Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Ralph has asked me to share a few thoughts about a resolution we can make that has the potential to yield abundant fruit in the year ahead!

This is the time of year that many people make new resolutions, most of which are attempts to break old, less-healthy habits, and to begin to build positive ones. Often the resolutions are focused on getting healthy, improving eating habits, exercising more consistently, living a more balanced life, and in some cases, aligning behavior and thought-life with higher values and goals.

I’d like to challenge all of us to make a life-changing resolution: to embrace St. Paul’s exhortation to “walk by the Spirit” (Gal 5:25). To “walk by the Spirit” means to have fellowship with the Holy Spirit, and in its simplest expression, fellowship with the Spirit means to talk to the Holy Spirit.

That may seem obvious, but let me ask: When was the last time you spoke to the Holy Spirit? Can you recognize his voice? Do you live with a vivid realization that God the Holy Spirit dwells in you, “that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, which you have from God?” (1 Cor 6:19).

I’m not asking whether you believe the dogmatic truth that the Holy Spirit dwells in you; I’m asking if you have a growing, maturing relationship with Him? A simple way to answer that question is to ask yourself whether you talk to the Holy Spirit on a regular, daily basis? I’m not asking the question to judge or criticize but to help us honestly take stock of whether or not we are walking in the full relationship with the Holy Spirit.

That is the key to a healthy, vital Christian life. That relationship enables us to walk in virtue, to come into the promises of God, and to begin to experience the “full joy” and “full life” that Jesus promised. These graces and promises come to life in us through our relationship with the Holy Spirit.

This kind of personal and deeply rewarding relationship with the Holy Spirit is possible because He is a person! Think about it: God the Holy Spirit dwells in you—the third person of the Trinity! For what purpose? To reveal the Father and the Son to you, personally. St. Paul reminds us so beautifully that the “Spirit himself witnesses to our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom 8:16).

Stop to consider what’s being said here: God himself lives in you—within the deepest part of you, in your spirit. The Holy Spirit, who raised Jesus from the dead, is at work in you! He comes to bear witness to your inner man, to bring convincing power to your spirit, to help you see, and to give you experiential knowledge and unshakable conviction that you are a child of God.

The Holy Spirit brings so much to us: He advocates for us, He counsels us, He literally makes us “born again,” a new creation. He is the power that makes us children of God, the one who leads us to all truth and who anoints us to carry on Jesus’ mission. Above all, He is the down payment, the first installment, the “guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it” (Eph 1:14)—of “an inheritance which is imperishable...
able, undefiled and unfading” (1 Pt 1:4). He enables us to “become partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pt 1:4).

Let’s resolve to set our minds on the One who dwells within. Jesus said, “the kingdom of God is within you” (Lk 17:21). It’s easy to fall into the habit of thinking that God is distant, and that we have to try, through our prayers, to get Him interested, hoping He will hear us, that He will draw near. Too often, we forget the fact that He couldn’t be closer to us, and that all we need to do is to turn to Him in the quiet of our hearts. That is where He is, always, every day, around the clock. He longs to meet you there, to talk with you.

To walk by the Spirit, we must talk to the Spirit. That’s how we grow. Even more, however—we must listen to the Holy Spirit. He doesn’t speak audibly—at least not very often—but He does make Himself known in ways we can understand: through subtle impressions; inspired thoughts; and encouragements, perhaps even the words or actions of others, all of which release new life and power within. To hear Him, we need to seek Him, to listen quietly for his “still, small voice” in the silence of our hearts. If we seek to engage Him, we will find Him; if we listen attentively, we will begin to hear and recognize his voice. The power He releases is often small, but real, and it produces the fruit of genuine transformation.

To talk with Him isn’t complicated; it’s simple. It may be difficult at first because we’re not used to it. Begin with small steps. Make a point to set aside a few minutes four or five times a day, just to speak with Him. Engage Him with simple words:

“Holy Spirit, I love you.”
“Please help me hear and understand You.”
“Thank You for the way You love me.”
“Help me understand what You think and feel about me, my life, and my family.”
“Speak Lord, your servant is listening.”

