Dear Co-Workers in the Vineyard,

First of all, I want to thank you for your generous giving in the past few months which enabled us to end our year “in the black” and commit to some special opportunities presenting themselves to us in 2007. We deeply appreciate your faithfulness and generosity. Some of you have been supporting the work of Renewal Ministries “from the beginning” way back in 1980! We are deeply grateful and truly thank God for you. We also are deeply grateful and thank God for newer friends of Renewal Ministries who have joined us more recently in being co-workers in the Lord’s vineyard.

We also are deeply touched and thank God for the supporter from Canada who recently died and designated Renewal Ministries as one of the charitable beneficiaries in his will. Whenever we learn that a supporter of Renewal Ministries dies, we immediately arrange for a Mass to be said for the repose of their soul. We look forward to the great “Renewal Ministries reunion” when we meet each other in our risen bodies and rejoice together in all the good the Lord did through our common mission!

But in the meantime, the sorrows and joys of life remain, and God’s call to us continues and so must we.

Peter Herbeck recently returned (as I write this, today!) from a special meeting in Africa, hosted by Cardinal Turkson, to discern more clearly God’s plan for continued evangelization in Africa. While there Peter and our other country coordinators who work in Africa met a bishop from Nigeria who has run hundreds of Life in the Spirit Seminars and evangelization schools and he requires that all his many seminarians and priests take advantage of these means that God has provided to strengthen his Church. Peter will share more about this very encouraging news next month (after he recovers from jet lag).

And just the other night we had a couple from Ann Arbor over for dinner who had recently returned from one of our missions to Papua New Guinea. With three married daughters the grandchildren are now appearing in groups! These two were both born in the same month, one in Saline, MI and the other in Steubenville, OH; Charley Baldante and Jonathan Sollom. By the time this newsletter arrives there will be another one on the scene, for a total of six.

What a joy to see so many ‘ordinary folks’ growing in holiness and being used by the Lord to help others.
Dear Friends

Guinea, which you read about in the February newsletter. They shared with us in greater detail what they saw the Lord do there, and what the conditions are really like, and all of us were inspired anew, both at what the Lord is doing in Papua New Guinea and also at the dedication of this couple. Rick and Jenny Rykowski have three children, one of them married. Rick is an engineer working with environmental issues and Jenny is a nurse who now is volunteering a great deal of time at a local medical clinic run by Christians, serving the poor and the uninsured. Rick also works in jail ministry. “Ordinary folks” who have said yes to the Lord, over and over again, and are seeing the Lord transform them and use them in service to others.

And then just yesterday I shipped out a package from our local “pack and ship” store and talked to the owner who told me that next week he’s leaving on one of our missions to Turkey. He is a father of five daughters, saying yes to the Lord over and over during many years.

What a joy to see so many “ordinary folks” growing in holiness and being used by the Lord to help others. And while I’m limited in what I see as I walk the streets of Ann Arbor, Michigan I know from my own travels that God is raising up men and women like this all over the world. And you are some of them!

Next month we’re having our annual Lift Jesus Higher Rally! in Toronto, returning to our usual spring schedule. With Dana Scallon coming from Ireland, Fr. Stan Fortuna and Fr. Benedict Groeschel from the Bronx, and the regular Renewal Ministries team, it should be quite a rally. If you’re anywhere in range of Toronto plan to attend. (See more information on page 3.)

And my new book continues to help people for which I am also deeply grateful. When you believe the Lord has asked you to do something and you work many years trying to respond to the call it’s really encouraging to hear that perhaps the Lord did call and perhaps you did respond, at least well enough, for some people to be helped. It’s so encouraging to hear from people who are experienced in the ways of the Lord that the book has been helpful to them, but also as a resource to help others. Getting a letter from a spiritual director and faculty member of a major seminary in Oregon was really encouraging. Fr. Jerome has given me permission to share his comments on the book after consulting with his abbot.

