Dear Fellow Disciples,

*It is a privilege to be called a disciple, isn’t it? And while none of us are perfect disciples, we are on the way, and it is so good to be on the way! It reminds me of what I sometimes say to people: we are Christians under construction, but it is so good to be under construction rather than under destruction!*

There is a lot of pain and suffering in this life, but we have hope that someday all the pain and suffering will be washed away and there will finally be perfect joy, peace, and love. And this hope is firmly grounded in the reality of Jesus—God’s Beloved Son—taking upon Himself the pain and suffering of the world and crushing its ultimate power. Through His gift, we can grow in relationship to Him, and our pain and suffering can itself be transformed into a sacrificial offering in reparation for sin and for the conversion of those far from the Lord—so that death for a Christian truly can be the doorway to eternal happiness. For those though who persist in refusing to repent of their sins and place their trust in Jesus, there is the horror of the “second death” (Rv 20:14), which is much worse than the first death, since it is eternal separation from the source of all love, goodness, truth, and beauty. This eternal separation is commonly known as hell.

As Msgr. Charles Pope so insightfully writes in his article in this issue of the newsletter, even in the midst of personal pain and the pain that the Church and the world are going through, we who are Christians under construction, disciples on the way, are given the privilege of doing all we can for the salvation of others.

And so we continue at Renewal Ministries, thanks to your support.

We continue to be given opportunities to help strengthen our priests and bishops, both in formal teaching situations and in private meetings. A few months ago, I had the privilege of being asked to make a last-minute change to my schedule to fill in for the archbishop scheduled to do the clergy convocation for the Diocese of Alexandria, Louisiana, who was detained in his diocese by an earthquake! The seminary gave me permission to miss my class and some events there, and so I went to Alexandria. (Incidentally, Bishop Sam Jacobs, our longtime friend and former episcopal advisor and board member, once served there.) It turns out that the previous bishop (not Bishop Sam) had cancelled many diocesan activities for financial reasons, and for ten years, there hadn’t been a real clergy convocation.

This was to be the first time in ten years that an outside speaker was asked in to help encourage and strengthen the priests.

Bishop David Talley, who is the relatively new bishop there, is an absolutely delightful man—warm, loving, committed to his priests and people, and grounded firmly in the truth of the faith. I gave about six talks while I was there, and I think the priests were both encouraged and challenged in a good way.

Another area where Renewal Ministries feels called to serve is in strengthening Catholic men in their faith. The two Peters (Peter Herbeck and Pete Burak) and myself regularly speak at men’s conferences and are able to call men to holiness, evangelization, and courage in leading their families and combatting the evil culture that is seeking to devour souls.
I continue to be deeply impacted in my own life by the witness of the three children of Fatima, and scarcely a day goes by that I don’t think of them with gratitude and feel called on by them. I have a picture of Jacinta in my office, and every time I look at, I feel drawn to respond to God as she and her brother Francisco did. (If you haven’t heard my CD or DVD that tells of their story, you can order them and Sr. Lucia’s first-person account of their experiences through the reply card in this newsletter or at our online store, www.RenewalMinistries.net/store.)

I was recently in San Diego to give a talk to a group of Catholic chief executives and do some live radio programs with Catholic Answers at their studios there. I had done many interviews remotely with them over the years by phone, but this was the first time I was able to actually see their studios and meet their staff, which was very inspiring. I had a free morning after all this, and I asked if there was a Catholic school that would be open to have me address their student body about the message and children of Fatima. There was! And so one morning, I went to San Marcus, which is north of San Diego, and spoke to the entire K-12 student body of St. Joseph Catholic School. I was grateful to God for the opportunity and hopeful that many of the children will now join Francisco, Jacinta, and Lucia in their response to the Lord—offering their prayers and sacrifices for reparation for sin, the conversion of sinners, and saying the rosary daily for God’s mercy on the world.

We also launched our new season of *The Choices We Face* last month, and you can sample our new programs by going to our website at www.RenewalMinistries.net/tcwf.

