Dear Friends,

I’m filling in for Ralph this month in order to give him a little extra time to catch up on the long “to do” list that he came home to last week at the completion of his thirty day silent retreat. Imagine that, thirty days of silence! Ralph gave all of us a brief report of his retreat at our last staff meeting. He said it was long, and at times challenging, but most of all it was a fruitful time of communion with the Lord. I am sure he will be sharing some of that fruit with you in upcoming editions of the newsletter.

It’s nearly mid-August and we’re beginning to wind down from another full summer of outreach opportunities for Renewal Ministries. I reported last month on the mission in Uganda, highlighted by a powerful five day retreat for nearly four hundred and fifty priests. At the same time, Tom Edwards was leading a large mission in Tanzania, where he and his team led a retreat for priests and another for sisters, as well as lay leadership training seminars and large Catholic evangelistic rallies. Working with key priests and lay leaders Tom has pursued a vision they sensed from the Lord some years ago—to lead a substantial mission to every diocese in the country of Tanzania. The fruits of those missions have been remarkable.

As I read Tom’s detailed report of the mission (see page six), I felt a deep sense of gratitude to the Lord for the dedication of all our mission teams and for the privilege of being used by the Lord in such a powerful way for the renewal of his people. When Tom and our friends began to pursue these diocesan missions, some of the bishops were skeptical, and not very open to the idea. But over time, as they moved out in trust on the course they believed the Lord had laid out for them, the doors began to open all across Tanzania. The Lord tells us in the scriptures, “You will know them by their fruits.” The work in Tanzania has produced genuine, visible fruit, one diocese at time: conversions, signs and wonders, profound healing and renewal of priests and sisters in their vocations, the empowerment of the laity, ongoing mobilization for evangelization, and on this latest trip, the completion of a new well, a work they began on their last mission. Many of the bishops have seen the fruit and have opened the doors of their dioceses to our teams.

Shortly after Tom and his team returned from Tanzania, Don Turbitt and Chau Ngoc Doan, a permanent deacon from the Archdiocese of Detroit, and a student in one of Ralph’s courses at Sacred Heart Seminary in Detroit, traveled to Vietnam. Bishop Joseph Nguyen Chi Linh, of the Thanh Hoa diocese, worked with key priests and lay leaders Tom has pursued a vision they sensed from the Lord some years ago—to lead a substantial mission to every diocese in the country of Tanzania. The fruits of those missions have been remarkable.

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Don Turbitt led Renewal Ministries’ first venture into Vietnam. It was intended to be primarily a relationship building trip, but it turned out to be much more than we expected!
invited us to send a team to give a retreat for religious sisters and to discuss the possibility of future collaboration. This was our first venture into Vietnam. I just received a call from Don who had returned from Vietnam and was elated. The mission which was intended to be primarily a relationship building and fact finding trip, turned out to be much more than we expected.

Don arrived in Vietnam to find out that he was to lead a retreat for 188 religious sisters. The sisters were interested in understanding more about renewal in the Holy Spirit. Most of them had never heard of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Not having a full support team on this initial mission, Don wasn’t too sure how he would be able to both teach and minister to the sisters, especially given the fact that none of them spoke any English. With the help of his only translator, Deacon Chau Ngoc Doan, Don led the sisters through a modified Life in the Spirit Seminar. Don described their experience saying simply, “The Lord came in power!” Before they were finished Don prayed individually for each of the sisters for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The sisters were deeply touched, many of them spoke in tongues, some of them were healed physically, some emotionally, and all of them were filled with the joy of the Lord. It was an entirely new experience for all of them. God bless Don for his courage and zeal! Don said he forged ahead because, “He knew the Lord had called him, and he knew he could count on the Lord to act.” When I hung up the phone I began to think about how Don’s experience is another example of what the Lord has called us to in Renewal Ministries, an experience that has been repeated in many different ways over the past fifteen years. The Lord told us from the start that he was going to open doors all around the world that he wanted us to walk through. The doors would be opened by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of helping renew, empower and mobilize the Church for a new age of evangelization. The Lord wants to touch his people everywhere, to give all of us—clergy, religious and laity alike, the experience of a personal Pentecost, an encounter with the living Jesus Christ, a fresh anointing and empowerment for mission and evangelization.