“I don’t normally write letters like this but I felt that I was led to write to you to thank you for your wonderful book, The Fulfillment of All Desire, which I just finished. It is the finest spiritual book I have read in many years, and I am busily recommending it to all I know who are interested in deepening their communion with God, especially our seminarians here. I have recommended that our bookstore purchase many copies so that the book may receive as wide a distribution as possible from our little corner of Oregon... Every year for Christmas the members of my Benedictine community may request a gift for Christmas and I requested and

Jenny and Rick Rykowski had the opportunity to meet the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, Sir Michael Somare, and his wife, Lady Veronica, during their mission trip to this country.
received your wonderful book. Now I have the opportunity to study its riches in depth, and can allow others to read our library’s copy. I am encouraging all who come to me for spiritual direction to read it, and I pray that many will benefit from this wonderful work of yours for Our Lord.” (Fr. Jerome Young, OSB, Mount Angel Seminary, Oregon)

Also this month our new season of TV programs is being launched. And we continue to get letters like this:

“I’m a Catholic on death row and I love what you’re doing on your TV show. I can tell that the people on the show are “for real.” Please put me on the list for your newsletter and send me 5 copies of the booklet. I want to share them with others here.” (Pennsylvania)

“I am in a maximum security prison here in Zambia (Africa). Thank you for all you are doing. Please send me some materials that can strengthen me.” (Zambia, Central Africa)

Because of your obedience to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, we are able to continue doing what He has called us to do, and respond to these requests and so many more like it.

Your brother in Christ,

Ralph Martin

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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
As some of you know, I had an accident last September. I was out running with my sister’s dog, a yellow lab. She had recently rescued him from a shelter, and he was very attached to her. Ben, the dog and I had had a great run for several blocks with him right at my side. I was thrilled that he was so good and could pace himself so well to me. Toward the end of the run, we turned a corner near my sister’s home. Ben spotted her in the distance, leapt for joy, and took off running—all 95 pounds of him. Unfortunately, I did not heed my sister’s advice to let go of the leash and I could not keep up with his sudden burst of speed. The next thing I knew I was on the ground with a badly misshapen left arm and wrist.

It is now four months since the accident, and I am still in therapy for a broken arm and smashed (literally) wrist. Surgery was needed to set the bones and put in many plates, pins and screws. I think it goes without saying that pain has been constantly with me, since that day.

Over Christmas I spent a week on retreat with my sisters. During the course of a time of prayer, I sensed the Lord say this to me: “When are you going to allow pain to become your companion instead of your enemy?” My first response was a rather sharp retort: “But it is my enemy and I want to get rid of it.” Once I calmed down, I said to the Lord, “How can it become my companion? I don’t understand, and I’m not even sure I want to.”

Over the next several days the Lord showed me three things. First, if pain is to be my companion, then I need to consult it before I begin any activity. I did not like that. I’m used to being in control. I’m used to being in charge. I’m used to having energy to do anything that I need to do, or I can push myself to do it. But suddenly I was without the energy for many normal, daily tasks. I tried to ignore. I tried to push through, but sometimes I could not and it frustrated me very much. Now the Lord was telling me to: “Make pain my companion.” The Lord also told me that my body was his gift to me and that I should use it according to his will, not mine. That I should not abuse my body by trying to force it to do things it could not. Once again, my pride reared up. I offered the Lord the excuse that if I was going to get better and regain full use of my arm and hand, I had to push through pain. His response was gentle: “Yes, but according to my will, not yours!”

In the days that have followed, the Lord has led me to treat my body more gently; even to kiss my hand when it is particularly painful. I even found myself beginning to thank him for the opportunity to ponder the miracle of his creation and to treat it with more respect.

Secondly, it called me to order my day more carefully and to be willing to stop when I should. I needed to listen more carefully, to consult my companion.

Thirdly, the Lord asked me to see that pain could accompany me on my journey to deeper
By Sr. Ann Shields, Radio

union with God. Pain has helped me to pray more by bringing all my needs to the Lord, for every daily activity. Pain has helped me to stop when I should to take a break; to listen more clearly to the Lord, and more frequently; to pause in prayer throughout the day. Given my temperament, only pain could have changed my patterns of daily living so thoroughly.

I work hard to fully regain use of my arm and hand. But I’m learning to do it with a very different spirit. Because I think I’m beginning to listen to my companion, I am starting to hear the Lord throughout the day rather than simply in my morning prayer.