Sr. Ann Shields continues to recover from her stroke, and we are hoping to see her back in the office soon. She is grateful for your prayers for her!

Finally, although last month I shared feedback from people grateful for our work—which is made possible through your support—we continue to hear every day from people whose lives have been touched by the work the Lord has most graciously given to us. Their encouragement is such a blessing to us, and so I want to share it with you this month as well. We received all of the comments below in only the month since compiling the last newsletter.

...  

- “I loved your December newsletter! I also was really encouraged by Msgr. Pope’s article; it changed me right away! I had been feeling pretty exhausted and down, and as soon as I read it I felt better.”
- “What I find so attractive about Renewal Ministries is that you’ve taken the lid off the Holy Spirit. In so many churches, there’s an acknowledgement of the Holy Spirit, but it’s like they have a little lid on Him, and it seems like Renewal Ministries has overcome that.”
- “Thanks so much for your great podcasts. Wow. Just touches me deeply. Your words are so incredible and powerful. Keep it going!”
- “Pete Burak spoke to my middle school students yesterday. WOW!!! He did a fantastic job calling them (us) to live heroically. Doing what Love demands! He gave my students the three keys to making the decision to live heroically and then called them to stand right then and there for Jesus and to call on the Holy Spirit.”
- “I was so inspired reading your article on Lithuania! I remember so much of the history with the three students at Franciscan University of Steubenville and Fr. Mike’s involvement! Great memories, and what wonderful fruit! The Kingdom of God is spreading like a mustard tree!”
- “I wish to thank Ralph Martin and Sr. Ann Shields for all they have done and are still doing to keep our eyes on the Lord. I am so grateful to you and all the team for all your sacrifices. I read and listen to all that Ralph Martin and Renewal Ministries and all that work with them are doing. May the Lord continue to bless all of you.”
- “You are truly a servant of God. I hear your Truth spoken so genuinely. May God bless you and all your staff.”
- “During my search for God, I feel that God kept introducing me to new figures in the Church. It started off with Fulton Sheen and branched out from there, but all the while I struggled to see what it was to be a follower of Christ today. When I saw Ralph Martin speak online, it awakened something and I felt like I had found the Church in its most authentic form. Praise God!”
- “Wow! I loved this interview (with Dr. Tom Graves on The Choices We Face)! Thank you for making it so easy to access! May God continue to bless Renewal Ministries as you spread the beauty, goodness, and truth of Catholicism.”

Hoping with you in the final victory of Jesus,

Ralph
In the Winter of Faith Just Keep Working

— By Msgr. Charles Pope —

The following article originally appeared on Community in Mission, a blog for the Archdiocese of Washington, on Feb. 13, 2019. It is reprinted here with permission from the archdiocese. You can view Community in Mission at blog.adw.org.

As I write this, it is mid-winter in the northern hemisphere. Like each season, winter has its time, its three months. To many of us, there seems to be a metaphorical winter in the Church and in our culture, one that has lasted for years.

Those of us who are older probably remember a time when Masses were crowded. The church parking lots were packed full, and if you didn’t arrive early enough you often had to park elsewhere and then stand during Mass. Catholic schools had long waiting lists, and parents made sure to put their children on the list long before they reached school age. If you put up four walls, Catholics would fill them.

Beginning in the mid-sixties, however, weekly Mass attendance by Catholics began to drop. According to some polls, nearly eighty percent of Catholics were regular attendees in the mid-fifties; today, that figure has dropped to as low as twenty percent (depending on the polling methodology). Open dissent from Church teaching grew among the faithful and the clergy, especially after Pope Paul VI’s 1968 encyclical Humanae Vitae, which reaffirmed the rejection of artificial contraception. The autumn of our discontent and the “falling leaves” of defection of clergy and religious sisters from their vows and the faithful from their pews ushered in a long winter from which we have yet to emerge. Added to this are scandals of the worst kind, rooted in a loss of faith by the very ones sent to prophetically announce that faith.

Corruptio optimi pessima!

