Dear Fellow Servants of the Lord,

As I write this life is busy and I’m just trying to stay close to the Lord, abiding in Him, and letting his energy, strength and wisdom flow through me in the challenges I face. I’m sure you know what this feels like!

The programs I’m responsible for at the seminary are growing and we now have 28 students enrolled in our advanced degree program (S.T.L.—Licentiate in Sacred Theology) in the New Evangelization, from seven different countries. We just had two priests from India, another priest from Africa and another priest and lay person from Canada join the program this fall. Yesterday I gave a long lecture on the importance of the Holy Spirit in the work of evangelization. The “synergy” between our work in Renewal Ministries and the work at the seminary is really evident. My colleague Peter Williamson, who teaches scripture at the seminary and plays a major role in our mission work at Renewal Ministries, is launching another year of the St. Paul Fellowship. They meet regularly at the seminary, involving faculty, staff, students and other interested people. This coming Friday one of the Archdiocese of Detroit official exorcists is coming to speak and pray with the group about the role of deliverance and healing in the mission of the Church. In a few weeks they will be helping one of our priest students carry out a parish mission in inner-city Detroit. And as you receive this newsletter in your mail boxes the St. Paul Fellowship will be holding a day-long Life in the Spirit Seminar at the seminary.

In just a few days I’ll be leaving for Budapest, Hungary where I’ll be giving three talks at the Congress on Evangelization. In the last four years this event has been sponsored by four different European Cardinals in their own dioceses. This is the fifth Catholic Evangelization conference in a major European city in the past five years. After my return I’ll be off to New Hampshire to give two different parish missions. And then our three weeks of television production begins!

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At the end I was so amazed at the grace God was giving that I didn’t want to leave!

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Students in the S.T.L. program at Sacred Heart Seminary come from eight different countries. In the center of the front row is Msgr. Jeffrey Montforton, the Rector of the seminary. On one side of Msgr. Montforton is Ralph, on the other side is Dr. Patricia Cooney who teaches at the seminary.
Dear Fellow Servants

As much as the “river of life” is flowing swiftly this fall I’d better back up a little bit and report on a few important events of the summer. At the beginning of the summer I spent 35 days in Omaha, Nebraska, at Creighton University, taking a “30 day” Ignatian silent retreat. There were 4–5 hours of prayer each day based on scripture passages we were given (there were about 23 of us; I was the only lay person) and a daily meeting with a spiritual director as well as Mass. This time was challenging yet very fruitful. Early in the retreat as I was checking off each passing day on the calendar I had with me; I couldn’t believe how many days there were yet to come and it seemed very long! At the end I was so amazed at the grace God was giving that I didn’t want to leave! It’s a little hard to talk about this as it was very personal but I’m sure over time the fruits of it will flow over into the work the Lord is calling me to and my communications with you.

At the end of the summer there was another big event. My youngest daughter Maureen got married! It was a joyous occasion as God blessed her with a fine young Catholic man and they are truly starting their married life in Christ. This is the fourth of our five daughters who have gotten married, three of them in the last year and a half! Anne and I marvel at the four fine sons in law and their fine families that the Lord has given us. We’re deeply grateful to God. It hasn’t always been easy as you can imagine accompanying our daughters (and son) on the challenging journey young people have to undertake in the world today. We can hardly believe the blessings right now, as God has truly done for our family more than we could have asked or imagined, so immeasurably generous is he. There have been many times of trial and suffering but now is a time of blessing and we rejoice. We are also grateful for the prayers of some of you over the years who have faithfully prayed not just for me but for my family as well. I am, and will be, eternally grateful.

Another encouraging event this summer was to see The Fulfillment of All Desire continue to be widely received by many as a real help on the journey to God. It’s what I prayed for and worked for over a period of ten years and it’s a joy to see the fruit God is giving. At one point this summer it was the # 3 best selling Catholic book behind two of Pope Benedict XVI’s titles!

Towards the end of the summer I was a guest on Marcus Grodi’s EWTN program and after the program was over a group of young friars who are studying to be priests there came out with eight copies of Fulfillment which is being used in their formation program, for me to sign. It was an amazing and unexpected sight.

