Dear Fellow Disciples,

A letter from Ralph Martin

The Lord is blessing fast and furious! Not without suffering, not without challenge, not without labor, but blessing.

Our hearts and prayers have been going out to our brothers and sisters in Kenya who have been threatened by the post election tribal violence which has killed so many people. But now that it has subsided—as of this writing at least—their thoughts and hearts are turning to how they can serve. From a young Kenyan man that we have worked with for many years:

“Things have cooled now and my family and I are fine. We are strategizing now as we have the opportunity in our prison ministry to reach out with the message of forgiveness and healing. In the prison there are all tribes and it’s an opportunity for us to preach acceptance, healing and detachment from tribal identity. We are trying now to reach two prisons outside Nairobi. We are grateful for all the support you give us.”

How inspiring!

As I write this we have a team in Turkey again serving what almost could be called a “re-vival” among the Armenian Orthodox in Istanbul. Also as I write, Sr. Ann Shields is in France ministering to the sick and handicapped. I am sure when she returns she will share about this in next month’s newsletter.

We also have just hired a young man who has worked as a youth minister for several years and will now be helping us with our TV and missions work. His name is Craig Pohl and you will

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During the taping of the last of the 13 Fulfillment of All Desire programs, graphic designers at EWTN projected the images of many of the saints I mentioned over the course of the series. It was inspiring!
Dear Fellow Disciples,

find his photo in this newsletter. He is from the German Catholic heartland of Westphalia, Michigan in the Diocese of Lansing, from which many seminarians and priests have come to serve the diocese.

And here is a letter from one of our dedicated Canadian Board Members:

“I just finished watching The Choices We Face. It was just you and Peter. I got down on my knees to join him in his prayer. You should do more programmes like that. We need to hear the challenge to radical conversion and holiness. I love your quote: ‘They go to seek the lapsed; they don’t wait for the lapsed to come to them.’ It stirred something in me.”

Later today I’ll be introducing Archbishop Thomas Collins, the new Archbishop of Toronto, as he gives a talk at the seminary in Detroit entitled: “Lessons from the Acts of the Apostles for the New Evangelization.” Last year at the Lift Jesus Higher Rally in Toronto, Archbishop Collins announced that his pastoral plan for the Archdiocese was the Acts of the Apostles. Praise the Lord! And tomorrow we’ll be taping a program with him for The Choices We Face.

Just a few days ago I returned home from almost a week in Birmingham, Alabama at the Eternal Word Television Network. I was asked by the network to produce a 13 week series based on the theme of my book, The Fulfillment of All Desire. I felt greatly honored to be asked but also experienced some “fear and trembling.” Even though I have hosted The Choices We Face now for 24 years I have always had a co-host and/or guests. This was to be my first “solo flight” and I very much felt the need for help from the Lord. I asked some people to pray which they graciously did, and I know your prayers for all the works of Renewal Ministries played a role here too.

I did get an “inspiration” which helped a great deal too. I remembered, with the help of the Holy Spirit, that the Franciscan Missionaries of the Eternal Word, the new order founded by Mother Angelica to serve the network, were reading my book as part of their formation. And it occurred to me to ask them if they would be able to participate in some of the programs, and they accepted.

I have to say that I experienced a lot of help from the Lord and I think that the 13 week series on the book went perhaps as well as it possibly could have. Thanks be to God and to generous prayer support! The programs are now in “post-production” and the earliest air date will be this coming September, but they may not air until March of 2009. I will let you know when I find out. Also, as the programs begin to air, copies will also be available at a reasonable cost.

One blessing of doing the programs was that some of the graphic artists and set designers were able to project images of the various saints as I quoted them on a backdrop behind me and it was as if they were there on the set with us. Craig Pohl has joined the Renewal Ministries staff to help with TV and mission work.

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Your brother in Christ,

Ralph Martin
“You are the Salt of the Earth and the Light of the World”
An Interview with Father Thomas Rosica

Father Thomas Rosica, C.S.B., is the Chief Executive Officer of the Toronto-based Salt and Light Catholic Media Foundation and Catholic Television Network. Fr. Rosica was ordained to the priesthood in the Congregation of St. Basil on April 19, 1986. He holds advanced degrees in Theology and Sacred Scripture from institutions of higher learning in Toronto, Rome, and Jerusalem.