What is evident in the Church is even more apparent in our culture. The West, which was once called Christendom, has descended into a cold and fierce secularism. The darkness and moral confusion grow deeper; opposition to once-widely-held moral norms is outright celebrated. Artificial contraception, abortion, divorce, premarital sex, adultery, homosexual acts, euthanasia/physician-assisted suicide, and many other things we once considered shameful are now promoted and called “rights.” Our culture has become crass, coarse, and angry.

Yes, it is the depths of winter in the Church and in our culture. Jesus once said, “False prophets will arise and mislead many. Because of the multiplication of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold” (Mt 24:11-12).

Where is the plentiful catch of fish, the abundant harvest of which Jesus often spoke? What are we to do in this long winter when little seems to grow?

Perhaps the first step is to realize that there are seasons through which the Church must pass and that one day the seasons will change. Even in winter, farmers work to prepare for the next harvest. What does this mean for us? St. Paul wrote this to Timothy regarding the seasons:

Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and encourage with every form of patient instruction. For the time will come when men will not tolerate sound doctrine, but with itching ears they will gather around themselves teachers to suit their own desires. So, they will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. (2 Tm 4:2-4)

Therefore, even in winter we must still work for that which will bring in the harvest when winter has passed. We are to preach and live the Word in season and out of season, whether popular or unpopular. We are to pray, to prune, and to accept pruning ourselves.

Back in November as climatic winter approached, I pruned my roses and crape myrtles. Pruning cuts away what is excessive and no longer fruitful in order to encourage future growth. Soon enough the warmth of spring will come; tender shoots will appear and then leaves and flowers. Similarly, the Church must prune and be pruned. The pruning has been severe and evidently quite necessary; much that was unhealthy is being cut away.

Even in those times that the Lord designates for pruning or for the field to lie fallow, He is preparing for future growth. The Lord says, “The harvest is plentiful,” but that doesn’t mean that the harvest is necessarily right now.

The bottom line is this: just do your work. Keep living the faith, passing it on to your children, and insisting on what is true. Obey what the Lord commands and know that the harvest He announced will be brought in someday. Yes, the harvest will come, and it will come with abundance. Scripture says, “Those who sow in tears will reap with shouts of joy. They go forth weeping, carrying the seed to be sown. But they will surely return with rejoicing carrying the harvest of grain” (Ps 126:5-6).

Although it is winter, continue to do your work. We may not live to see the harvest for which we prepare, but others surely will. Jesus says, “Thus the saying ‘One sows, and another reaps’ is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor” (Jn 4:37).

I have reaped harvests that others have sown. When someone comes to confession after forty years away, I reap the harvest that others prepared—planting, watering, and fertilizing. I, too, will prepare so that others after may harvest.

Whatever the season, do your work. It will bear fruit in due time.
How did you come to work with Renewal Ministries?

Africa has been on my heart since I was a child, and I even tested a vocation as a mission priest with the Holy Ghost Fathers. However, I learned that ordained priesthood was not my calling, and I then went straight to compulsory military service. I was then married and had three children. We moved from England to Alberta, Canada, in 1967, when I joined the Hudson’s Bay Company as an assistant display director.


After 1990, when Pope John Paul II called for a decade of evangelization in preparation for the Jubilee Year 2000, I was inspired to live out my faith in an even deeper and more radical way. My wife and I returned to England to serve for two years with Sion Catholic Community, evangelizing in parish missions with street ministry.


I also served in the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services (ICCRS) offices for eight years and travelled to different parts of the world, including the Vatican.

Throughout the years, I have supported my ministry through my work as an artist. You can view Peter’s work at www.peterthompsonart.ca.

Tell us about the specific work you did as a missionary.

I have gone on twenty-five missions to Africa and fifteen to Kenya as the country coordinator serving in multiple dioceses. I’ve also served in the Caribbean, South Korea, India, and Asia, and done teaching and leadership formation in Rome.