Let the words flow from your heart, not in formal, lengthy prayers, but with childlike simplicity. The more you do it, the easier it becomes.

If we resolve to go deeper in the Spirit—to engage Him from the heart on a daily basis, developing a more consistent and simple habit of prayer, He will change us. This is the place of healing and transformation, the place of freedom and life, the place where we begin to touch the full joy Jesus promised.

This is the only kind of resolution that ultimately will bring the personal transformation we long for, a transformation that is strong enough to bring healing to a deeply divided, confused, and lost world.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful ones, and enkindle the fire of your love!

Your brother in Christ,

Peter Herbeck
Our chapter started in August 2018 as a small brunch and has grown to include over sixty middle school and high school girls. Our goal is to build a culture where girls can come together and run after the Lord: to be His, be free, and be love.

Including both middle school and high school girls allows for a tiered-mentorship approach where the younger girls can imitate the older girls on how to belong to Christ, how to live in that freedom, and how to build a culture of life and love.

We have over seven mentor leaders who are college-age or in their twenties. They run the events and breakout groups. These young women have been vital to the growth of BLR and are excited to be a part of this ministry. Fruits of their participation include strong relationships of trust and many opportunities for one-on-one guidance.

All girls are swimming upstream in this culture and they are challenged by and are exposed to situations that confuse them and conflict with their Catholic faith. Our BLR Chapter strives to equip them with truth and the knowledge of Christ, his Church, and Sacred Scripture.

Whether they attend home school, public school, or Catholic School, these girls genuinely look forward to seeing each other. They experience a place where they are welcomed, loved, valued, and accepted. BLR is an opportunity to hear the message: You are enough. You are loved. God has a plan for your life. He will turn even your sufferings to good. And He designed you, with your specific gifts and talents, with all of this in mind.

Recently, two sisters who regularly attend BLR were riding bikes at a beach in North Carolina, when they rode past another bicyclist wearing a Be Love Revolution shirt! One of the sisters shouted “Hey, BLR!” and the other girl shouted, ”Yes! BLR!” They were so excited to tell me that story!

I also want to share with you a story about a girl who I was hoping could join us as a mentor leader. I didn’t know her personally, so I mentioned it to one of her friends who I work with. I know by now—and this experience supports my belief—that the Lord will do His work behind the scenes. Today after Mass, the girl introduced herself to me and said she is very interested in being involved in BLR. In fact, she already knew about it, because her roommate from Ave Maria University, where she recently graduated from, was part of BLR in Ann Arbor! I think she even said that she has met you; I am unclear about it because I was screaming with excitement in my head, and I couldn’t hear everything quite clearly! This young woman also is starting her teaching career in our local Catholic high school, so this is a great opportunity for continuing to build our chapter.

In a short year, the Lord has shown His great power. I am amazed at how little I have to do, other than be open to His movement, welcoming and being friendly to middle-school and high-school girls, and having faith that it is all Him and his glory. He is so much more concerned about these girls than I (or their moms) ever could be! And the feedback from the parents is outstanding as well. They seem so grateful for the support for their faith, the holy rudder that the mentor leaders are providing, and the friendships that their girls are building with each other.
Renewal Ministries recently hosted author Dr. Michael McClymond and more than sixty Catholic theologians, priests, deacons, and lay pastoral leaders at its new offices for a seminar examining Universalism, queer theory, and Fr. Richard Rohr.

