Dear Friends in Christ,

Greetings in the Lord.

You know, despite all the trials of life, it’s a great joy to be a Christian. What hope our faith in Jesus Christ gives us for an ultimately wonderful outcome! So many of us are tried sorely by illness, pain in relationships, and financial pressures, but if we just “hang in there” and persevere, depending on God’s grace, and taking it one day at a time, we will be saved. We continue to read each of your prayer requests and are in solidarity with you in prayer at our staff meeting each week. Thanks for your prayers for us.

In this issue you’ll be reading news about our recent mission trips to the Czech Republic and Slovenia. Next month we will report on other recent missions to Uganda, Hungary, Romania and Turkey. Some of you may be aware that over the past year or two there have been a number of successful attempts by Islamic militants to kill Christians. There is some danger in carrying out mission in Turkey right now and I want to explain how we determine whether or not to go into dangerous situations like this.

We generally leave such decisions/discernment to the team leaders and the team members, in consultation with those we will be working with in the particular country. If Peter or I determine through prayer and an evaluation of the situation that a particular risk should not be taken we may simply ask the team to postpone or cancel the trip. We don’t feel that we can ever require anyone on these missions to put themselves in danger but we encourage prayer, consultation, evaluation and discernment so each person can make the decision they feel is right for them. And, of course, if they decide to go, we support them daily in prayer. One way you can join in this prayer support for our missions is to cut out the events calendar in each month’s newsletter and post it on your refrigerator or put it in your bible or prayer book so you can pray for each mission as it is being carried out.

Now that the seminary academic year has ended I myself am freer for travel and have been to both Ireland and Mexico so far this summer.

In Ireland I gave a series of talks to Catholic evangelization leaders from many different movements and organizations at the Irish national seminary at Maynooth, about a half hour

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This was the first time that Ralph ever preached in a bull fighting ring. The bull wasn’t there and things went well.
Dear Friends

west of Dublin. One of the things we think the Lord is calling us to in Renewal Ministries is precisely to be of support to dedicated priests and lay leaders like this all over the world. It is a privilege to meet them and encourage them in their important service.

It was also a privilege to be at the Maynooth seminary. The seminary is world famous and at one time was the largest seminary in the world with more than 600 seminarians. Also, at one time it was just one of eight seminaries in Ireland preparing men for the diocesan priesthood. Now it is the only seminary left preparing men for the diocesan priesthood for all of Ireland and it only has about 70 seminarians at this time. Ireland is going through an amazingly rapid process of secularization and de-Christianization. It’s almost as if a “perfect storm” concocted by the devil, aided and abetted by human weakness and malice, has been unleashed on this land of saints and scholars who sent missionaries to so many countries over the centuries. Sudden prosperity, integration into the European Union with its strongly secularist pressures, and the exposure of truly horrible clergy sex scandals have combined to silence the Church when it most needs to be giving bold guidance to the Irish people. Lord have mercy on Ireland!

In Mexico, a traditionally Catholic country, some of the same pressures are at work. Perhaps less than 10% of the Mexican people go to Mass on Sunday. And it was a shock to the Church when Mexico City recently took steps to legalize abortion.

I was invited to address members of the Catholic charismatic renewal celebrating the 40th anniversary of this renewal in the Archdiocese of Tijuana. We met in a bull fighting arena, which was a first for me! About 5,000 people attended and once again I was impressed by the commitment of the local leaders and their great service in helping so many continue to follow the Lord. From seeds like this in both Ireland and Mexico the renewal of the Church will come.

There’s one more special thing I want to share with you. Jessica from our office, called a cloistered Dominican monastery of women in the Detroit area last year to order some communion wafers for an event we were having. While on the phone with one of the nuns, she had an opportunity to tell her about Renewal Ministries. The nun then told Jessica that there was an elderly sister in their convent who had been praying for me for the last 30 years. Wow! This nun had met me many years ago when I visited her convent in Newark, N.J. with Fr. Jim Ferry and had decided that she would pray for me each day since. A few months ago I met this nun and thanked her personally for her extraordinarily kind commitment. Only in heaven will we know to whom we owe a debt of gratitude for us arriving safely home! Thank you Sr. Mary of the Holy Child, O.P., and for all who pray for us.

And thank you too for your financial support without which we could not continue this work.

Gratefully,

Ralph Martin

It was a joy to finally meet Sr. Mary of the Holy Child who has been praying for me for more than 30 years. She used to be in NJ and now is in the Monastery of the Blessed Sacrament of Cloistered Dominican Sisters in Farmington Hills, MI. (www.opnuns-fh.org)
Mission to the Czech Republic
By Tom Edwards

A major thrust of the April outreach to the Czech Republic was the presentation of a week long parish mission in the Northeast Moravian town of Fulnek. Situated in the valley of the Oder Hills, the picturesque town square shows little sign of the devastation by bombing during World War II. Two young Polish Pallotine priests, Fr. Artur Cierlicki and Fr. Joseph Gruba are seeking to build a vibrant parish which includes six village churches which lie in close proximity around the town of Fulnek.