This isn’t just a call for Renewal Ministries; it’s for the whole Church. We are a small part of that fundamental call in our time. The call requires trust, surrender, abandonment, courage, faith, sacrifice and the willingness to risk from all of us. It demands that we believe the prophetic word of the Lord that he has given to the Church in our time. It requires the willingness to act upon that word and to follow the lead of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Pope John Paul II said, “We stand at the dawning of a new missionary age for the church,” that the Lord has, “prepared the hearts of humanity for a fresh proclamation of the Gospel,” and just as on the day of Pentecost, he wants his people to know, with the convincing power of the Holy Spirit, that he is, “risen, he’s alive, acting in the
present, and changing lives.” Our part is simply to follow the lead of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Tom and Don and all of us at Renewal Ministries are relying on that word. We believe it with all our hearts. We know this whole mission we are caught up in is not simply our idea. Our prayer is that the Lord would grant us the grace to never get in the way, to keep us right where he wants us to be, to take us only where he desires us to go. We pray that our weakness, fears, sins, and limitations would not be an obstacle to his purpose for us.

Shortly after the retreat in Vietnam, one of the sisters was struck by a motorcycle while crossing a busy street. She was seriously injured, with damage to internal organs, broken bones and head trauma that left her unconscious. The next day Don accompanied the Bishop on a visit to the hospital to see this Sister who was lying unconscious in a bed, still wearing her blood-stained clothes. At one point Don knelt next to Sister’s bed, laid his hand gently upon her and asked the Lord to heal her of all her infirmities. As he prayed Sister opened her eyes just a bit. They left with no other indication that anything of note had happened to her.

The next day the Bishop received a call from the doctor saying that Sister had experienced dramatic change from the previous day. She was no longer unconscious and he said that as far as they could tell, it seemed she had no visible signs of the effects of the serious head trauma. Though she still had broken bones, the doctor said he had never seen such a quick recovery from that level of head trauma. The Bishop was overjoyed and he was effusive in his gratitude to Don for his boldness in prayer. The Bishop then asked Don to please consider bringing a whole team to his diocese in the next year to help all of his priests, religious and lay leaders come more deeply in touch with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

That’s why Renewal Ministries exists. May the Lord help all of us to take our place in this mission with ever greater boldness and generosity of spirit!

It’s your ongoing support in prayer and financial giving that makes our mission work in places like Tanzania and Vietnam possible. Thank you!

Make a Gift to Renewal Ministries Using an IRA Distribution

The Pension Protection Act of 2006 allows taxpayers who are 70½ years of age or older to donate money to charity directly from their IRA accounts without having to report the distribution as taxable income. Currently, 2007 is the last year to take advantage of this tax benefit.

There are some restrictions. This benefit applies only to those individuals who are 70½ years of age or older. Qualifying distributions to charity are limited to $100,000 in the calendar year 2007 and can only be made from traditional IRA accounts or certain Roth IRA accounts.

If you qualify, this may be a way in which you might be able to satisfy IRS mandated minimum distribution rules while avoiding at the same time federal and state income taxes by excluding these distributions from taxable income. It might also reduce your taxable estate value and expand your capacity for charitable giving.

Please consult your IRA custodian about the proper procedures or call your tax advisor for more information. This could be a good opportunity for those in certain situations.
“Clear! Understandable! Possible!” This is how people described this year’s School of Spirituality and the call to holiness. Seventy four people arrived on Friday, July 6 at the St. John’s retreat center in Plymouth, Michigan for a retreat weekend with emphasis on the spirituality of St. Francis de Sales. The comments below are a synthesis of evaluation comments given to us at the end of the weekend.

