Dear Friends in Christ,

There’s a lot of suffering in the world. It is not just “out there” in the world, but right here, within us. As many of you know, we receive many requests for prayer from our supporters, TV and radio listeners, conference participants, and so forth. Each Thursday afternoon during our weekly staff meeting each one of these requests is read individually by a staff member as we sit in a circle, then together we lift up these requests to the Lord.

All of us are deeply struck by the pain and suffering that so many of us experience in life. Perhaps the most commonly voiced prayer request is for children who are far away from the Lord. Sometimes that sorrow is compounded by mental illness, debilitating physical illness, or addiction. Prayer requests for broken relationships, broken marriages, broken friendships, illness, unemployment and financial pressures are all too common.

I remember reading a book when I was in college called “Miss Lonelyhearts” by Nathaniel West. It told the story of a male advice columnist who wrote for a newspaper under the title of “Miss Lonelyhearts”. The weight of reading letter after letter telling of the suffering in people’s lives drove him to despair and madness. And indeed, without Christ, who can bear the suffering of the world? Without Christ, who can hope in the midst of pain and suffering? Ah, but the truth is, we are not without Christ. We are with Him. He is with us. Even in the midst of pain and suffering we are not alone. If we turn with faith to Him who is closer to us than our own breath we can join our pain and suffering with His and make it redemptive for the world.

And of course our staff members are not just praying for you “out there”. All of us in various ways have our own crosses to bear, our own pain to bring to the Lord, and so we join with you in turning to Him, who is our hope, who bore more pain and suffering out of love for this fallen world, than we can ever hope to imagine.

And oh, every week we see deeply touching signs of this hope as well. How touching is it when elderly brothers and sisters write that even in their blindness or illness or loneliness or poverty they are offering their suffering and small donation for the work of Renewal Ministries.

Your love, your “widows’ mites”, your suffering joined to His, are indeed effective for the salvation of the world. Each and every issue of this newsletter witnesses to the wonderful ways in which Christ is working. Read on!

Your brother in Christ,

Ralph Martin

And indeed, without Christ, who can bear the suffering of the world?
Jesus is Lord!

Something radical is taking place in the Church today. It’s deeper and more radical than the decline in the Church. It is deeper than her scandals, than the emptying of the churches in places that were once considered the heart of “Christendom.” The decline of faith certainly is dramatic and radical. But something deeper, even more radical is happening beneath it.

The decline of the Church, the weakening of faith, and the corresponding rise of an in-your-face secular culture, is producing slowly but surely, a fresh wave of humility in the Church, born of desperation. More and more bishops, pastors, and professionals in the Church, are being confronted with the reality of weakness and powerlessness in the face of what Pope Benedict XVI has called the “dictatorship of relativism,” which “in certain respects has become the real religion of modern man.” (Without Roots by Joseph Ratzinger, pg 22)

The leadership of the Church has been profoundly humiliated by the rapid decline in church attendance, the sobering statistics in polls that repeatedly show no statistical difference between the way Catholics and non-believers live in relation to fundamental moral issues of our time, such as abortion, pre-marital and extra-marital sex, the continuing “crisis” in priestly vocations, the ongoing priests sex scandals, the closing down of parishes in many diocese, and the manifest inability to turn back the decline through updated pastoral strategies.

Without a doubt, we are being humbled. The weak, divided, and broken state of the Church is being exposed. The Lord is permitting the Church to pass through a season of severe mercy—a humiliating, sobering period of reality therapy. Our weakness, born of sin and compromise, leaves us powerless and ineffective in accomplishing the mission Jesus has given to all of us: to make disciples of all nations.

We’re powerless to produce any real change in the Church or in the culture. The only place real power to change could ever be found is in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ! As St. Paul said: “I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who has faith.” (Romans 1:16) The good news the Church has to offer the world is in the person of Jesus Christ. God’s power has brought this good news to the world through the power of the Holy Spirit. God backs the proclamation of the truth about Jesus with his power. The Church has power therefore, when, and only when, she speaks about Jesus. About his life, his death and resurrection; about his victory over Satan and the kingdom of darkness; about his reign in glory; about his unparalleled authority and rightful claim on all mankind; about his coming again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and of his kingdom without end.

