Dear Partners in the Gospel,

A letter from Ralph Martin

We’re drawing to the end of an amazing year—both for turmoil in the world, and the work of God that we’ve seen in Renewal Ministries. But rather than do a review of the year right now (I’ll save that for next month) I want to draw your attention to something special that we’re doing for this end of the year issue.

These last months have been stressful for many people with the economic and political turmoil, but as challenging as things have been here in North America, it is far more difficult on a daily level, in many places where we regularly work throughout the world.

Lloyd and Nancy Greenhaw have recently returned from Zimbabwe where the conditions are particularly difficult and have been for a very long time. You will be inspired, not only by Lloyd and Nancy’s faithful service under difficult conditions, but by the quiet heroism of many of the people they serve. We are publishing part of their “diary” to give you more of a better feel for what life and work is like there. I hope you’ll be inspired and encouraged as we all face our own challenges.

I also want to say a few words about a personal challenge I have faced recently. Word about it spread through the Internet and I want you to hear an update from me. A few months ago I received the surprising diagnosis that a little “spot” on my forehead was a highly aggressive form of skin cancer that indicated immediate surgery. The good news is that it seems to have been caught early enough without spreading and the prognosis is excellent. It just so happens that one of the three centers in North America for handling this kind of skin cancer (Merkel Cell Carcinoma) is at the University of Michigan here in Ann Arbor, and a few weeks ago they informed me that the surgery appears to be so successful that no radiation treatment was necessary. Getting our health insurance company to handle this “out of plan” referral is an ongoing challenge, but nothing compared to the challenges that many of our brothers and sisters are facing both here and elsewhere. If you heard about this and prayed for me, I am very grateful.

At our recent Board Meeting there was some discussion about how the grave economic turmoil might affect us and our ability to keep serving so many throughout the world. We know that many are hurting but believe that the Lord will continue to provide what He wishes for the service of His people. We count on you standing firm in your commitment to Renewal Ministries during this difficult time, as the Lord enables you.

If some of you are able to do more than normal that would be a great blessing as we know there are some who may not be able to continue at their previous level of giving.

May you discover the closeness of the Lord and His profound commitment to be “with you” this Christmas season.

Your brother in Christ,

Ralph Martin

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Board members: Fr. Dave Pivonka, Tim Patton, Dcn. Dan Foley, Bob Van Norden, Joe Brennen, Bishop Sam Jacobs, Ralph Martin, Tom O’Brien, (seated in front) Laurie Manhardt and Ellen Holian. (Not pictured: Nancy Timmis)
Advent, A Time to Watch and Be Ready!

Advent is typically such a busy time—Christmas parties, cooking, buying gifts. Yet it is a time of new beginning; the new liturgical year begins with the 1st Sunday of Advent. It is a time to examine and prepare. If the Lord were to return today, would we be ready? Hardly any of us could give a resounding yes. We need to make time for a personal assessment.

How alert am I to the Lord’s presence in my life? Am I vigilant in guarding the entrances to my mind and heart or are they clogged by worry, anger, unforgiveness, bitterness, jealousy, lust and greed? Jesus tells us in Mk 13:33–37 that we are to be watchful so that He has genuine access to our minds and our hearts.

I remember one time when I was a child, my dad asked me to go to the corner of the next block from his gas station and watch for the tanker that would be coming to deliver gasoline. “Let me know,” he said, “when he comes around the corner so I can make sure he has easy access on our property.” I went and sat on a grassy bank to wait. Someone asked me to play; someone asked me a question about homework. People who knew my family honked as they drove by, but somehow I knew in my young mind that if I were distracted I might miss being able to give my dad a quick warning. I was vigilant.

I wish I could be as vigilant today about those things that matter for eternity. Jesus asks us to be ready for His coming at our death and at the end of the world, but also for His daily coming in our lives. We are so easily distracted and overwhelmed by difficulty that we forget to turn to the source of all love and wisdom for what we need. If Jesus asks us to be watchful and ready then we need to believe that He also gives us all the grace we need to do that.

In Hebrews 12:25–29, God asks us to listen attentively to His voice, but many other voices, including our own, tend to drown it out. God says that He will once more shake the heavens and the earth in order that what is unshakable may remain. Look at your values and priorities. Are you clinging with all your energy to those things which could collapse? Are you attached to people who may be leading you away from the Lord? Are you committed to projects or plans that consume your time and energy but don’t contribute to the building of God’s kingdom?