Editor: Can you describe the impetus for the founding of the Salt and Light Television Network in 2003?

Fr. Rosica: Salt and Light Television was born on the wings of World Youth Day 2002. Its name is drawn from the phrase “You are the salt of the earth and the light of the world,” (Matt. 5:13-14) the theme for World Youth Day 2002. The Catholic television project is clearly a legacy of Pope John Paul II, and there could be no better way to carry on the legacy of WYD 2002 than through Canada’s first national Catholic television network that bears the imprint and tradition of World Youth Days.

The television network came about through the generosity of an Italian Canadian family that owns the largest private print and media company in the country, St. Joseph Media. Its founder, Mr. Gaetano Gagliano, now 90 years old, was a disciple and friend of Blessed Giacomo Alberione. Mr. Gagliano views Salt and Light as the crown of his long career in the print, media and communications industry. We are now supported by donations from Catholic organizations such as the Knights of Columbus, religious congregations and individuals.

Editor: What are some of the more lasting effects of WYD 2002 that you have seen on the Church in Canada?

Fr. Rosica: World Youth Day 2002 was a tremendous catalyst allowing many great things to happen in Canada. Against a world background of terror and fear, economic collapse and ecclesial scandals, World Youth Day presented an alternative vision of compelling beauty. WYD 2002 woke up the country and the Church in Canada.

We have felt the effects of World Youth Day 2002 throughout the vast Canadian landscape over the past five years—from the dynamic Youth Ministry Program in the Archdiocese of Vancouver, to the powerful Scriptural Lectio Divina evenings with the young people and the bishops in dioceses like Edmonton, Alberta, Toronto, and Ottawa in Ontario. There have been revitalized youth ministry programs in the Ontario Dioceses of St. Catherine’s, London, Toronto, and Cornwall.

In Atlantic Canada there has been a veritable explosion of youth activities in Halifax, and WYD inspired the birth of the John Paul II Media Centre in Halifax, a creative media project led by young people. In Quebec City, birthplace of the Church in North America, the seeds of World Youth Day 2002 have empowered young people and the Quebec Church to prepare for the Eucharistic Congress in June 2008.

The energy of World Youth Day has swept across Canada through powerful, Gospel-rooted movements like Catholic Christian Outreach [CCO], now present on many university campuses of the country. NET (National Evangelization Teams) Ministries continues to flourish with the WYD 2002 spirit. In Quebec the presence and growth of the new community “Famille Marie Jeunesse” is a testament to the power of World Youth Days. It has also become a seedbed for vocations to the priesthood, consecrated life, marriage and lay ecclesial ministries.

World Youth Days offer a new lens through which we look at the Church and the world, and build our future. One thing was clear after WYD 2002: we realized that we have much work to do in reaching out to young adults across this vast land. July 2002 was the beginning of a new adventure of faith and hope for the entire Canadian Church.

Editor: How has John Paul II’s pontificate, and in particular his call to the New Evangelization impacted and influenced Salt and Light?

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Fr. Rosica: I learned most of what I am doing here at Salt and Light Television from Pope John Paul II. He was a brilliant teacher and model of goodness and humanity, a wise communicator and a true “Pontifex Massmediaticus.”

Canada needed this television medium more than we know. Starting up a television network anywhere is fraught with challenges, and in Canada this is compounded by the country’s size, distances, languages and cultures. Also, Canada is often described on the international scene as being one of the most politically correct or tolerant societies in the world. Some take great pride in these words applied to our country. Others, including myself, do not necessarily see this description as something terribly positive. There is nothing politically correct about preaching and living the Gospel, about being salt and light in a culture that has lost the flavor of the gospel and tried to extinguish the light of Christ. In fact, the Gospel message is at times completely incorrect in the eyes and ways of the world!