Again, St. Paul saw it clearly: “For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to those who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor 1:18) St. Paul understood that the power of the gospel flowed from the power released in Jesus through his death and resurrection; a power greater than any force, capable of bringing dying human flesh into eternal life, literally, to an eternal existence beyond death.

Paul also understood that the world considered the message of salvation through a crucified Messiah to be folly—a joke, a myth, worthless religious mumbo jumbo, a drug for the weak. Yet he didn’t attempt to change or “adapt” the message to his audience, to come up with something clever that they would find less offensive to their sensibilities. He was uncompromising: “Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For in the wisdom of God the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” (1 Cor 1:20–24)
I believe the humiliation the Church is undergoing, when it is born in faith, is producing this kind of apostolic conviction. When the leaders of the Church are convinced to the very marrow of their bones, like St. Paul, that “God has made foolish the wisdom of the world” and that all of his power has been given to us through the gospel, then the Church will know, with a radical conviction, that she has a solution for the crisis she is facing. Jesus Christ crucified! Jesus Christ glorified! He is the hope for the Church, and the only hope for the world.

Our late Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, speaking on behalf of the Bishops of the Americas, echoed the conviction of St. Paul in his own words: “Everything planned in the Church must have Christ and his Gospel as its starting-point”.

(248) Therefore, “the Church in America must speak increasingly of Jesus Christ, the human face of God and the divine face of man. It is this proclamation that truly makes an impact on people, awakens and transforms hearts, in a word, converts. Christ must be proclaimed with joy and conviction, but above all by the witness of each one’s life”.

This is the voice of the Holy Spirit coming to the Church, giving us our marching orders. It’s simple, but it’s radical. If we believe and obey it, daring to abandon self-reliance for radical dependence on the gospel, not being hearers only, but doers of the word, the power of God will be released, and we will be made capable again of fulfilling our mission for the glory of the Lord.

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**Important Announcement—Mark your calendar!**

The 2007 Lift Jesus Higher Rally

Saturday, April 14, 2007

**LOCATION**

We will be back in The NORTH BUILDING of the Metro Toronto Convention Centre

**SPEAKERS**

- Dana Scallon
- Fr. Benedict Groeshel
- Ralph Martin
- Fr. Stan Fortuna
- Sr. Ann Shields
- Peter Herbeck

**Calling all teens!**

Jesus is your best friend!

Attend an awesome youth event

**Don’t come alone!**

Invite someone to Praise the Lord with thousands of others and Lift Jesus Higher!

**For tickets/information:**

Call Sadie at 905-270-2510
Email: pdkromer@rogers.com

www.lift-jesus-higher-rally.org
Mission to Ghana
By Brent Heiser

There were many opportunities for ministering the Word and healing during this visit, as well as strengthening the ongoing relationships with the hierarchy and the many clergy involved in the charismatic renewal. Here are a few highlights of a very fruitful mission.

We conducted a rally at St. Mary Magdalene Senior High School for a coed group of about 300 students. Our team was well received, but the hero was Emmanuel Tamakloe from the National Charismatic Center in Ghana, whose story of girls and drugs had them hooting and laughing nervously in recognition of the great seductions. We led them into renunciation of the works of darkness and offering their lives to the Lord and the power of His Spirit. It was very moving to see their response and the enthusiastic celebration to conclude the event.

The first night of 3-day crusade, “Speak, Lord,” was held at the University of Ghana at Legon. About 1200 young men and women crowded the lower section for the rosary, followed by exuberant song and dance, then our teachings and prayer ministry—four hours and more each night. We talked about their unique identity, about the good news of their sexuality, and about the Holy Spirit and Eucharist. The second night of the crusade attendance increased and Cardinal Turkson addressed the assembly to great cheers and applause. The third and final night of the rally Archbishop Buckle spoke and shared in the powerful hour of Exposition with healing prayers as Eucharistic Jesus moved among the rows.