“The speakers made God’s word accessible to our hearts—the complementarity of their gifts, their humor and vulnerability made God’s word real, practical, challenging and possible…Their integrity, their faith and hope showed me the call to holiness was really possible…We were given the tools…The inspiring and at the same time the practicality of the talks was like an energizing and hope-filled push toward understanding why we should strive for holiness…It was a revelation of the burning love of the Trinity and the invitation to share in it…I was called to change and was able to make clear decisions…I was inspired to run the race to the end…The weekend was God-filled, inspiring, peaceful and fun!…Those days were a taste of heaven on earth…”

As a leader of the retreat I know that what transpired was a gift from God for the people from eleven states who attended the weekend. I concluded that God must just want our willingness to give Him a weekend because that simple decision released a flood of grace for so many—beyond what they had hoped for.

Brothers and sisters, the challenges we face in the world today are only increasing. We need to make some definite decisions to ensure our lives are on the right path, that our relationship with God is secure; that our hope is in Him, not in ourselves or the things of this world. We need to be spiritually healthy to run the race to the end. Are you and what are you doing about it?

Up until this time, I have often invited people to attend one or more of our schools in order to grow in the Christian life. But after seeing the remarkable work of grace during the School of Spirituality, I want to tell each of you reading this newsletter that God is being very generous with his grace—lavish, in fact. I want to urge you to make sure you are in a place to receive this grace so you can be, by His grace, a sign of His love, hope and mercy in a world growing cold and dark. Don’t put off or miss the invitation to be made ready.

Participants described the School of Spirituality as “a taste of heaven on earth.” Their simple decision to give the Lord a weekend released a flood of grace beyond what they had hoped for.
Reflecting on this year’s Bible School and reading over the evaluations from the participants, I got a glimpse of what the disciples must have felt like at the Transfiguration. (see Mk 9:2-8) More than sixty of us gathered together, and setting ourselves apart from the concerns of our daily lives, we were “led up a high mountain” by the inspired teaching of our beloved priests, Fr. Ponessa and Fr. Liesen. As we studied Moses and the Torah and the Gospel of John, an amazing thing happened—Jesus made Himself known to us in a more profound way and began to reveal to us the Father’s plan, expertly woven throughout the Old and New Testaments.

At times I could hear audible gasps as we plumbed the depths of Scripture, peeling back layer after layer of meaning. We saw the Crucifixion scene in a new way through John’s eyes as he used the language of the Old Testament prophets to reveal Jesus as the long awaited bridegroom of Israel. We stood with Jesus in the garden at his arrest and as we heard him proclaim, “I AM”, it brought us back to Moses and God’s revelation of his name in the burning bush. There were so many moments of discovery but perhaps some of the participants own words will give you a sense of our awe in God’s revelation:

“The teachings were eye opening... I was totally satisfied and I am going home with a new way of understanding the bible and a new love for the scriptures...it allowed me to experience in a profound way that the bible is not just a book with the words of God but it is the Word of God as living person...the talks reached depths I never knew existed in Scripture and they awakened in me a new interest in reading the bible... I think this will revolutionize my bible study...I didn’t want it to end!”

What a tremendous privilege and joy it was to spend time on that mountain top with Jesus and Moses, with the prophets and apostles, and with my wonderful brothers and sisters in Christ. Like the disciples, our instinct was to stay up there, basking in the presence of the Lord and our newfound wisdom. But the Lord’s injunction to each of us—whether priest, deacon or lay person, is to move out from those places to share the Good News with those who do not yet know Him, and to help others see His brilliant light shining throughout His holy Word. I hope next year you will make that journey up the mountain with us to study God’s Word—you will be inspired, strengthened and equipped!