When God allows things to be shaken, it’s His mercy at work to wake us up and enable us to see what we are really doing with our lives. Through the political conflicts, the weak spiritual state of our nation, the financial markets, our own financial status, and the weakness in the Church, God is allowing things to be shaken so that we can see what is really of value in this life and for eternity. We don’t like to be shaken and so the first thing we do is try to grasp something more substantial until it stops. We must fix our gaze on the Lord and take His hand through the Eucharist and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Don’t reach for money, possessions, not even, first, for other people. Grab hold of Jesus and gaze upon Him and there you will find peace. Then, do what He tells you!

I just read an inspiring account of a happily married woman in California who heard about Africans dying for lack of clean water. She began asking married women in her country if they would be willing (with the consent of their husbands), to sell their wedding rings to raise money to build wells.

So far, fifty women have responded and two large wells have been constructed. With the markets so volatile it would be easy to say, “I can’t afford to help anyone right now,” and we do need to be fiscally responsible. But giving up a valued possession so that others may have life is really living by kingdom principles. Such people are letting their lives be shaken and clinging to what truly endures forever.

In this Advent season take at least five minutes a day and assess the areas of your life that impede your vigilance, and leave you unable to see the Lord’s activity in your life. Also, think about how the voice of God gets drowned out in your life. Let the Advent readings for the Liturgy be your guide.

Pope Benedict in his speech to the October Synod on the Word of God said, “The Word of God is the foundation of everything, it is the true reality…We must change our notion that matter, solid things, things we can touch, is the most solid, the most certain reality…He who builds on sand only builds on visible and tangible things, on success, on career, on money. But all this one day will vanish. We can see this now with the fall of two large banks: this money disappears, it is nothing…Only the Word of God is the foundation of all reality…”

Let’s not waste this Advent grace. May we build on rock so that the inevitable shaking will not destroy us but mature us and enable us to bear with inexpressible joy, “the weight of glory” in the kingdom to come.
Saturday, July 26: We left for our first trip to Zimbabwe with some trepidation because of all the negative news about the country. The Zimbabwe currency is practically worthless. Inflation was estimated to be over 11,250,000%, with the prices doubling every 22 days. While we were there they knocked ten digits from their currency. A billion dollar bill was then worth ten cents. The government froze all bank accounts so there wouldn’t be a run on the money. The amount a person can withdraw can’t even pay bus fare to town! People cross over into Zambia, South Africa, and Mozambique to purchase rice, beans, and other staples, and bring them back to sell by the roadside. There is a thriving black market for those with foreign currency and a large barter system is growing. Zimbabwe has been in the news lately because of irregularities in voting. Robert Mugabe has been in power for years. After he lost the election he called for a recount of all the votes and then a runoff election. His supporters then began beating and killing (reportedly over 100) of the supporters of the opposition party. The man who had originally won the election withdrew to end the violence.

Monday, July 28: We were picked up at the airport by our host, Lovemore Wood (his real name), who is rich by African standards. We ate a wonderful meal and talked of the problems in the country. Lovemore, a tireless worker for the Lord, said that many people only have enough for one meal a day. For some teachers the bus fare is more than a day’s salary, so they don’t bother to go to work. Thousands are fleeing to neighboring African countries.

Tuesday, July 29: We waited at Lovemore’s house with Fr. Arnold for about two hours while he went to get black market diesel fuel for the small SUV. We were told it was a four hour trip to Father’s parish. The fumes from the gas tanks in the back were strong and we never drove over 40 km per hour. The four hour trip turned into seven. We saw a sack of potatoes on the side of the road being sold for 1.4 trillion dollars or 40 US dollars! Fr. Arnold had the flu and was exhausted. We later found out that he and two seminarians were dragged from his car and beaten with clubs by supporters of Mugabe. One of the seminarians was still in the hospital with swelling of the brain. When we arrived at his parish in the hills of Harere after dark, the only lights were from our car. The seminarians and staff greeted us warmly, but at more than 4500 ft in altitude it was very cold for us. At the convent we celebrated a very intimate candlelit Mass with only five sisters and a postulate. We shared a nice warm meal of beans, rice, fried chicken bones (no meat on them!), pasta and greens. No one served themselves until our plates were full. After the meal, as soon as we could, we jumped into bed to get warm; there was no heat.

Wednesday, July 30: We awoke to see we were in the middle of nowhere, in a very continued on page 4

A billion dollar bill is worth only ten cents in Zimbabwe currency.

The economy is so bad that most people cannot even afford the bus fare to town!

During the dry season water is difficult to find and people have very little food, yet their faith and determination is amazing.
small town. The church was the largest building and the convent, hospital, and a few buildings were all we could see. I hadn’t slept well and didn’t go to breakfast so Lloyd brought me a small bowl of canned beans. There was no bread, no eggs. Our teaching sessions didn’t begin until evening, so this was our day of rest. Fr. Arnold showed Lloyd his orange orchards, which are not producing well because he can’t afford fertilizers. Fr. told us, “not too many people come to church because the baboons know that on Sunday the farmers leave and they come in large packs to hunt and raid the crops. The people have to stay home to guard the crops.”