On Saturday we made the long trip to Fr. Charles’s parish in Akosombo. Two incidents there illustrated the warmth and genuine acceptance of these wonderful, happy Ghanaian people. At Sunday Mass my wife Kathy and I accidentally sat with the processional choir and we were immediately incorporated. Kathy said, “I’ve never danced so much in my life.” There were four conga players, plus a full regular church choir in caps and gowns, acolytes, readers, altar servers, incense, and candles in full procession with Fr. Charles. Two hours after the beginning of Mass, we began the offertory and after 45 minutes more, we neared the end of the Mass, followed by announcements, special blessings, and more music. Later in the day we met Fr. Charles at the rectory chapel for a wedding. Although we didn’t know the couple, we were asked to be in the wedding pictures and we were invited to the reception in town!

The Lord has given Renewal Ministries a strategic position in Ghana through the many relationships that have developed over the years. Our support of Cardinal Turkson, Archbishop Buckle, and the charismatic renewal is bearing much fruit, and the Spirit is moving in Ghana. This “New Springtime” of evangelization will grow with the continued commitment and financial support of Renewal Ministries.

We gathered for a photo and said our final farewells to the catechists from the diocese of Koforidua after a week of training and ministry.

Brent Heiser presented Cardinal Turkson with a copy of Ralph’s new book. Renewal Ministries’ ongoing friendship, support and collaboration with the cardinal are bearing much fruit in Ghana.
Mission to Slovakia and Czech Republic

By Tom Edwards

In the past several years we have held some large events, primarily evangelization schools and FIRE rallies in Presov, Slovakia. This trip focused on a number of smaller events which involved ministry in four high schools and outreaches to smaller towns and villages.

Early Sunday morning our team traveled from Presov to Trebisov along with several members of Sr. Helena’s community. The little parish had done their best to promote this first time ever renewal event. Trebisov was one of three Slovakian towns chosen by the Communist regime to be totally communist. After the fall of the regime it was left in moral and economic disarray. The town still struggles with a 25% unemployment rate, a high degree of alcoholism, broken families and shattered lives.

In the afternoon the “Mini-Fire Rally” began in the town sports arena which seated 1000. People from more than 100 miles away traveled to attend the event. The arena was packed and it didn’t take long for the people to sing along with the music ministry. Our team members shared some testimonies followed by my talk entitled, “Awake from Your Sleep”. The people were very attentive, drinking in the Word. When an invitation followed for those who wanted to commit their lives to Christ, people immediately began to stream forward. Eventually nearly everyone in the place came forward for prayer. People were pouring out their hearts to the prayer teams and the priests later remarked that it was almost like everyone was confessing. Old men, many marked by the worn faces of a people who had endured ages of hardship, came forward with tears streaming down their faces.

The next day we traveled to the village of Kracunovec situated near the Ukraine border. A few weeks before a Renewal Ministries team had broken ground in this town by presenting a two day retreat for youth. The parish priests were anxious to have us back for an Evening of Renewal to be held in the town Cultural Center. The response by the villagers was very positive as 200 gathered and most all responded to the invitation for personal prayer.

The following morning we flew to Prague to conduct a parish mission in a suburban area of Stodulky which is home to 100,000 people living in high rise flats, and many are young with families. Under the dynamic ministry of their pastor Fr. Michael Spieller, the churches are experiencing real growth and Sunday Mass attendance is filling the church for each service, something uncommon in the Prague area. This parish mission was a first time event. In addition to the nightly presentations we spoke to youth groups, a moms’ gathering, an Alpha Course and a gathering of priests.

I sense spiritual momentum building in the Czech Republic. It may be acclaimed as the second most atheistic place in the world, but there is a true spiritual hunger. People came to our mission who identified themselves as “seekers” and they left as “believers”. New doors keep opening for our ministry. There is no doubt that the Lord wants to renew his church in this beautiful country. The blood of the martyrs has been sown in the soil of the Czech Republic and it is still crying out for the souls of the lost.