The gospel of Jesus Christ must be proclaimed with boldness and courage. It is a boldness that does not overpower, that is not rude, that does not bully, that is never disrespectful, and that never shows off or flaunts gifts that one has received. But where the Spirit has been so lavishly poured out upon us as individuals and as a faith community, the Church has an obligation to announce and to proclaim Jesus Christ boldly, unapologetically and unabashedly with great joy. Pope John Paul II showed us how to do this in his life and through his public death.

Editor: How would you articulate the mission and message of Salt and Light Catholic Television Network?

Fr. Rosica: Everything we do at Salt and Light revolves around the five pillars of the network: prayer, devotion and meditation; multilingual Catholic liturgy, Vatican events and ceremonies; learning and faith development for all ages; stories of Catholic action and social justice throughout Canada and around the globe; stories of our Catholic communities; and information and context.

Salt and Light Television network also works closely with the major television networks in Canada to assist in the background material and education about Catholic matters. This was clearly evident in 2005 during the transition in the papacy. These efforts have built badly needed bridges with the secular media, and continue the legacy of World Youth Day 2002.

Editor: Do you see the role of young people in Salt and Light as a hopeful sign for the future of the Church?

Fr. Rosica: First and foremost one of the great contributions of Salt and Light is the unique manner in which young Catholics have assumed leadership roles in our evangelization efforts. One clearly gets the impression that the Church is “alive and young” at Salt and Light. Second is our commitment to offer Canadian society a message of hope, and an invitation to draw closer to Christ and the Church through our programming. In many ways Canada is a new mission territory, and the urgent pastoral needs for education in faith and spirituality, history and Church teachings are so vast and can never be fulfilled by one group or agency.

Editor: How important is the media in the Church’s ability to proclaim the Gospel and be strengthened both now and in the future?

Fr. Rosica: Throughout his nearly 27 year Pontificate, John Paul II taught us that communication is power. He told us to use that power wisely, to prudently get our message out, and...
it will have the potential to bear fruit, despite obstacles.

The forces he partially unleashed against authoritarian regimes during his lifetime were only side-effects of the way the man John Paul viewed humanity. At the beginning of the third millennium, we have economic globalization, but this must be accompanied by a moral globalization.

Whether or not one shares John Paul II’s motivating beliefs, one can certainly acknowledge that his was the most impressive attempt so far made by any single human being to spell out what moral globalization might mean, starting with a lived practice of universal solidarity, charity, and hope. And he did this by communicating his message boldly and respectfully wherever he went.

He taught us that there is much more to the Church and the papacy than preaching, speaking, writing, greeting people and traveling, although he certainly did enough of all of that. He communicated through spontaneous, symbolic actions that were often more eloquent than some of his speeches, homilies and encyclicals, especially his final moments on the world stage. Those actions were often powerful symbols.

Up to the moment of his death, and even after, Pope John Paul II was bringing people together in peace and in love. That was communication at the service of truth. That is our mission at Salt and Light Television Network and through our Media Foundation.

Editor: How can people throughout Canada view Salt and Light Television?

Fr. Rosica: Initially available only in the Toronto area, the network is now carried by cable and satellite TV services that cover Canada coast to coast. Programs in English, French, some Italian and most recently, Chinese (Cantonese) are available to nearly a million Canadian homes, primarily as a low-cost pay-cable channel. A limited amount of Salt and Light programming also can be seen in the U.S. on various cable networks including Boston Catholic Television and EWTN.

You may also sample S+L programming at www.saltandlighttv.org where you will find clips of all current shows as well as streaming video of many complete episodes. The site also features a daily, four-minute news broadcast in English and French called “Zoom.” See www.catholictv.org for channel and scheduling information of programming on the east coast of the U.S. For more information on Salt and Light, visit our website at: www.saltandlighttv.org, write to us at: info@saltandlighttv.org or call 416-971-3353 or toll-free 1-888-302-7181. +

Renewal Ministries Institute Schools—Just Around the Corner This Summer!

Join us and be called on in faith and holiness, grow in your love and understanding of Holy Scripture, and learn how to effectively reach out to others with the Good News! Check our website www.renewalministries.net for details or call Jessica Sherwood at 734-662-1730 ext. 32.