Ralph Martin was introduced to McClymond through his two-volume work *The Devil’s Redemption*, which counters the claims of Universalism, a widespread and growing belief in today’s culture that virtually everyone will go to heaven. McClymond, a self-professed “evangelical Anglican,” is a professor of Modern Christianity at St. Louis University. Ralph Martin explained how the event came to fruition:

When I read *The Devil’s Redemption*, I knew I had to do what I could to make it better known. It’s a great scholarly achievement that will be a wonderful resource in countering this pervasive deception. I recognized in Dr. McClymond a real ally in this battle. What started off as a desire simply to meet each other grew to become our first official seminar in our new offices. I realized many of Southeast Michigan’s ‘thought leaders’ could benefit from hearing Dr. McClymond, and I invited many of them. I was amazed at how many responded and how appreciative they were of his presentations. I hope this seminar widens the circle of awareness of these deceptions that are weakening God’s people, and equips the leaders that were there to take their place in a more vigorous way in this important battle.

One Scripture reading on the day of the seminar was from the First Book of Maccabees. Ralph reflected,

*This reading is relevant today. The threats to punish us for speaking the truth are growing. Many have become afraid. Many will not speak the truth. Many want to accommodate with the culture in a way that will betray Christ. So the topics we’re speaking about are really important; we all (need to) grow in clarity about the scholarly backing for the orthodox truth of the faith.*

1. UNIVERSALISM

There are many variations of universalism, but they all share in common the belief that final salvation will be given to all. Universalists ask, “If Christ’s cross was a final payment for our sins, can anyone suffer final death?”

However, as McClymond explained, such belief in salvation for all, regardless of one’s choices during life, actually empties our choices of meaning. Another universalist perspective, proposed by David Bentley Hart, argues that no creature can ultimately turn away from God. But as McClymond countered, “some universalists seem to be defining an ideal world that doesn’t exist. . . . Universalism is the Gospel message frozen at the moment of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem—everyone is applauding, and the crucifixion hasn’t happened yet.”

McClymond also noted that a “problem with all of these theories (of Universalism) is that there is nothing directly in Scripture to support any of these ideas.”

One theologian in attendance noted that “the fruit of this belief is that it doesn’t motivate evangelism or prayer. Yet Scripture’s practical intent is for us to examine what type of people we ought to be in light of God’s pending return. We are called to live lives of self-denial, service, missional urgency, and alertness. And yet, is there a form of Universalism that understands the importance of these things? I haven’t seen it.”

McClymond added that St. Thomas Aquinas said the “dignity of humans lies in our ability to reject God.”

“There are a lot of reasons to think the recent turn toward Universalism has to do with our culture, and not with new reasons,” said McClymond. “If you look at the context, a Christian who embraces Universalism doesn’t have to be troubled about the eternal future of a non-Christian friend. They don’t have to be offensive. They can say, ‘It will be all right.’ They don’t have to call people to faith and repentance.”
McClaymond opened this topic by saying, “As Christian believers, we need to keep our hearts open to those in the transgender community.” He also recommended the book When Harry Became Sally, by Ryan Anderson.

He then explained that in 2016, the term “gender fluid” was added to the Oxford English Dictionary. “Fluid can take the shape of whatever container it’s in,” he said. “Is humanity like that?”

McClaymond discussed the fact that Facebook lists fifty-eight gender options, a New York Times’ columnist reported it was OK to commit infidelity twenty percent of the time, and activist Masha Gessen argues that marriage should not exist as an institution because of its restricting character. McClaymond also noted internal tensions in the LGBT world, including tension between those who support full-transition and cross dressers; and also with TERFS (Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminists), who object to the transgender philosophy, arguing that males cannot know what it is like to be a woman and confront everything women must face, including harassment, menstrual cycles, pregnancy, and more. He said TERFS believe “trans-activism erases lesbians,” and problems between such groups recently erupted at a gay-pride parade.

There also is tension about whether gender is fluid or fixed. McClaymond said, “If gender is separate from your body, why do you need to change your body type? Why would someone like Caitlin Jenner need to present in a glamorous form, when most women don’t look that way? And why would those who support transitioning not support de-transitioning? It’s like they are traitors—but if gender is fluid, why should there be changes in just one way?”