Paradoxically, I find myself, even when I’m in pain, paying more attention to what’s going on in the lives of others. How does that happen? Because I’m not running around so fast myself and because my companion has taught me to be more sensitive beyond the confines of my own mind and heart.

I cannot yet say that pain is my friend, but I can say that being willing to embrace pain as my companion, has brought a gift and blessing.

Perhaps in time pain will lead me to greater submission to the will of God. As one learns it in one area of life, it opens the door for courage to embrace it in all areas.

I remember almost two years ago, when John Paul II died, I asked the Lord to give me the same hunger and thirst for His will that John Paul had. I have prayed that prayer almost daily with all my heart. Perhaps God used a certain loveable dog to bring me to a deeper appreciation of how the Lord can use physical suffering to bring us to a place of greater submission and peace.

Pray for me as I pray for all of you, that the circumstances of our lives—even and maybe especially when they involve suffering, can bring us into deeper union with Jesus. +

“I cannot yet say that pain is my friend, but I can say that being willing to embrace pain as my companion, has brought a gift and blessing.”

Cardinal John Newman

Seek a Fresh Outpouring of the Holy Spirit!

In this 40th anniversary year of the Charismatic Renewal we invite you to join us for our annual Renewal Ministries Gathering May 4-6, 2007 at St. John Center for Youth and Family in Plymouth, MI (halfway between Ann Arbor and Detroit).

A Weekend of Thanksgiving
• Praise and worship
• Daily Mass

A Weekend of Prayer
• A fresh outpouring of charisms
• Healing
• Continued anointing for the ongoing work of Renewal Ministries

A Weekend of Teaching & Preaching

A Weekend of Fellowship
• Friday golf outing
• Missions updates
• Meet other members of the “Renewal Ministries family”

For more information or to register contact Jessica Sherwood at 734-662-1730, ext 32 or jsherwood@renewalministries.net or download and print out the registration form at www.renewalministries.net.

Please Pray...

+ that the new 2007 season of The Choices We Face will help many viewers come into a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus.

+ that the proclamation of the gospel message at the upcoming Lift Jesus Higher Rally in Toronto will bring deeper conversion and freedom to all those who attend.

+ that the Lord will continue to raise up more “ordinary people” to be laborers in his vineyard.

+ for all the intentions of our supporters and their family members.

Thank you for your continued support through prayer as we labor together for the Gospel and the renewal of the Church.
Fr. Jeffrey Njus intended to become a Protestant minister, but during a college trip to Rome, he “fell in love with the Church” and converted to Catholicism. He was ordained in 2003 and is the pastor for St. Thomas the Apostle Church in Ann Arbor, Michigan. This was his first mission trip with Renewal Ministries.

The first phrase I learned in Kenya was “Roho Mtakatifu,” Swahili for the “Holy Spirit.” These words resounded repeatedly in my ears and in my heart during our two week stay in Kenya as we saw many people welcome the Holy Spirit into their hearts in new and powerful ways. Sometimes when I tell people here in the U.S. about my trip to Africa, they seem surprised that I wasn’t traveling to Kenya on a humanitarian mission with food and medicine. It is true that issues of poverty and development are very serious in East Africa. Clean drinking water is a widespread need and diseases like Malaria and AIDS have had devastating effects. (A little personal experience with Typhoid Fever brought that reality home to me.) However, in Africa I learned that while the material needs of different people may vary, the needs of every heart are the same. We all need the love of our heavenly Father, we need Jesus who overcame the divisions of sin and death that keep us from God, and we need the Holy Spirit who comes to share the life of love in God with us.

Our mission in Kenya was to teach the teachers. Peter Thompson, a Renewal Ministries’ country coordinator from Canada, and I participated in two four-day conferences with catechists in two different dioceses in Kenya. The role of the catechist in Africa and in many other countries throughout the world is quite different from that of a catechist in the U.S. In many places in Africa, the parishes are so enormous that there are several outstations in each parish numbering about 300 or 400 families—the size of a small parish here. Usually a lay catechist is assigned to administer an outstation and they do a remarkable job in spite of difficulties and very poor wages. The catechists are on the front lines of evangelization. Catholics and even some catechists are increasingly being challenged in their faith by the explosion of many fundamentalist sects that are springing up by the thousands in Africa, often drawing people from the Catholic Church. Our teaching to the catechists consisted of the basics of Catholic doctrine, including the Eucharist, Confession, Prayer, the Call to Holiness, and the Last Things, among others. Over two thirds of those attending had no access to a Catechism of the Catholic Church and we were able to supply them with this treasured resource. It was a joy to see their hunger for truth and a privilege to help reinforce their training in apologetics.