“The Fulfillment of All Desire has become a companion to me at Adoration. My husband has picked it up and now wants his own copy. Another friend saw me with it, wanted one, and I’m getting one for her too. I also want to get one for each of my daughters, my son, and a daughter in law too. Thank you for writing it. What a help!”

- A woman from Michigan

“I am currently reading The Fulfillment of All Desire and I have come to realize that this will be a lifetime guide for me. It’s such a gift.”

- An email from New Hampshire

“I’ve read your book 6 times already. Fantastic!”

- A man from Indiana

“This morning I was listening to the EWTN morning Mass. The priest who was preaching on the feast day of St. Bernard of Clairvaux said your book was the best interpretation of Bernard he had read. He strongly endorsed your book.”

- An email from Canada

“After I read your book I knew this is just what people in my parish needed. It is so readable for the average lay person. I got a group of women in my parish together and they eagerly
agreed to read your book. The result is heartwarming. A woman in this group has already started another group to read your book in another parish. I gave a copy of your book to a young friend who is contemplating a religious vocation and while she was visiting an order she was considering joining the nuns were so excited to see the book that she gave it to them and got another. I know this is the Lord’s doing but you did what He asked you to do and it is bearing fruit for many.”

• A woman from Texas

“What a wonderful book. There is something about this writing that makes me feel secure and safe.”

• A cloistered Carmelite nun in Pennsylvania

“I’m dealing with the recurrence of a serious illness. I can’t thank you enough for *The Fulfillment of All Desire*. You put it all together in a perfectly easy to understand fashion. Your book has opened up new dimensions of relationship with God. The saints and their wisdom are fascinating and inspirational. I refer to your book often.”

• An email from Michigan

It’s also a time of blessing for all the other avenues of ministry that we undertake in Renewal Ministries. This is Renewal Ministries’ 27th year and I never tire of being amazed and thanking God for the way He is touching lives through all the various things he has asked us to do. You are helping us do all this by your prayers and giving. Peter and Sr. Ann have updated you in recent newsletters on the tremendous mission work and radio ministry that continues to unfold. Let me share with you some things about how *The Choices We Face* continues to impact viewers, and even more now worldwide.

“A priest friend and myself were able to watch *The Choices We Face* this past Sunday night. Thank you for the inspiring program!”

• A priest from Slovakia

“I just saw your program. Warm, friendly, speaking the truth but in an encouraging way.”

• An email from Michigan

“Exceptionally fine programs. We can get them on the internet here. So very important for all of us. Thanks a million for everything!”

• An email from China

“We can get your program now here in New Zealand. Can us Kiwis have a free booklet too?”

• A letter from Auckland, New Zealand; we sent the booklet!

Anyway, I’d better run or I’ll be late for our budget meeting that we need to have ready for our annual Board Meeting.

Thanks for everything. God is truly great!

Your brother in Christ,

Ralph Martin

Please Pray…

+ that the mission trips to Mexico City and Kenya this month would effectively proclaim the message of God’s love in both word and deed.

+ for the continued work of evangelization, renewal and formation at Sacred Heart Seminary in Detroit and in seminaries throughout the world.

+ for our future missions to China and Vietnam as they continue to develop and grow.

+ 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.*
Looking in a New Direction

I walked into the office one morning recently never expecting to be profoundly touched and convicted by a handwritten letter in my mailbox. I noted that the letter came from a man imprisoned on death row for a capital crime. The man also included an article that he had written.

I get many letters but never have I been so challenged by the article printed below. This prisoner gave me the name of a deacon, who brings these death row inmates communion, so that I could contact him for verification. I did and Deacon Allen responded: “I am happy to share the good works of this man with you. He has given me permission to use any of his writings however I think will benefit the kingdom, so please use his work however you like.”

May you be challenged as much as I was!

Thoughts From a Death Row Prisoner

I am a capital prisoner awaiting execution on death row. Our Blessed Mother took my hand and led me to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in this place. After Holy Baptism and Confirmation, I dedicated my life to lay mission.