No time went to waste throughout the days, as our team members were called upon to engage in many events: ministry to the home-bound, moms’ meetings, men’s and women’s ministry, and youth groups. Several outreaches were made to the two public schools where we were given freedom to proclaim the gospel message through testimony and teaching to students from elementary to high school age.

The evening events commenced with 5:00 Mass, followed by our program and fellowship time in a small hall. No such event had taken place in recent history and the priests were apprehensive about how the people would respond. Their concern dissolved as the first evening began with an overflowing church. The priests immediately began to direct our team to certain crisis situations in the lives of the people and our prayer teams had the privilege of praying with many and witnessing the transforming ways of the Holy Spirit.

One testimony illustrates this well:

Working through a translator, one of our prayer teams was approached by a young couple in crisis. They had several young children. They were living under the same roof but at the point of impending divorce. Although the wife was open to reconciliation, the husband was filled with anger over a past situation that involved the betrayal of his wife and the church. He no longer believed in God, and prior to our arrival had asked the pastor to remove his name from the list of believers on the church registry. Over the course of several prayer sessions the next few evenings which involved repentance, forgiveness, and renunciation...

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tion of sinful ways, etc., the wife made consider-
able progress. The husband however remained
hard of heart and could not respond to any
word of God’s mercy, love or identity with Christ.
This continued throughout the week. Our team
was scheduled to catch a train after the Sunday
morning Mass. After communion, the hus-
band came to a member of the prayer team and
desperately pleaded for one more prayer. After the
final blessing, the husband fell on his knees in
the middle of the crowded sacristy and the prayer
team placed their hands upon him and began to
pray. Immediately the man began to shake and
sob uncontrollably and the Holy Spirit and the
love of God consumed him. The prayer team was
overwhelmed by God’s great love and compassion
as they asked the Lord to fill him with every gift
of the Spirit and bring total healing to his mar-
niage. With time running short, the prayer team
left with rejoicing at this sovereign move of God
to bring a beautiful healing to this man’s heart
and family.

Fr. Artur announced at the Sunday Mass
that the parish would immediately begin a first
ever Life in the Spirit Seminar. He invited us to
return in a year to do a follow up mission.

From the Moravian region our team trav-
eled across the country to the far Western side
of the Bohemian region and the city of Pilsen
(famous for its brewing of beer). The area lies
close to the German border and is renowned
for its lack of faith and religion. Atheism pre-
vails and of the small percentage of Catholics
in the diocese only about seven percent are
church attendees. This visit to Pilsen would be
the first for our ministry.

Our first evening of ministry was presented
at the bishop’s complex. About forty people
attended from various areas in and about the
city. A number of those who work directly for
the bishop attended and all seemed quite
receptive to the testimonies, messages, and
prayer ministry offered. The following morning
we were warmly received by Bishop Frantisek
Radkovsky and he met with us for the greater
part of an hour. He shared how his personal
life had been greatly influenced and fashioned
by involvement with lay movements, particu-
larly the Focolare movement. His hospitality
and genuine interest in our mission ended with
an invitation to return and to actively engage in
ministry in the Diocese of Pilsen. Our second

Our team (l to r) Ellen Holian, Tom Stempky, Jana Ungerova,
Angelus Varata, Mary Shaw and Tom Edwards with Bishop Frantisek
Radkovsky of the Diocese of Pilsen.

Ellen Holian, a Renewal Ministries board member and frequent
mission trip participant, shares with the Czech high school
students.
evening of ministry was scheduled with Fr. Jan at the Dominican church of St. Anne. He had some reservations about how we might be received since former efforts at gathering people for any event outside of Sunday Mass had resulted in about eight people showing up. He was more than delighted when the small room in which we met was filled with about 60 people. Once again, those present (who came from many walks of life and some with little or no experience with spiritual renewal) were tremendously responsive to the gospel and to receiving prayer. Many were visibly touched as fears and hurts gave way to faith and healing.

Mission to Slovenia
By Don Turbitt

During our week-long stay in Slovenia, I had the opportunity to preach each night in six different parishes. The first night I spoke on healing at a parish where about 125 people had recently completed a Life in the Spirit Seminar and all of them were at this Mass. At the end of the talk, I prayed for everyone in their seats and also invited any to come forward to receive more prayer through the laying on of hands. I repeated this model on each of the six nights; in all, I prayed with over 1,000 people.