I discovered how hungry people are for the Gospel. The word would get out that we were in an area, and people would travel for many miles. I did a lot of apologetics because of the influence of more fundamental Christianity that made inroads in Africa. They would teach people that Catholic’s worshipped bread and statues, and that Mary had other children. But people were hungry to know their faith and answer these challenging questions. A lot of what I was asked to do was equipping the people.

In one area, we asked a group of catechists how many of them had a catechism. Only three of them did—so we went to a basilica in Nairobi and bought every catechism they had. Everyone left with one.

Please share some of your mission experiences with us.

In 2004, I travelled to Kenya with the previous country coordinators, Lloyd and Nancy Greenhaw. There was a priest who described the areas we were going into as “Satan’s territory.” We travelled 7000 feet up, and on the first day or so, hardly anyone came. However, the word gradually got around, and by the end of our time there, we were ministering to thousands of people gathered on terraces going up the hillsides. There were amazing healings and deliverances that took place, by the grace of God.

Another time, we were in what a priest had described to us as a very pagan area. On the first day, only two or three people came. We thought, “If they won’t come to us, we’ll go to them.” So we took a loud speaker and rode in the back of a pickup truck. There were no doors to knock on—since the people literally had no doors—so we met people where they were.

And finally, in Lunga Lunga, in Kenya, once I was speaking on Genesis 3:15: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.” At that point, a green mamba—a very dangerous, very venomous snake—began moving toward a group of children, and some men came forward and crushed the head of the serpent. The Gospel was brought alive right in front of us, and it was very powerful.

What have you learned from your years of mission work?

It’s a humbling experience, because I’ve gained so much from being able to travel and to experience the Universal Church in different regions of the world. It has impacted and deepened my love for the Church Christ founded. Few people have had that opportunity, and God’s given that opportunity to me. I have experienced the witness of people who live in extremely difficult situations, and I have seen their faith and courage. It has been a great gift. They have been such a witness to me.
over the years about what it means to be a follower of Christ.

As someone from Western society, who has experienced all the comforts of life, the experience of serving in missions has allowed me to be able to experience the privations of life, and it has taught me to surrender all of those comforts for the sake of the Gospel. Once in Uganda, I remember having torn mosquito netting, a pail full of hot water to wash—splash—youself in, and a little hut full of mosquitoes. The toilet was a hole in the ground. We ate boiled bananas morning, noon, and night, by handfuls. I learned that what for me are privations are simply daily life for others. This helps us grow in holiness. We need to embrace that. The people there said,

“You are one of the only ones to come and live with us.”

What are your hopes for retirement?

I don’t consider myself retired. I still have my health. I’m still continuing to teach wherever the Lord opens doors. I don’t see myself stopping. In fact, I have been added as a member of Renewal Ministries’ Speakers’ Bureau.

After your years of service, what aspects of Renewal Ministries do you appreciate most?

God called Renewal Ministries into a worldwide apostolate whereby the lay and ministerial priesthood can work together in the four corners of the world—it’s a profound grace God has given Renewal Ministries for our time. The vision of Renewal Ministries stirs the spirit to be a witness, to proclaim the Gospel, and to serve the Church Universal.

Renewal Ministries really created a tremendous opportunity for lay people to experience missions in different parts of the world. I am grateful to have been, and to continue to be, a part of that.

For the same reasons you support Renewal Ministries now, would you consider remembering us in your will?

Making a bequest to Renewal Ministries is simple...

Use this formula if you live in the United States:

I give and bequeath to Renewal Ministries Inc.,
230 Collingwood, Suite 250, Ann Arbor, MI 48103,
Tax ID 38-2385975, the sum of $__________
for its general uses and purposes.

Use this formula if you live in Canada:

I give and bequeath to Catholic Renewal Ministries Inc.,
331 Evans Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M8Z 1K2,
Registration No. 12374-0243-RR0001, the sum of $__________
for its general uses and purposes.