When I arrived at Death Row my skewed view of life was both outward-looking and downward-looking. I peered out from my cell, ever ready to look down on my neighbors. I would tell myself that another prisoner’s crimes were worse than my own therefore I must be a better person. I looked down on the young guy whose combined arrogance and ignorance manifested itself in a motor mouth that never seemed to stop running. I looked out at the psychologically damaged fellow, looked down on him for his foolish behavior. I looked out at the resident manipulator who had to stick his nose into everyone’s business, the guy who never met an argument he couldn’t start, looked down at him with violent thoughts while thoughts of God never came to mind. Stranded in the quicksand of my own arrogance, I blindly continued to wonder why I could never seem to find a moment of inner peace in the zoo that my life had become. As it turns out, I was an empty vessel, a cargo-less ship sailing in the wrong direction, only looking outward and down.

Then a most amazing thing occurred: I asked God into my heart. I began to look inward and upward—inward in self-examination and upward to God for the guidance necessary to my soul. Soon, with practice, I learned that I could consciously make the choice to reject negative thoughts. Instead, I could mentally work to paint others in a positive light while also looking to spiritually better myself. Any one of us can seek this way...through prayer, through holy books, through advice sought from a chaplain, from a priest or from a pastor. You need only look toward God, then look inward and invite Him into your heart. Only by looking in those new directions will you know the Truth. And only in knowing the Truth will you find peace within your own soul.

Perhaps the truth is that I did not stop to see that each of my neighbors was in the same boat as I, that I had no right to judge them. In my self-absorbed irritation at the noisy young man, I had failed to see his childhood beatings and abuse at the hands of traitorous adults which left him stifled of all maturity, forevermore to be the child crying out in pain. In my haste to turn away from the haunted eyes of the mentally ill fellow, I had not stopped to see a string of his forced confinements and anti-psychotic medication at every mental asylum in the state prior to his capital imprisonment that had occurred long before the crack cocaine took over his life and produced an irrevocable dementia. As for the argumentative busybody, I had never stopped to understand that his current acts were a way of making up for a long lack of human contact, that his unsophisticated attempt at social interaction was his way of making up for decades of time lost in the fog of mean-street gutters with only a bottle of cheap wine as friend and confidant.

Looking outward and down upon others, I had blinded myself to the truth of humanity. When I looked inward at my own faults and upward to God for direction, He removed the scales from my eyes and allowed me to look in a new direction, to see in a new way. And therein I found an inner peace. I was no longer angry or vexed by those who surround me. I stopped looking down on my fellow man. I leapt from my self-righteous homemade pedestal and landed squarely amongst my brethren, each of us equal in the sight of God, each of us equally loved by Him.

In the August 5, 1935 entry in her diary,
“Divine Mercy in My Soul”, Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska wrote:

“When some suffering afflicts me, it no longer causes me any bitterness, nor do great consolations carry me away. I am filled with the peace and equanimity that flow from the knowledge of the truth. How can living surrounded by unfriendly hearts do me any harm when I enjoy full happiness within my soul? Or how can having kind hearts around me help me when I do not have God within me? When God dwells within me, who can harm me?”

Peace in our own souls is attainable, even in the steel and concrete waiting cells of Death Row. Look upward to God for guidance. Look inward and place His light there, to expel the darkness. And, with Saint Faustina, know that when God dwells within you, no harm may come. Embrace your neighbor’s humanity, for it is a mirror image of your own. 

Sr. Ann Shields, S.G.L. Radio

“I leapt from my self-righteous homemade pedestal and landed squarely amongst my brethren, each of us equal in the sight of God, each of us equally loved by Him.”

An email from Lithuania...

Vince Kolycius, a long time friend of Renewal Ministries, was part of the first FIRE rally team in Lithuania in the early 1990’s. At 84 years old, he recently completed his 14th trip to Lithuania, traveling there to strengthen Catholic lay communities and prayer groups. Vince is loved by many there and is described by one Lithuanian leader as “a friend for those who need friendship, spiritual director for the confused ones and the comforter for the dispirited ones.” In this email he keeps us up-to-date on his latest trip...may each of us serve the Lord and His people with love and devotion all the days of our lives!