“Gender theory has become detached from biology or empirical control,” said McClaymond. He explained that Judith Butler, a proponent of gender theory, argues there is no such thing as human nature. She believes “there is no creator and we are not creations. We are each playwrights and stage actors—with no

nature or givenness. This is so far from Catholic natural law. . . . She even asks, ‘Is incest OK?’ Nothing is normative.”

Statistics also do not support the transgender narrative, explained McClaymond: People who have already transitioned are nineteen times more likely than the average person to die by suicide, and this number is not improved by transitioning. The Guardian reported that there is no good evidence for the efficacy of transitioning, and a study from Sweden, the first country to encourage transitioning, supports that claim. The life-rate of suicide is approximately forty percent in the transgender community.

Additionally, McClaymond said “Queer Theory” has its origins in socialism, which taught that the family and marriage were repressive. Friederich Engels, coauthor of the Communist Manifesto, believed the “state should care for children” so that “women can be liberated from work in the factory,” said McClaymond.

Catholic Fr. Richard Rohr authored the book Universal Christ, Amazon’s top-ranked book on Christology. However, McClaymond said Rohr’s teaching actually leads people away from Christ.

“Rohr teaches that Christ is another name for everything,” said McClaymond. He said Carl Jung, who taught that the ultimate quest is a discovery of our true self, greatly influenced Rohr. He said Rohr’s teachings separate Jesus from Christ—his divinity from his humanity.

“It’s hard not to see the book as a disparagement of the ‘dirt-under-the-fingernails’ Jesus. He describes the resurrection as the body of Jesus exploding into particles of light that spread through the universe. Is Jesus really God? (In this book), it’s not completely clear,” said McClaymond. “There is a problem with the fundamental theology of Rohr. He said the Big Bang is the first incarnation of God—because He is present in everything . . . To understand Rohr, you have to understand the redefinition of terms in his writing . . .


3. RICHARD ROHR

Ralph Martin concluded the seminar by saying, “We need Scripture. We’ve lost our confidence and our knowledge of the Word of God. There’s a tremendous supernatural power that works through these theories. We need to stay close to Jesus’ Words to have discernment.”

Peter Herbeck added, “In Matthew’s Gospel alone, there are fifty times Jesus gives explicit or implicit warnings about not adhering to his teachings.

It’s incumbent upon the Church to interpret for the people in the Church—to give them a warning. There’s a temptation to soften all the edges, to avoid the hard sayings of Jesus, and as a result, there’s a loss of trust in the truth of God’s Word and its power. The warning is love—but now it’s like, if you say that, you’re judging people. But we can hold the Bible over our heads—our safety is the lordship of Jesus and his Word. With love, tenderness, and humility, we need to present his Word.”
ARRIVAL

We were looking forward to this weekend with Jim Murphy, then-president of International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services (ICCRS), my fellow country coordinator from Renewal Ministries, and a dear friend, one of the most authentic Christians I have ever known.

After I picked Jim up at the airport, we had a late lunch together in my house and then left quickly for Miskolc, almost two-hundred miles northeast, where the Hungarian Catholic Charismatic Conference was beginning the next day. My wife, Panni, escorted us and helped me in everything during the coming days. When we arrived at the General Arena, we joined the local organizers for a Holy Mass and prayer of preparation. After Mass, we went around the arena singing and praising, while a priest sanctified the place with holy water. Since some areas were filled with people not affiliated with our conference, we saw a lot of surprised faces. We simply smiled at them and prayed more!

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Jim’s first talk was a kerygmatic mission speech based on his own story of conversion, with the title Jesus is Life! With his characteristic sense of humour and pathos, Jim grabbed the hearts of the audience of approximately two-thousand people. After his speech, he asked everybody to dedicate their lives to Jesus. The sixty prayer pairs found their places around the floor in a big circle to welcome the newcomers. During the forty-five minutes allotted to this ministry time, they prayed with a few hundred men and women. After this very fruitful time, Jim continued with his second speech on the vision of spiritual growth in Christian life, Remain in Me! Jim continued his personal testimony, and he spoke more about a pilgrimage he made in which he crossed the entire United States on foot while carrying a big wooden cross.