“Old men, many marked by the worn faces of a people who had endured ages of hardship, came forward with tears streaming down their faces.”

Carol Kean (far left) and other team members found the high school students in Presov, Slovakia to be friendly, inquisitive and open as they shared the Gospel message with them.
Missions continued...

Mission to Papua New Guinea
By Lloyd and Nancy Greenhaw

Papua New Guinea is the eastern half of the island of New Guinea, and was divided between Germany and Great Britain in 1884. The western half of the island is Indonesia. In 1975 the country, now united as Papua New Guinea, achieved independence from Australia. Today Papua New Guinea continues to be the foremost country in Melanesia. The country struggles to fulfill the dreams of independence as economic stagnation, corruption, and law and order problems take their toll. Papua New Guinea is a place that often markets itself as “The Last Unknown”, or a place where you can still find “Stone Age People”. Twenty seven percent are Roman Catholic. The country is mostly mountainous and covered with rain forest, as well as very large wetland areas surrounding the Sepik River and Fly River.

Bishop Austen Crapp of Aitape who was recovering from heart surgery, invited our small Renewal Ministries team to his diocese to conduct two simultaneous week-long retreats in different venues. Lloyd and Nancy ministered to the twenty priests and Rick and Jenny Rykowski conducted sessions for the lay people. In the evening everyone joined together at the youth center where Lloyd preached and then asked God to heal his people. Several hundred people reported some significant healing. It was a great time of rejoicing.

By mid week Nancy had given the entire program of “Unbound”, a Catholic model for deliverance. At least five priests immediately signed up to receive deliverance prayer and by the end of the week more than half of the priests received prayer. In the evening a white sheet was hung and the people sat on chairs, tarps, cardboard boxes, and huge leaves to view “The Passion”. It was the biggest crowd so far and they just loved it.

The last day in this diocese concluded with a Mass and other festivities. As Mass began, two of the priests who had been prayed with, stood up and asked the people for forgiveness for their sins. Later the nuns told us that this was a great miracle, especially for the males to ask forgiveness of females. After the Mass, the Bishop took Jesus to the crowd of over 1,000 people. Several of the priests in a kind of “holy relay” took turns relieving the Bishop. They paused frequently to allow the people to talk to Jesus. They never had this type of worship before and there was great joy.

The next day we boarded the small plane to Wewak to join Bishop Tony Burgess for the second week of ministry in his diocese. On Sunday the team split up and went in four different directions. Rick to St. Francis Parish, Lloyd stayed with the Bishop at Christ the King Cathedral for two Masses, Jenny went to Kaindi Teachers College, and Nancy accompanied Fr. Joe to the Moem Army Barracks for Mass and then back to the town hill for the 2nd Mass. We invited everyone to the big outdoor rally the following weekend. Later that day, we drove two hours through the rain forests, bogs, many rivers and hilly mountainous terrain to the small town of Maprik, where we were greeted by a huge crowd and native dancers.

The schedule for the week-long retreat was the same every day: Morning Prayer at 6:30 AM followed by Mass and breakfast, then talks in the morning and throughout the afternoon. The priests and Bishop estimated that there were around 600 people every day for Mass and the talks. Sixteen priests and the two Bishops joined the laity at the retreat and it was the first time in three years that all the priests of the diocese had come together.

One of the priests told Nancy a fascinating story about his uncle, who was a witchdoctor. This uncle would taunt him, “Why are you...
going to the seminary? You can have much more power if you become a Sanguma.” When his uncle put a curse on somebody, he would collect herbs, bones from the dead bodies, and some hair or dirty clothes from the person he was going to curse. Then he would invoke the spirits of the dead and wait to see if the person got sick or weak. This priest knew that his uncle was wrong. He had been raised to believe that God was all-powerful, and that the power of darkness was not equal with God. Remembering Elijah and his confrontation with darkness, he challenged his uncle with God’s strength and power. His uncle said, “If there is a sign from those who I call upon, then you must believe in my power. But if there’s a sign for your side, I will believe in your God.”