Everywhere people asked for individual prayers. In the mornings many people came for individual talks. I spent a half hour with Archbishop Sigitas Tamkevicius who was very friendly and very open. I also spoke three times on Radio Maria doing question and answer sessions.

I was very much pleased with the work of Catholic Evangelization Centre. They are young; there is so much love and understanding among them. They have various projects and are rather successful. For instance, Alpha program is doing very well, and at the moment it is going on in some 40 parishes and there is demand for more.

I thank God that I was able to go and to minister to so many people. They all loved me very much, accepted me, so what else would I need. All of them are still in my heart.

Vince

It has been four weeks since I returned from Lithuania. I really don’t know how to describe God’s blessings. He blessed me every single day, every hour. The Catholic Evangelization Centre prepared a schedule for me even before I got there. I did not have any free days at all, but I liked it. I visited many prayer groups in Kaunas and also went to different other towns, like Kazlu Ruda, Kuklautuva, Vilkaviskis, Marijampole, Lazdijai, Vilnius, and Telsiai. I had invitations to other places, but did not have any more free days. All together during those four weeks I gave 32 talks and people could not believe that I was 84. I spoke to high school and university students and also to families.

Hill of Crosses in Lithuania
“I Was Hungry and You Gave Me Food”

By Jessica Sherwood

What are some things you take for granted? Running water, availability of food, a local doctor? Maybe something simpler, like clean air to breathe, a second set of clothes or clean drinking water?

I can say that I take a lot for granted. I try to be thankful for what God has given me and I try to share with others. But I don’t think I always appreciate how much I really do have—a closet full of clothing, a fridge full of food (some even spoils at times for being there so long), a shower every morning and a soft bed at night. I think most of us can say we have those things, in the very least. We may even be blessed to have the internet at home, cable television, an extra guest room and a car.

There is nothing wrong with having items and comforts, but it’s important to remember and to help the people in the world who have almost nothing. There are people who only have a few pallets and a tarp for their shelter, and who never know where their next meal is coming from. These are the people I spent time with in the garbage dump in Mexico City. On this trip at the end of August, we went to a “poorer” section of the dump than we had in the past. These people are not allowed to set up any sort of permanent home, but every two months they are forced to take down their makeshift shelters and move deeper into the dump. There is no running water; no electricity and no way to keep the rats out at night.

One could hardly blame these people for bitterness, resentment and hostility, but we found the exact opposite when we arrived. As we set up for Mass and a simple medical clinic, we wondered if anyone would actually come and join us. A few mission team members began to play the guitar and sing and in just a short time, there were almost 100 people standing before the altar, ready to celebrate Mass with us. The reality of what we were doing—bringing Jesus to the people in the dump, struck me as we knelt in the garbage and the Eucharist was raised up in Fr. Manuel’s hands. Then, at the sign of peace, instead of awkwardness, there were hugs, smiles and gracious looks of acceptance.

As the encounter continued, many of us distributing the medicines were amazed at the patience of the people in line. They stood quietly while they waited to be served, but were ready with a smile when you caught their eye. A few days later when we returned, several people approached us to tell us how much the medicine had helped them. Sadly, the need was so great that we ran out of several medications and supplies. At the end of our time there two little girls showed up—one with bites all over her body and another with a bad cough. We were able to give them some meds, but the toys were all gone. I dug through my bag and gave them each a small bottle of drinking water. Christy, a team member from Arkansas, gave their mom some chocolate covered almonds from her bag; our humble gifts were gladly accepted and appreciated. It broke my heart that we didn’t have more to give at that point, but we prayed over them—the best gift you can give to anyone.

Jessica Sherwood is the administrator for the ‘Renewal Ministries’ mission teams. If you feel called to join us in any of our missions you can contact Jessica at 734-662-1730 ext 32 or jsherwood@renewalministries.net
Rekindling the Flame of the Spirit
By Brent Heiser

At the invitation of Cardinal Peter Turkson, Archbishop of Cape Coast, Ghana, we conducted a retreat for 50 priests of the archdiocese from July 16 to July 20. The invitation came to Renewal Ministries as a part of the Cardinal’s initiative in response to the proposals from the January 2007 Consultation on Evangelization and Catechesis hosted by the Archdiocese of Cape Coast and Renewal Ministries.