Tonight there was no electricity and the stars were so amazing that we stopped in our tracks as we walked to church for Mass and gazed heavenward. When the participants arrived (leaders of the Charismatic Renewal), we could hardly see them in the dim light. It was difficult to preach with an interpreter into the darkness without seeing expressions. Afterwards, we ate a meal together in the dark and then at 10 pm the electricity went on.

**Thursday, July 31:** Today we met a seminarian named “Knowlege”. He had walked over 30 miles to get to the conference. We ate a breakfast of porridge and baked beans and I stared at two boiled eggs in a dish as there were seven of us at the table to eat. I insisted that Father eat the egg because he needed his strength after the flu, but he insisted that I eat it. There were very little paper products, no detergent, no grain, no oil, and sugar was hard to come by. The people here are so humble and amazing. We set up our portable sound system and sang two songs. I taught the Unbound method of prayer all day. At noon I asked for a bucket of hot water to be able to wash my hair and bathe. The showers didn’t work and it wouldn’t matter if they did, because it was way too cold. I used the hair dryer on this day of electricity. I went back to the church and we finished at dark, but electricity was now turned off. At dark the Mass began and everyone seemed more joyful after we had led them through the forgiveness prayer and renunciation. We had no electricity, but we did have the Light of Christ. The harmonies were spectacular, rich and full. After the Mass we again shared a meal and tonight we had electricity again!

**Friday, August 1:** We awoke to beautiful sunshine again. This is the dry season and there was no water anywhere that we could see. After breakfast we returned to the church to teach the rest of Unbound and the small crowd had grown. Sr. Anarite who runs the hospital said many people come to it because there are no medicines in the government run places. She gets her monthly paycheck of 11 or 12 trillion dollars and it isn’t enough to pay for a bus ticket to go to Harare to cash it!

**Saturday, August 2:** We were supposed to have electricity most of the day, but it cut out around 4 pm. Mass started after dark and we led a simple healing service with many reporting remarkable healings. The faith of the people is really growing!

**Sunday, August 3:** Mass started at 8 am and went until noon. Afterwards we said goodbye to St. Michael’s parishioners and packed. Most of the people that we had come to know and love wanted to travel back to Mutare with us, but the bus fare was too high. Some of them did manage to come. One man in a wheelchair was the finance manager for the church until about three months ago when a strange paralysis came upon him. I took him through the Unbound prayer, but he didn’t walk. However, his faith was really built up and he came to Mutare. Fr. Arnold said this was significant because this man had not been coming to church. We left for the three hour trip to
Monday, August 4: They had bread here! We were supposed to have a day of rest, but we went to see Bishop Alexio Muchabaiwa, a gracious man whose heart is for his people. He told us he was shocked and ashamed at the crimes from the runoff elections, some committed by his Catholics. He said the Gospel hadn’t penetrated their hearts and that the Church had obviously failed in making people Christian. He shook his head and said, “We need help. Please come back and make us Christian.”

Tuesday, August 5: Another miracle! In the 43 years we have been married, I had never seen Lloyd eat liver. He finally tried it and liked it. Hunger does strange things! We began a Life in the Spirit Seminar for the priests and religious. We had electricity in the morning so I washed, dried, and curled my hair just in time. They never know how long the power will be on. This afternoon we had confession, adoration, and Mass. The priests and sisters were very reserved. After a candlelight dinner, Lloyd spoke again. At each session the praise and worship got better. Someone brought drums and that sparked the dancing by these shy priests and nuns. By the end of the week, and after the baptism of the Holy Spirit, they were all dancing and singing.

Wednesday, August 6: We finished our teaching and in the afternoon we prayed over all the participants for the baptism in the Holy Spirit. All were eager for a fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit and they were not disappointed! Later, during the time for testimonies we heard of the many wonderful things God had done. One young priest, from a very troubled area, said it was the happiest day of his life. A nun told how she had been to multiple doctors for several years to help a heart problem and a chronic shortness of breath. She said she couldn’t move far or fast or she would pass out. She then jumped up and down and ran all around the room to show that God had indeed healed her! Two other older nuns with arthritis demonstrated their new-found mobility.

Thursday, August 7: It was two days before the Charismatic Conference began so we decided to teach the priests and nuns the Unbound model of deliverance. Everyone wanted prayer, so we made a schedule and prayed at every break, before and after meals, and late into the night. The freedom God gave them was often very dramatic and life-transforming.

