sponges. Jean had placed her display of “pro-life visuals” on a small table—and many of the students were attracted to them like magnets. They seemed to delight in the fetal models.

People told Tíbi, “We need this fire here again.” He said he “kept receiving feedback about how amazing the (student event) was: the whole community was set on fire.”

HUNGARY

Renewal Ministries’ Country Coordinator Deacon Zoltan Kunzabo, who helped found the New Jerusalem Community in Budapest, invited us to participate in three very busy days of outreach. Country Coordinator Deacon Steve Thomashofsky, and his wife Lucia, were also present.

Our first evening began with an hour of praise and worship before the Blessed Sacrament, followed by Holy Mass, a testimony, and teaching. We were able to personally pray with many past participants of the Holy Spirit. We also move profoundly in many lives, with blessings of healing and deliverance.

One afternoon, there was a mini-Fire Rally, with Bohdan sharing a moving testimony about his conversion from a life of rebellion and addiction. A “call to the Cross” brought several people forward to commit their lives to Christ. Following Mass and a time of prayer, the prayer teams prayed for people late into late evening.

We thank Zoli and Tíbi for opening the door to our team and allowing us the privilege of participating in the movement of the Holy Spirit in Hungary and Romania.

Reflections from the team...

“Meeting many people of all ages who are living their lives with that hunger for our Lord and being able to walk with them and encourage them was a huge blessing.”
—Jean Thompson

“I felt that God put us together from different countries and made us one. Everything fitted perfectly—our testimonies, teachings, father’s homily, and our prayer with the people. I saw a new fire and a new passion pouring in people’s life and I hope that decision they made will bear much fruit.”
—Bohdan Novák

“I had the opportunity to watch Jesus restore broken hearts, encourage those weary from the spiritual battle, and bring the lost home. This is what I see: our God the Mighty Warrior saving people” (Zep 5:17).
—Steve Harrington
On the Road

September 2016 ENGAGEMENTS

Rome, Italy
ICCRS Leadership Formation Institute
Aug. 29-Sept. 2
Dr. Mary Healy
Contact: info@iccrs.org

Ann Arbor, MI
i.d.9:16 Disciples’ Night
Sept. 1
Contact: julianna@id916.com

Brooklyn, MI
i.d.9:16 Summit Retreat
Sept. 9-11
Peter Herbeck, Pete Burak, Debbie Herbeck | id916.com/summit

Hartford, CT
Deacons’ Study Day*
Sept. 10
Ralph Martin

Ann Arbor, MI
The Choices We Face Production*
Sept. 6-16
Ralph Martin, Peter Herbeck

Pittsburgh, PA
Legatus Leaders’ Retreat*
Sept. 7-10
Peter Herbeck

Pittsburgh, PA
Legatus*
Sept. 15
Pete Burak

Ann Arbor, MI
Heart to Heart Apostolate
Sept. 15
Debbie Herbeck
www.hearttoheartcwa.com

Brooklyn, MI
Country Coordinator Meeting*
Sept. 21-24
Ralph Martin, Peter Herbeck,
Sr. Ann Shields

Tampa, FL
Women’s Retreat
Sept. 24
Sr. Ann Shields
Contact: danielle@myspiritfm.com

Alberta, Canada
Deacons’ Retreat*
Sept. 23-25
Ralph Martin

Rome, Italy
CDF Symposium
Sept. 26-28
Dr. Mary Healy

Alberta, Canada
Priests’ Study Days*
Sept. 26-28
Ralph Martin

Philadelphia, PA
Flame of Love and the New Pentecost
Sept. 30-Oct. 1
Sr. Ann Shields, SGL
Contact: www.flameoflove.us/conference

* Not open to the public
For a complete listing, visit: RenewalMinistries.net/Events

"Spread love everywhere you go: first of all in your own house. Give love to your children, to your wife or husband, to a next door neighbor...
Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of God’s kindness; kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile, kindness in your warm greeting."

• Blessed Mother 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, conferences, retreats, and other international evangelistic events.

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