Members of the St. Catherine of Siena Society will receive:

- Personalized gift of recognition and gratitude
- Matted print of St. Catherine of Siena
- Complimentary set of Ralph Martin’s CDs on St. Catherine’s life and teaching

For more information, visit our website at
www.renewalministries.net/plannedgiving

Annual Gathering April 5-7, 2019

TO WALK BY THE SPIRIT

TIME IS RUNNING OUT TO REGISTER!

For details and to register go to:
www.renewalministries.net/gathering

Leave a Legacy of Faith
For my final report, I want to focus on one special aspect of our most recent time in Kenya. We served in the farthest and most remote parish in the Diocese of Homa Bay. Ours was the first mission undertaken in this region. When we met with Bishop Philip Anyolo, he advised us that it was an area that had seen much violence between tribal factions, especially with cattle rustling, although with an increased police presence this had been greatly reduced. He sent us forth with his blessing and desired to hear from Fr. Paul Ogalla, a priest who travelled with us, about the results of the mission that we were undertaking.

As there was no suitable accommodation in the parish or region, we had to stay at the nearest town, more than eighteen miles from the parish. Each day, we traveled over dirt and mud roads. Depending on the situation with either rain, mud, cattle, or traffic, it took us about an hour each way. In fact, on our first night returning to our accommodations after a day in the outstations, the drive back was one of those “Hail Mary” journeys with no light, slick mud, a narrow road, and oncoming traffic, motor bikes, cattle, and pedestrians. Thankfully, the Lord sent His angels to watch over and protect us.

The first day, we separated into three teams and each visited a different outstation, where people could gather from nearby areas. The outstation I attended had a dirt floor, mud brick walls, no windows, and a tin roof with holes. There was a little table for the altar and rough wooden benches. We arrived to the sound of joyful song, and the little church was crowded to overflowing. We taught all day; it is always amazing to me how patient and attentive people are in Africa. They are hungry for God’s Word and sit for hours with no breaks. Many attendees were writing intensely, taking notes. Also, we always allow time for questions and answers, which unleashes a flood of questions concerning the faith.

We concluded each day with Holy Mass, which was a great blessing, as normally people in the outstations might get Mass only once every four to six weeks. Also, Fr. Paul made himself available for confessions throughout the day, and there was a constant stream of penitents.
Over the next three days in the main parish church, we once again dedicated time to teaching about living the “Life in the Spirit.” Attendance here was good, with approximately eighty people taking in the whole seminar. Fr. Paul had advised us that with the beginning of the rains, many would be planting their crops, which are so vital to their needs, since many are subsistence farmers. Saturday was different, however, and the church hall was filled to capacity, and many of the attendees were young people who ranged in age from little ones of about six to teenagers. The audience was captivated to see the development of life within the womb from seven to twenty four weeks, and especially to hold in their hands the tiny models of the unborn babies.

We were also able to visit a small prison that was newly built on the outskirts of the town, which held about fifty prisoners. Meeting under the sun, with a little shade from one solitary tree, we shared the Gospel, and Bohus spoke of true freedom in Christ, focusing on the conversion of Zacchaeus. We gave them soap and toilet tissue, and they asked us if it was possible for them to receive a small donation to build a shelter with a tin roof and wooden posts to shade them from the sun and rain, so that they could meet together for prayer. The cost was equivalent to $100. With our prison ministry funds, we were able to meet that need, and we trust that they will be able to build this most basic of structures. The facilities in these prisons are invariably very basic, and even necessities like soap are only available to those who have friends or family members to bring them such items.

On our return to the parish, one of our cars got a flat tire; however, the Catholic prison chaplain who had met us there had his car, so we were able to pile into his vehicle to continue our journey. Meanwhile, Fr. Paul, who waited with the car until the repair was complete, was asked if he would conduct a funeral for a villager who had died. So the Lord in His goodness worked all things to the good.

Sunday was once again a great celebration. Fr. Paul asked our team member Deacon John Hust to not only give the homily, but also to baptize six babies who were to be baptized that morning.

Mass began at 9:30 a.m. and concluded at 1 p.m., even though Deacon John did not undertake the one-hour homily that is typical in that area at the Sunday Mass. We had to leave shortly after Mass, to drive to Kisumu for our flight back to Nairobi the next morning.