So his uncle made up a potent concoction of poison. Together they put it in a firewood shed on his uncle’s property. For one month this priest prayed and fasted and asked God to show his power. He prayed the Rosary and read the Bible. On Good Friday, by no human means, this wooden shed burst into flames and burnt to the ground, every bit to ashes! The shed was connected to the house yet only the shed burned. Needless to say, the uncle was converted, went to confession, made restitution for the curses. He died not long afterward.

Every evening we gathered for a huge rally outdoors at the church. At the beginning of the week Nancy had the front of the stage to herself for her tripod and cameras. By Friday everyone was enjoying the praise so much that she had to “fight” her way to the front rail. Many of the 2,000 people were jumping, dancing and waving leaves, their hands raised in praise of God!

Mark your calendar!

May 4-6, 2007
for the Renewal Ministries
Gathering

More information will be in next month’s newsletter.

Just getting to Aitape was an adventure! Our four team members were accompanied in the back by three sacks of flour, sugar and other goods, our luggage, three wicker chairs, two New Guinean men and a 25 year old woman from Holland, who is an internist in the only hospital in the town of Aitape. Finally, after 5 ½ hours and 33 river crossings we arrived, dusty, dirty, hot and tired.

Please Pray...

+ for the continual humility of the Church leaders and a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon them for the proclamation of the Gospel.

+ that the many Lenten retreats throughout the US and Canada would help participants be renewed in their faith, grow in holiness and live more in the power of the Holy Spirit.

+ that the upcoming 2007 season of The Choices We Face television programs would help many come to know the saving power of Jesus.

Thank you for your continued support through prayer as we labor together for the Gospel and the renewal of the Church.
He is never slow in giving, nor am I ever weary of receiving. The more I drink, the more thirsty I become.

St. Jerome

On the Road

February 2007
Southfield, MI
Chaldean Center, Life in the Spirit Seminar
February 8
Ralph Martin
Contact: gavrilidespaco@aod.org

Garden, MI
Catholic Charismatic Renewal Retreat
February 9–11
Ralph Martin
Contact: John Hogan at 906-283-3212 or jhogan123@centurytel.net

Manistique, MI
St. Francis de Sales Retreat Center
February 11
Ralph Martin
Contact: John Hogan at 906-283-3212 or jhogan123@centurytel.net

Cincinnati, OH
Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish
February 14
Sr. Ann Shields
Contact: Nancy Kleespies at 513-232-9614

Cincinnati, OH, Women of Grace
February 15
Sr. Ann Shields
Contact: Nancy Kleespies at 513-232-9614

Detroit, MI, Catholic Charismatic Conference
February 16–18
Ralph Martin, Dave Mangan, Patti Mansfield
Contact: www.amazinggraceconference.com or 248-593-4888

Chicago, IL, Catholic Charismatic Conference
February 23–25
Sr. Ann Shields

New Ulm, MN, Pastoral Leader Days
February 26–27
Peter Herbeck
Contact Sr. Mary Daniel at 507-233-5130

March 2007
Southfield, MI
Chaldean Center, Life in the Spirit Seminar
March 1
Peter and Debbie Herbeck
Contact: gavrilidespaco@aod.org

West Palm Beach, FL, Men’s Conference
March 3
Peter Herbeck
Contact Jim Manhardt at 772-321-3886

East Lansing, MI
St. Thomas Aquinas Parish “Lenten Series”
March 4–7
Ralph Martin, Sr. Ann Shields, Peter Herbeck
Contact: Joe Reynolds 517-351-5460 jreymonds@stachurch.net

Omaha, NE
Institute for Priestly Formation Council
March 7
Ralph Martin

Toronto, ONT, Students' Retreat
March 9–11
Ralph Martin

Sunman, IN
St. Nicholas Catholic Church Retreat
March 10
Peter Herbeck
Contact Liz at st.nicholascatholicchurch@yahoo.com

St. Jerome

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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, tapes, conferences, retreats and other international evangelistic events.

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