The next day, we had Mass at St. Peter’s parish with Fr. Janez Riktaric of the Novo Mesto diocese. Afterwards, we went to the parish hall where 200 people crowded in and overflowed into the hallways and outside the windows. Somehow God seems to work in power in crowded rooms. We had great worship and an anointed prayer ministry.

On Sunday we had Mass for the leaders and members of several prayer groups in the Novo Mesto diocese. More than 200 attended and I taught on the “Fruit of the Spirit.”

A few days before Pentecost, I was interviewed on National Secular television. I talked about Pentecost and the renewal movement and experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit. The woman who interviewed me said she experienced Jesus for the first time just the week before. I ended up praying over her and she was blessed. The program was scheduled to be aired on Pentecost Sunday.

The TV interview was held at a Jesuit monastery and after the interview we had Mass which they covered for television. Afterwards, I taught and prayed with about 150 people. At the end of the night, my translator called one priest who lived in the monastery but did not attend our meeting and invited him to come for prayer. He was a middle-aged priest who had not been involved in the Charismatic Renewal, yet he said he was open to receiving prayer. I spoke to him for a minute, and then prayed with him. He said God touched him deeply and that he would look for more.

Dr. Janez Cerkovnik and Fr. Marijan Sef, SJ, accompanied me on a visit to Archbishop Alojzij Uran of Ljubljana Archdiocese. We met for about ½ hour and I invited him to celebrate Mass for us next year at a “Fire Rally.” The Archbishop was very open and agreed that if possible, he would come. 

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Who is Jesus?

Over past few weeks I’ve been slowly making my way through Pope Benedict XVI’s inspiring new book, *Jesus of Nazareth*. Although it’s more of a scholarly meditation, I’m finding it very helpful. In it he seeks to lay hold of the true identity of Jesus that is given to us in the four Gospels. It is the first part of what he hopes will be a two part series written to help recover Jesus’ true identity, which has been so obscured and emptied by contemporary biblical scholarship. The book addresses important questions: Who is the Jesus of the Gospels? Can we trust the picture of Jesus given to us in the Gospels? What has Jesus brought to us?

There is so much I would like to say about the book, but for the purposes of this short article I will limit myself to one simple dimension of Jesus’ person highlighted by Pope Benedict. While discussing the call and sending of the apostles, His Holiness reflects on what seems like a paradox in Jesus’ words to the apostles. The apostles are given “a double assignment: to be with him, and to be sent out to preach.” (p.172) Jesus draws them near and sends them in the same breath.

Pope Benedict addresses the paradox with this remarkable statement: “Being with him (Jesus) includes the missionary dynamic by its very nature, since Jesus’ whole being is mission.” (p.172) Those few words say a great deal about the identity of Jesus. He is a missionary; he is the God-man who lives in a constant state of mission.

Mission is Jesus’ preoccupation. If we don’t know this about Jesus, we don’t know much about Jesus. This one dimension of Jesus’ identity is often omitted or obscured by modern reconstructions and this has resulted in devastating consequences on the life and mission of the Church. It has contributed to a cooling of missionary zeal and conviction in the lives of many, if not most, Catholics.

Recovering Our Identity

Knowing who Jesus really is has a direct impact on our own identity as his disciples. The recent Popes have all labored to help us understand how deeply rooted the “missionary identity” ought to be in our own lives. We have been reminded repeatedly that “the Church [that’s us] exists to evangelize,” and that evangelization expresses “our deepest identity.” Pope John Paul II, reflecting on the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, saw the hand of the Lord guiding the Bishops to rediscover this fundamental truth about ourselves:

“More deeply than all the truths of the Church, this truth has been highlighted in the consciousness of our generation by the Second Vatican Council. Thanks to that, we have all understood far better that the Church is constantly in a state of mission, and that is what is meant by the fact that the whole Church is missionary.” (L’Osservatore Romano 6/2/80)

Why does evangelization express our “deepest identity”? Why are we called to be living “constantly in a state of mission”?: Because, as baptized believers we are being conformed to Jesus; we receive our identity from him and literally come to participate in his “way of being.” Mission is a reality of his existence that he wants us to know and experience in our own lives. The question we should ask ourselves is, “Do I see myself in this way?” For most of us, we see evangelization and mission as something we do, not a fundamental expression of who we are.

Becoming Like Jesus

The implications of Pope Benedict XVI’s words have profound meaning
By Peter Herbeck, Missions Director

for all of us. They give us insight into what it means to “be with Jesus.” We all want to live more with the Lord, to experience his presence and power in our lives. The question we face is how can we experience a deeper intimacy and companionship with Jesus?

When Jesus gave his apostles the Great Commission, he gave them a promise: “Lo, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Mt 28:20) Jesus is with his disciples in mission. To live as one who is sent is to walk with Jesus, to be where he is, doing what he is doing.