Please Pray…

+ that the Lord will pour out his Holy Spirit on all the mission events in the Czech Republic this month.
+ that the Lift Jesus Higher Rally in Toronto, Ontario this month will help many people encounter the saving love of Jesus Christ.
+ that the Lord will use our brothers and sister in Kenya to bring a message of hope, healing, and reconciliation to their fellow Kenyans.
+ for the prayer intentions of all our supporter 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.
From the Field

The Power of Hope

In his recent Encyclical Letter, Spe Salvi, Pope Benedict XVI has given us a timely and inspiring reflection on the meaning of Christian hope. The encyclical was presented at the beginning of Advent, the start of the Church year, and provides all of us, and the world at large, with vision and light to guide us in 2008.

The document is timely because it helps to provide the antidote for the hopelessness that seems to characterize our time. The constant push by secular culture to exile God and a Christian worldview to the margins of life, and the embrace of a radically secular and relativistic understanding of reality, leaves people with little onto which they can hold. If there is no truth to stand on, and all is constantly changing with no fixed end or goal, all we are left with is what we can construct to provide an escape from the apparent meaninglessness of our lives. As a result, the human heart is left in a state of alienation and a future without hope.

A secular world is a world without hope. When God is exiled from his creation, the light goes out.

Redemption

Pope Benedict begins his encyclical by reminding us that we have been given a way out of this life of empty futility, that we have been redeemed through the gift of hope: “we have been given hope, trustworthy hope, by virtue of which we can face our present: the present, even if it is arduous, can be lived and accepted if it leads toward a goal, if we can be sure of this goal, and if this goal is great enough to justify the effort of the journey.” (SS #1)

The encyclical is, among many things, a fresh proclamation of the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is that goal which is great enough to justify the effort of our journey. He is the “light that shines in the darkness…the true light that enlightens every man.” (John 1:5, 9) In him we see our future and through faith he enables us to see our destiny. We see Jesus risen, alive, and radiant in glory, the Lord of all, the beginning of the new creation. When we see him through the eyes of faith, hope is born in us. This hope is a deep, abiding confidence that what he is, we too shall become.

Hope produces conviction and confidence that the goal of my life is sure. It transcends the circumstances of my life and my future is sure because Jesus lives forever! My future is forever tied to his destiny. That means the circumstances of my life, no matter how difficult, tragic or disappointing, are not the final word. They do not define who I am, and most of all, they do not control my future. Jesus is greater than my circumstances; he cannot be contained by them. And because I am in him, they cannot contain me.

Hope Means Change

The Holy Father reminds us that this kind of hope “makes things happen and is life-changing.” (SS #2) Do you hear what he is saying? Christian hope has the power to effect change. It is not just a matter of acquiring information about God; it is the experience of encountering a person—God himself, and being touched and changed by his life.

That truth is profoundly revealed in the story told by the Holy Father of Saint Josephine Bakhita. Her early life could hardly be more tragic. She was born in Darfur, Sudan around 1869. He writes, “At the age of nine, she was kidnapped
by slave-traders, beaten till she bled, and sold five times in slave markets in Sudan. Eventually she found herself working as a slave for the mother and the wife of a general, and there she was flogged everyday till she bled; as a result of this she bore 144 scars throughout her life.” (SS #3)

In 1882 she was purchased by an Italian merchant and was placed in the home where she came to know an entirely new kind of “master.” To that point in her life she had only known masters who “despised and maltreated her.” But now she began to hear about the Master who is above all other masters, the one who is Lord of all lords, and one who, like her, had been whipped, beaten and despised. She came to know that this Lord “knew her, and that he created her—that he actually loved her. She too was loved, and by none other than the supreme master.” (SS #3)

In Jesus, the Holy Father states, Josephine had found “the great hope.” Meeting Jesus, coming to an experience of his personal love for her changed her. Though still a slave, she was set free. She had met a power greater than her own tragic history. She was touched by a love that was brighter than all the darkness she endured through her most sensitive and formative years. She was touched by a love that healed her and gave her an identity, and filled her heart with a life-changing hope. Her own words describe in the most beautiful and simple way the life-transforming power of hope: “I am definitively loved and whatever happens to me—I am awaited by Love. And so my life is good.” (SS #3)

Our Hope
She is speaking to us of the reality and power of hope. She is telling us that the Good News is real. The touch of Jesus freed her from the internal scars produced from years of trauma and unspeakable abuse. This young girl who was repeatedly told that she was nothing, who went to bed each night with open wounds, and no one to care for her, was literally transformed by the knowledge that God had revealed his unconditional, unchanging love for her in Jesus Christ.