On our arrival into Nairobi, we went immediately to an appointment with his Eminence Cardinal John Njue of Nairobi. He welcomed us and, with searching questions, asked us in great depth about the role of Renewal Ministries and how we had been able to serve the Church over these past years in Kenya. From our varied gifts and service, we were able to share with him the details of Renewal Ministries’ work and especially its growth over the years and how the Lord had called Renewal Ministries to serve in so many diverse regions of the world.

The cardinal also was very aware of Bishop John Oballa’s desire for a priest’s retreat and advised us that he would be very open to Renewal Ministries addressing all the bishops of Kenya at an upcoming annual conference of bishops. We hope this will come to fruition.

As we left for home, team member Celeste Martin, who had already taught English to seminarians in Vietnam for a year, left to begin another year of service there.

The Lord in His great love and mercy led us, protected us, blessed us, and, I pray, used us in building His Kingdom in the new regions of Kenya where He led us. Thank you for allowing me to serve.
On the Road

April 2019 ENGAGEMENTS

Green Bay, WI
Legatus*
April 4
Ralph Martin

Ypsilanti, MI
Renewal Ministries’ Gathering
April 5-7
Ralph Martin, Peter Herbeck, Sr. Ann Shields, Dr. Mary Healy, and Lavinia Spirito
www.renewalministries.net/gathering

Milwaukee, WI
Legatus*
April 11
Ralph Martin

Lafayette, LA
Legatus*
April 11
Dr. Mary Healy

Grand Rapids, MI
Legatus*
April 11
Debbie Herbeck

Detroit, MI
Fellowship of St. Paul at Sacred Heart Major Seminary
April 12
Peter Herbeck
Contact: fellowshipofstpaul@gmail.com

Stamford, CT
Frassati Fellowship of NY Spring Retreat
April 12-14
Dr. Mary Healy
Details: http://frassati.nyc

Toledo, OH
Men’s Morning of Spirituality
April 13
Peter Herbeck, Pete Burak
Details: www.fomnwo.org

Ann Arbor, MI
Junior/Senior High School Home-school Leadership Retreat
April 13
Debbie Herbeck
Contact: Sheila Lennon at sheilalennon@gmail.com

Sullivan’s Island, SC
Women’s Retreat at Stella Maris
April 13
Lavinia Spirito
Contact: Ann Thompson at stellayouthgroup@gmail.com

Minneapolis, MN
Legatus*
April 17
Lavinia Spirito

Peoria, IL
Legatus*
April 23
Pete Burak

St. Louis, MO
Archdiocesan Chancery Retreat*
April 24
Pete Burak

Please Pray...

- That we may all grow in the gifts the Lord wishes to give us to help us reach the hearts of others with the message of His love.
- That our nation’s citizens and leaders will grow in an understanding of the infinite value of human life, from conception until natural death. Also, that we would grow in our understanding of how to best support those facing immense pressure and fear in difficult circumstances, and that the Lord would abundantly bless the efforts of those already so bravely doing this important work.
- For the prayer intentions of all our supporters and their family members, especially as they face the challenges of illness and economic uncertainty.

R E N E W A L   M I N I S T R I E S

In the United States

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

Chairman of the Board
Deacon Dan Foley

President
Ralph Martin

In Canada

Episcopal Advisor
Cardinal Thomas Collins, Toronto, ON

Chairman of the Board
Monsignor Gregory Smith, Vancouver, BC

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.

CONNECT WITH US...

Visit our website www.renewalministries.net for programs, blog, contact info, resources, & more!

Download the Renewal Ministries' App for easy access to all of the above Renewal Ministries’ content and so much more!

Editor
Heather Schultz

Design
Emily Bachelor

© 2019 by Renewal Ministries

www.renewalministries.net
P.O. Box 1426 Ann Arbor, MI 48106 phone 734-662-1730
In Canada P.O. Box 400 Station U Toronto, ON M8Z 5Y8 phone 416-251-4255