“...in Africa I learned that while the material needs of different people may vary, the needs of every heart are the same.”
Sharing together in the four-day conferences gave us just enough time to begin to get to know these fellow Christians and to unite our hearts with them as brothers and sisters. Indeed, from our first day there, they felt like family. Those working in the Renewal in Kenya were inspirations of faith and zeal. The catechists were beautiful examples of openness as they absorbed the teachings of the Church with their minds and hearts. But the children were the greatest delight and they touched my heart over and over again.

When I returned home, one of my parishioners back in Ann Arbor shared with me that while I was in Africa he awoke in the middle of the night and was inspired to pray for me and specific details of our mission in Africa. As he prayed, several people came to mind. One was a young girl who was in danger of entering into prostitution. Another was a couple whose marriage was in trouble. The last was a man who was tempted to abuse his child. As he spoke, my heart melted and several people flashed before my eyes. I could put a name or face to some of his intentions. These are the real spiritual battles that people are facing in Africa and they are not unlike the battles people are facing in the U.S.

God’s family stretches throughout the world and it was a delight to encounter some of his African children, and to share in his love together with them. I am especially grateful because our mission was right at the heart of the Gospel. We did not bring material goods, food, or medicine with us to Africa. Instead we brought spiritual goods—the bread of life and the medicine of immortality. The material needs in Kenya and elsewhere in Africa are indeed great. Sometime soon I hope to return to help out with material resources from my own parish. However, the spiritual needs are even more significant. It was beautiful to see our loving God fulfilling these spiritual needs as his children opened their hearts to the work of his Holy Spirit. We saw the Holy Spirit inspire the hearts of the catechists as they prepared to return to their outstations, confident in their mission of evangelization, and confident in the love of Christ which transforms lives. I returned to my parish confident in that same mission. I pray that we too can welcome the “Roho Mtakatifu” into our hearts more and more. Then wherever the Lord places us, whether in Africa or Ann Arbor, he may send us out in mission to show his love to the world. 

In many places in Africa, the parishes are so enormous that there are several outstations in each parish numbering about 300 or 400 families—the size of a small parish here.

We did not bring material goods, food, or medicine with us to Africa. Instead we brought spiritual goods—the bread of life and the medicine of immortality.

Fr. Jeff (he’s the one in the middle) poses with the catechists in Ngong at the completion of their four day training session.
“Jesus Christ gave you all; he left nothing for himself.”

St. John Chrysostom

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

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

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

Boynton Beach, FL
Institute for Priestly Formation Symposium
March 15–18
Ralph Martin

Kenner, LA
Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference
March 23–25
Sr. Ann Shields
Contact: 504-828-1368 or info@ccrno.org

Detroit, MI, Catholic Men’s Conference
March 24
Ralph Martin
Contact: www.mensfellowship.com

Pittsburgh, PA, Duquesne University
Answer the Call Men’s Gathering
March 24
Peter Herbeck
Contact: 412-276-2685 or www.cmfpitt.org

Manchester, NH, St. Marie’s Parish Mission
March 25–26
Ralph Martin
Contact: karenhettrick@comcast.net
or 603-647-2597

Lincoln, NE
Catholic Men’s Day, St. Joseph Church
March 31
Ralph Martin
Contact: 402-483-2288

April 2007
Mexico City, Mexico, High School Mission trip
April 6–14
Debbie Herbeck, Jim Murphy

Toronto, ON, Lift Jesus Higher Rally
Saturday, April 14
Ralph Martin, Peter Herbeck, Sr. Ann Shields,
Fr. Groeshel, Fr. Stan Fortuna, Dana Scallon
Contact Sadie at 905-270-2510
or www.lift-jesus-higher-rally.org