He used this experience as a symbol of the Christian life. Most days, you don’t have strong experiences with God. You are on your road with the hard cross.
Most days, you don’t have strong experiences with God. You are on your road with the hard cross on your back, but God blesses your faithfulness!

On your back, but God blesses your faithfulness! In that way, you will be purified and transformed. You should stay close to Jesus every day with the help of five tools: prayer, the Word of God, the sacraments, community, and a lifestyle of service. After this speech on such deep and real-life topics, we had a time of Adoration and prayer ministry.

After lunch, Jim gave a third talk, titled Bearing Remaining Fruits. He explained how it usually takes a long time to bear fruit that will remain and endure. The unfaithful and the unpatient will never see such fruit. Before the real fruits come forward, a time of purification is necessary. Without that, there is no place for God to put in his own works. The time of purification is very painful. God cuts out everything from us that is against his plans. Sometimes, He cuts off good things too (things we loved and honored as God’s works) to make room for new works He wants to accomplish in us. It is essential to trust in God during this period. We asked for the help of the Holy Spirit, and people once again went to the prayer pairs for help.

After the prayer time, Bishop László Varga, the honorary president of the Hungarian Catholic Charismatic Renewal, addressed a message to the whole Renewal to call for more and deeper unity. We are on the good path, but the Lord wants to use us like one non-divided body.

After a short break, the closing Holy Mass started with the main celebrant Archbishop Csaba Ternyák, the local bishop. Everybody noticed how happy he was watching the praise of the two-thousand participants. He encouraged us to fulfill our missional calling with the help of the Holy Spirit, who is the main actor of the mission throughout the history of the Church. A very lively worship time started after the Holy Mass! We were really thankful to the Lord for this day filled with his wisdom and power!
**On the Road**

**JANUARY 2020 ENGAGEMENTS**

**Toowoomba, Australia**
Immaculata Mission School
Jan. 1-10
Ralph Martin
Details: www.sistersoftheimmaculata.org.au/ims

**Phoenix, AZ**
FOCUS SLS Conference
Jan. 1
Dr. Mary Healy
Details: sls20.org

**Toledo, OH**
Encounter Conference
Jan. 3
Dr. Mary Healy
Details: encounterministries.us/encounter2020

**Lansing, MI**
"The Journey to God" Series at Church of the Resurrection
Jan. 23
Ralph Martin
Contact: sdewitt@corlansing.org

**Gainesville, FL**
Holy Spirit Healing Conference
Jan. 24-25
Peter Herbeck
Details: www.HolySpiritHealingConference.net

**Pinckney, MI**
Live Free Conference*
Jan. 25
John and Michelle Kazanjian

**Lansing, MI**
"The Journey to God" Series at Church of the Resurrection
Jan. 30
Ralph Martin
Contact: sdewitt@corlansing.org

**Columbus, OH**
Millennial Church Conference
Jan. 17
Pete Burak
Details: www.millennialchurchconference.com

**Ann Arbor, MI**
FGRHS Freshman Retreat*
Jan. 17
Debbie Herbeck & the Be Love Team

**Naples, FL**
Legatus Summit*
Jan. 23-25
Pete Burak

We must make God present again in our society. This is the first essential element: that God be once again present in our lives, that we do not live as though we were autonomous, authorized to invent what freedom and life are. We must realize that we are creatures, aware that there is a God who has created us and that living in accordance with his will is not dependence but a gift of love that makes us alive.

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**Please Pray...**

**For** the light of Christ to penetrate our hearts and minds, to help us clearly see and embrace the truth of his loving plan.

**For** courage to “run with perseverance the race that is set before us” (Heb 12:1).

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

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**MISSIONS**

**Mexico**
Jan. 2-8
Debbie Herbeck & Tim Green

For more information about missions, contact Kathleen at 734-662-1730 ext. 132 or kkittle@renewalministries.net

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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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