When I first read Saint Josephine’s words I wept. She found the pearl of great price, the true meaning of life! This simple, uneducated, wounded child understood the deepest realities of life; we are good, our lives are good—no matter what the circumstances—because we are loved. Our lives here on earth are filled with meaning, and our journey is a precious gift because love awaits us.

Can you say the words of Josephine in your own heart and mean them? “I am definitively loved and whatever happens to me—I am awaited by this Love. And so my life is good!” This is the hope Jesus wants to birth in your heart. This is what defines you, not the scars from the past or the difficult circumstances of the present.

Open your heart today and let this truth lay hold of you. Let it be your identity and your security. Let no experience or circumstance control you. Believe so that you may see the hope that is in him for you.

An Invitation
In order to penetrate more fully the truth of the Holy Father’s encyclical, we’ve chosen the theme of hope for our annual Renewal Ministries Gathering. This yearly event is a time when friends and supporters of Renewal Ministries—those who have stood with us in prayer, or who have made financial contributions to our work, or who have joined us in mission—come together for spiritual refreshment, fellowship, and strengthening of vision.

We have very special guests this year, including Cardinal Peter Turkson, the Archbishop of Cape Coast, Ghana. The weekend is always a great source of new life for all who attend. Please give prayerful consideration to joining us May 30th–June 1st, 2008. For more information or to register for the weekend you can go to www.renewalministries.net or contact Jessica at jsherwood@renewalministries.net or 734-662-1730 ext. 32. We hope to see you there and to grow in hope together! +

Peter Herbeck, Missions Director

The Annual Gathering, located at the lovely St. John’s Youth and Family Center in Plymouth, Michigan, will be held on May 30th–June 1st.
On the Road

“

All things are beautiful because You made them; but You who made all things are inexpressibly more beautiful.

St. Augustine

April 2008

Czech Republic Mission
April 3–27
Tom Edwards and Team
Contact Jessica at 734-662-1730 ext 32 or jsherwood@renewalministries.net

Brooklyn, NY, Mercy Conference
April 5
Ralph Martin, Sr. Ann Shields
Contact Josephine Cachia at 718-859-7065 on Tues & Wed

Omaha, NE
Institute for Priestly Formation Council Meeting
April 7
Ralph Martin

Akron, OH, St. Hillary’s Parish Renewal
April 11–12
Ralph Martin
Contact number: 330-283-8748

Pittsburgh, PA, Catholic Men’s Gathering at Duquesne University
April 12
Peter Herbeck
Contact Pat@cmfpitt.org or www.cmfpitt.org

Toronto, Ontario, Lift Jesus Higher Rally
April 19
Ralph Martin, Peter Herbeck, Sr. Ann Shields, Fr. Frank Pavone
Contact: 416-251-4255 or Sadie at 905-270-2510 or www.lift-jesus-higher-rally.org

Prague, Czech Republic, ReLAY Conference
April 22–28
Peter Herbeck
Contact rob@kteams.org

Birmingham, AL
Taping for Men’s Television Show
April 28–May 2
Peter Herbeck

May 2008

Moodus, CT, My Father’s House Retreat
May 2–4
Ralph Martin
Contact: 860-873-1906

Gaithersburg, MD
Contemplative Prayer Conference
May 24
Ralph Martin
Contact Betsey Swan at 301-258-7432 or betseywan@aol.com

Plymouth, MI
Renewal Ministries Gathering
May 30–June 1
Contact: Jessica Sherwood at jsherwood@renewalministries.net or 734-662-1730 ext. 32

All things are beautiful because You made them; but You who made all things are inexpressibly more beautiful.

St. Augustine