What a tremendous privilege and joy to spend time on that mountain top with Jesus and Moses, with the prophets and apostles, and with my wonderful brothers and sisters in Christ.
This past July marked Renewal Ministries’ seventh mission journey to the tenth diocese in Tanzania in the past six years. Our time in the diocese of Dodoma was followed by another week in Dar-es-Salaam. The mission to Dodoma was a response to an invitation we received last year from Bishop Juda Thadaeus Riwa’ichi, O.F.M.CAP. He specifically asked us to be involved in the presentation of a retreat for the priests of his diocese, a retreat for sisters, daily workshops and outdoor rallies. A focal point of our visit was the commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of the first missionaries who arrived in Dodoma in 1907.

**Dodoma Rallies and Retreats**

The Dodoma diocese is comprised of a population of 1,800,000 of which about 20 per cent are Catholic. Several thousand people attended the rallies each day and all of our thirteen team members were involved in organizing and presenting daily workshops as well as prayer ministry following the rally talks. As usual there were numerous opportunities for prayer ministry as the “deliverance tent” was filled each day with dozens of people being set free.

The three-day priests’ retreat was attended by 34 priests and was led by Fr. Earl Muller from Detroit Sacred Heart Major Seminary, assisted by Fr. Graham Keep of London, Ontario and Fr. Jan Buc of Slovakia. Bishop Thadaeus was present for most of the retreat and another visiting bishop also attended one day. Many of the misconceptions and questions regarding the renewal were addressed and in the end all of the priests present were prayed over to receive renewal in the Holy Spirit. This was an occasion for much rejoicing by all of the participants. The priests were also eager to attend the afternoon rally sessions and to join the team in praying for the many thousands of people.

Once again our Sisters from the Disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ of Prayer Town, Texas added a vital dimension to our ministry team. Sr. Rita D’Souza and Sr. Juana Teresa and the effect of their special community charisma of evangelization were evident in every place that we set foot. In Dodoma Diocese seventy sisters representing five different congregations participated in a five-day retreat, and another twenty-two in Dar-es-Salaam. The Sisters at the retreat were fully open to the Lord and the Holy Spirit moved in power in the hearts of every single Sister. A sure sign of this action of the Spirit is joy—they danced and sang and danced and sang. Sister Furencia, the superior general of the Sisters of Saint Gemma Galgani, and her vicar, Sister Oportuna were most grateful for this opportunity of learning as well as experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives and those of their Sisters. Sister Furencia said in one of her comments, “Sisters, you have made my job easy because now so many Sisters are healed spiritually, emotionally and physically and they are so happy.”

Our two Sisters were constantly finding opportunities to evangelize as we made our way through the country. Their witness opened doors for ministry to a group of British missionaries and again to a group of German girls who were in the country doing social work.

**Ministry in Dar-es-Salaam**

Our second week of ministry in the large coastal city of Dar-es-Salaam followed the same program schedule. Our participation in the afternoon rallies constituted the final week of a twenty-four day crusade. The event was held on Jangwani Grounds, the same field used for the Pope John Paul II event in 1990. Our ministry also included other outreaches to orphanages, small groups, and special sessions with individuals in need of attention. Team member John Mathe was able to bring the first well-digging project to completion. Three hundred villagers now have access to clean water for drinking, bathing, and laundry.

On our final day in Tanzania, our team was invited to the Catholic Radio station. We taped a one hour interview to be broadcast in Swahili the following day to all the dioceses in Tanzania. Equipment is now being installed which will allow the station to produce and broadcast television by October.

**Testimonies**

At all the rallies, numerous people came forward each day to give testimonies of the Lord’s marvelous workings in their lives. Here are just a few stories:
Simon was injured from an injection at the hospital and couldn’t bend over. There was a word of knowledge that God was healing three people with backbone problems, as a result of doctors’ mistakes. He felt that he was healed where he was injected. When he went home, he was free of pain; he could bend and kneel and was completely healed.

Joanna saw a light touching the place of pain from an operation and she was healed of pain. As a result she gave her life to Jesus.