It’s important to see that the change Jesus wants to produce in us is not a change in geography but a change in identity. To live in a “constant state of mission” does not mean we all need to spend more time preaching the gospel in Africa or China. It means living with a new self-understanding wherever we are. Whether you are a mother, a teacher, a banker, an athlete, a student, a politician or a priest, we are all called to live with a deep and abiding conviction that we have been personally commissioned by Jesus to be his ambassador, his representative, in every situation. He wants us to know that he is with us, guiding, empowering and leading us to share in his mission from the Father in every circumstance.

To live constantly in “a state of mission” is to stand ready, to be on alert, to give the Lord permission, to be attentive to the leading and prompting of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives. It means we understand that our time, talent and treasure has been given to us for the sake of his mission in the world.

It’s this disposition that plunges us into a deeper, fuller, more dynamic relationship with Jesus. To live with a missionary identity demands a radical reorientation of our interior life. It requires a new way of thinking. It demands that I put to death the constant preoccupation and anxious concern I have for my own comfort and safety. Having died with Jesus in baptism, I already know where my life is headed; I know who it is who holds my present and my future. I am secure in him. For that reason I can join him in his mission and become “a missionary of the Father.”

**Cooperating with Jesus**

How can we cooperate with this work of “missionary formation” Jesus is seeking to produce in each of our lives? Here are just a few suggestions:

1. Each day, ask the Lord to help you discover your missionary identity and then be willing to confront ways of thinking within yourself that prevent you from embracing this identity.

2. Prayerfully study the call and commissioning of the apostles in the Bible.

3. Study the documents of Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II: Evangelii Nuntiandi and Redemptoris Missio.

4. Find other Catholics who are living a missionary lifestyle—learn from them and ask them to help you do what they are doing.

5. Sincerely give the Lord permission to take you out of your comfort zones and to place you at the heart of his mission for your life.

6. Seek training and formation in mission, e.g., attend one of the Renewal Ministries Institute Schools, or join an evangelistic Bible Study in your local church.

**Please Pray…**

+ for the spiritual renewal of Ireland. May the Lord help all Catholics there to live courageously as His disciples.

+ for our upcoming mission trips to Slovakia, Mexico, Papua New Guinea, and Hungary, as well as all our events throughout North America.

+ that Catholic seminaries would be places of spiritual renewal, evangelization, and empowerment for the future leaders of the Church.

+ for the intentions of all 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.*
On the Road

August 2007

Scranton, PA
Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference
August 3–5
Ralph Martin
Contact Bob Valiante at 570-344-2214 or ccrenewal@adelphia.net

St. Leon, IN
Healing Conference, Walking on Water
August 11
Ralph Martin
Download brochure and register at www.inholyspirit.org

New Orleans, LA
Center of Jesus the Lord Retreat
August 17–18
Peter Herbeck
Contact number: 504-529-1636

Mission to Slovakia
August 17–Sept 2
Tom Edwards and Team
Contact Jessica Sherwood at 734-662-1730 x32 or jsherwood@renewalministries.net

Mission to Mexico
August 26–Sept 1
Jim Murphy and Team
Contact Jessica Sherwood at 734-662-1730 x32 or jsherwood@renewalministries.net

Detroit, MI, St. Paul on the Lake
August 30
Sr. Ann Shields
Contact Andrea Hoeflein at 313-886-6467

September 2007

Mission to Papua New Guinea
September 1–14
Lloyd and Nancy Greenhaw and Team
Contact Jessica Sherwood at 734-662-1730 x32 or jsherwood@renewalministries.net

Omaha, NE, Legatus Chapter Meeting
September 12
Sr. Ann Shields
Contact Jim Carroll at 402-571-0200, x11

Howell, MI, St. Joseph’s Parish Mission
September 14–16
Ralph Martin, Peter Herbeck, Sr. Ann Shields
Contact number: 517-546-0090

Budapest, Hungary
Catholic Evangelization Conference
September 17–20
Ralph Martin
Contact: kunszabo@freemail.hu

Mission to Hungary
September 16–22
Dcn Steve Thomashefski and Team
Contact Jessica Sherwood at 734-662-1730 x32 or jsherwood@renewalministries.net

Newport, NH, St. Patrick’s Parish Mission
September 21–22
Ralph Martin
Contact number: 603-868-1422

Keene, NH, St. Bernard Parish
September 23–24
Ralph Martin
Contact Joy at 603-352-2861

Ann Arbor, MI, Renewal Ministries Country Coordinator Meetings
September 27–29
Ralph Martin, Peter Herbeck, Sr. Ann Shields

On the Road

“I will go anywhere and do anything in order to communicate the love of Jesus to those who do not know Him or have forgotten Him.”

St. Frances Cabrini

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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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