In the Cardinal’s letter of invitation to us he wrote, “Nobody can give what he/she does not have. I wish to encourage the priests to realize it, recognize the need for their openness to the Spirit, and see this at work in the Acts of the Apostles and in the papal documents...How the early Christians and church live, under the overshadowing of the Spirit...is the way to be and to live as church and Christians at all times. I was hoping that one can do this through talks and reading of the Acts of Apostles and ultimately being encouraged to yield to and pray for a rekindling of the flame of the Spirit.”

The Cardinal asked that we (Fr. Ben St. Croix, from the Companions of the Cross in Ottawa, Ontario and myself), address the spirituality of the new evangelization, including personal conversion, holiness, and embracing the Holy Spirit in one’s life. The Cardinal also exhorted the priests to be instruments of the Holy Spirit for each other and for the communities they serve. The final day was spent in small groups of five, reflecting on and sharing moments of conversion and the action of the Holy Spirit in each person’s life. The priests paired up for individual confessions, then rejoined their small groups, praying with each other for the empowerment and gifts of the Holy Spirit. It was a truly powerful and anointed week.

At the conclusion of the priests’ retreat, we rode with Cardinal Turkson to Accra to join the First Annual Pan-African Charismatic Renewal Conference, sponsored by the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services (ICCRS). The response was far beyond the organizers’ expectations, with more than 2000 renewal leaders from 30 African countries in attendance for five days of training and formation. The final two days of the conference were just as surprising! More than 7000 people converged on the Ghana Parliament parking lot and filled the colorful tents to celebrate the renewal in Africa, the 40th Anniversary of the Renewal in Ghana, and the 50th Anniversary of Ghana’s independence.

The opening Mass for the two-day rally was celebrated by Archbishop Charles Gabriel Palmer-Buckle of Accra, along with more than 100 priests. In true African fashion, there were colorful cultural processions, joyful music, and enthusiastic dancing. On Sunday, Fr. Ben and I were invited to share some thoughts of inspiration to those gathered. I included a brief history and ongoing activities of Renewal Ministries in Ghana and the other countries we serve in Africa.

The closing liturgy for the Pan-African Conference was celebrated by His Eminence Cardinal Peter Turkson. Concelebrating with the Cardinal were Archbishop Buckle, Bishop Essien of Ghana, and a bishop from the Congo. The celebration of God’s love and our faith exploded with joy throughout the closing Mass.
“How much our Lord must love you, to afflict you so! In the depths of your heart, he is sure to speak these words to you: ‘Courage. I break the dearest bonds on earth, but I reunite them in heaven... Here below, suffering; in heaven, true happiness.’”

St. Bernadette

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

Brighton, MI, Women’s Night
November 14
Debra Herbeck
Contact Glenna Diskin at 810-229-9863 x208 or gdiskin@stpatchurch.org

Mission to Kenya
November 26–December 10
Peter Thompson
Contact Jessica Sherwood at 734-662-1730 x32 or jsherwood@renewalministries.net

Houma, LA, School of Evangelization
November 28–December 2
Lloyd and Nancy Greenhaw
Contact Doug at www.houma.com

December 2007

East Lansing, MI, St. Thomas Aquinas Parish Day
December 1
Ralph Martin
Contact Joe Reynolds at 517-351-5460 or jreynolds@stachurch.net

Ypsilanti, MI, Transfiguration Parish Mission
December 2–5
Ralph Martin, Peter Herbeck, Sr. Ann Shields
Contact: gwenmayes1@aol.com or 734-482-6240

Atlanta, GA, Day of Renewal
December 8
Ralph Martin
Contact: m_shusta@wsdbw.com

Toronto, Ontario, CANADA Canadian Board Meeting
December 9–10

Ann Arbor, MI, Legatus Meeting
December 12

Save These Dates!

Lift Jesus Higher Rally in Toronto, Ontario, CANADA
April 19, 2008

Renewal Ministries Gathering
May 30–June 1, 2008

School of Spirituality
June 20–22, 2008

School of Catholic Bible Study
July 24–27, 2008

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.

Editor
Debra Herbeck

Design
Anne Martin

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