Stelle Peter said that she was involved with witch doctors. She relinquished the witchcraft and for the first time since birth she is able to bend over; she was released from bondage.

Lucia Laban said that she had been diabetic for three years. She came to the rally. The next day her doctor said that her diabetes is completely gone and her sugar level is now normal.

Rose told us that the bank her aunt works at was robbed one week ago. Her aunt and the bank’s manager were charged with involvement in the robbery. She came to the rally on Monday and put a petition in the basket asking God to set them free if they were not guilty. The next day she received a phone call that both the aunt and manager were found not guilty and set free.

Flora Augustine complained of chest pain for seven years. She had been to many hospitals with no healing. Now all pain is gone and she is healed.

Benson received a message two months ago that his sister was lost. On Tuesday at the Rally he asked others to pray that she would be found. That day his sister was found and brought back alive.

Assumpta attended a marriage workshop and felt immediate change. She learned about humility and obedience to her husband. Even her husband told her that she has changed. She has been married for 32 years. For the first time ever, he showed her his pay stub and now they will have a joint bank account. Her husband is so happy because after she attended the rally, one person gave them 300,000 shillings to buy a plot of land to build a house.

Please Pray…

+ that the new opportunity to work in Vietnam would help many to know the love of Christ and live in the power of the Holy Spirit.

+ for the taping this month of the 2008 season of *The Choices We Face* television programs. May all the practical details go smoothly and may each show bring glory and honor to God.

+ that all those who attended the School of Spirituality and the School of Catholic Bible Study would continue to grow in holiness and be used by the Lord to build His kingdom.

Thank you for your continued support through prayer as we labor together for the Gospel and the renewal of the Church.
On the Road

October 2007

Ann Arbor, MI
US Board of Directors Meeting
October 7–8

New Boston, MI, Taping for The Choices We Face Television Shows
October 4, 9–11, 17–19, 22–24, 31
Ralph Martin, Peter Herbeck, Sr. Ann Shields

Mission to Slovakia
October 13–28
Tom Edwards and Team

Mission to Romania
October (dates to be confirmed)
Dcn. Steve Thomashefski and Team
Contact Jessica Sherwood at 734-662-1730 x32 or jsherwood@renewalministries.net

Mission to Poland
October 23–29
Don Turbitt
Contact Jessica Sherwood at 734-662-1730 x32 or jsherwood@renewalministries.net

Camden, NJ, Catholic Charismatic Renewal Diocesan Conference
October 12–14
Peter Herbeck
Contact Pat Loughran at 570-823-6321

Albany, NY, Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference
October 12–14
Ralph Martin
Contact Dcn. Jerry at dcnjmgrigaitis@aol.com

Ontario, CAN, Women of Peace
October 25
Sr. Ann Shields
Contact Julie Oullette at julie_o@sympatico.ca

Coeur d'Alene, ID, Men’s Retreat
October 26–28
Peter Herbeck
Contact: cfksak@wmconnect.com or 208-699-1022

Orlando, FL, Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference
October 26–27
Ralph Martin
Contact: doccrs@juno.com

Pittsburgh, PA, Magnificat
October 27
Debbie Herbeck
Contact Kay Burket at 724-772-6749

Omaha, NE, Institute for Priestly Formation
October 31
Ralph Martin

November 2007

Northampton, PA
Retreat for Deacons and Wives
November 2–4
Ralph Martin
Contact: lferris_2000@yahoo.com

Mexico City, Mission to Mexico
November 8–15
Jim Murphy and Team
Contact Jessica Sherwood at 734-662-1730 x32 or jsherwood@renewalministries.net

Manchester, New Hampshire
Vita Novo Conference
November 10
Ralph Martin, Peter Herbeck, Sr. Ann Shields
Contact Paul Charron at 603-889-3483 or pauljoanne3@msn.com

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

“Be attentive to the voice of grace.”

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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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