Friday, August 8: After breakfast we prayed with the nuns and priests again. At 1:00 pm I came out of our prayer room for a lunch break only to be told we were all fasting today. I prayed until 5:00 pm and then we departed for the opening of the Catholic Charismatic Conference. It was held outside on the grounds of the church because of the huge number of the participants. The wind was blowing and it was very cold. The Mass started at dusk and there were no lights except battery powered lights on the altar. After dinner we walked in the moonlight to an empty building where they had set up a meal for us and the priests and sisters. Outside in the cold they cooked over an open fire for the 2500 participants; I’m sure their meal was much simpler than ours. When they finished feeding everyone, Lloyd spoke. At night people slept in the empty classrooms with the clothing 

With limited electricity, Mass was often celebrated under the stars with only a few battery powered lights on the altar.
Mission to Zimbabwe

and blankets they brought. Some of the people came from over 620 miles away. Most earn less than one dollar a month and the expense of travel was over five dollars! The faith and determination of these people is incredible.

Saturday, August 9: When we arrived early the next morning, a line for prayer had started so we had the privilege of praying most of the day. These people are living in circumstances more difficult than we can imagine and God is their only hope. A nun brought two hearing impaired people to Lloyd for prayer. God gave one a partial restoration of hearing and the other could hear perfectly! At the end of Mass Fr. John Baptist Bashobora, an internationally known priest from Mbarara, Uganda, was introduced. He has a great reputation for the gift of healing and words of knowledge. I was supposed to speak at 7:30 pm, but everything was running late so we didn’t eat supper until around 9:00 pm. We were sitting in the priest’s house visiting with Fr. Bashobora when they called me to speak. I went to get my laptop because I always give my talks from notes on it, and it was gone! Lloyd decided to speak instead of me, and to do a healing service. The young pastor of the church was devastated by the disappearance of the laptop. It was evident that everyone was feeling bad. Lloyd got up and said, “The devil can steal our laptop, but he can’t steal our joy!” When the healing service was almost over Lloyd asked the priests to come to the front to give the people a priestly blessing. The microphone was given to Fr. Bashobora. Later he told us he took this as a sign from the Lord to speak. He said to the crowd, “God the Father knows who you are. We love you and He loves you. You are really tall and dark, and are sitting in the audience right now. The Lord wants you to bring the laptop that you ‘borrowed’ back to us.” Then we sang another song and everyone went home.

Sunday, August 10: When we arrived at the retreat center people ran up to us and said, “Have you heard the good news?” When my laptop’s return was confirmed by the parish priest, the praise and worship team got me on the stage and we all thanked the Lord! It was a great time of glory for the Lord Jesus. This one miracle strengthened the faith of every Christian there, including mine. God really wants to do so much on our behalf if we only ask Him.

Earlier in the week I had prayed for a young nun whose uncle was a witch.

The 2500 participants were eager and hungry to hear God’s word. Some came from over 620 miles away and spent five months wages on bus transportation.

During the closing Mass four young women in their bathrobes were escorted to the front and they asked us to go up to pray for these women from the tuberculosis hospital.
doctor. He had threatened to kill her mother and had taken land from her father. The uncle told her mother that she would never live to see the celebration of her daughter’s profession of vows. The day before the celebration her mother was sitting in a room with a niece and two others. All four were struck and killed by lightning through the window of the house. This nun believed, as do many other people here, that witch doctors can control lightning. I prayed with her and she professed her faith in Jesus, but she still believed in the witch doctor’s power. I talked to the priests from this area and they also believe this. The bishop told me that this occurrence is quite common, but the reason is scientific. The witch doctors have knowledge of certain rocks that contain a type of metal that attracts lightning. Secretly at night, they place these rocks around the homes of those unfortunate people. The next time a storm comes up lightning is attracted to the houses. Satan always works in deception. That night, the healing service led by Fr. Bashobora started later than usual, and it began to rain. He said to the crowd, “We will ask the Lord to stop the rain.” When they brought out their umbrellas he told them put them away and to have faith. The rain stopped!

Monday, August 11: This was the last day of the conference. As we got out of our cars, people asked for prayers and immediately lines formed. We prayed until it was time for me to give a talk and I spoke on blocks to receiving more of God’s love. At 11:00 AM the outdoor Mass with Bishop Alexio began and lasted until about 3:00 PM. During the Mass four young women in their bathrobes were escorted to the front and during the homily, which was in their language of Shona, they asked us to go up to pray for these women who were from the tuberculosis hospital. At 4:00 PM I was still praying with people and we were supposed to be at another parish giving a talk. We left around 5:00 PM and went to St. Martin’s. Of course there was no electricity, so it was another beautiful Mass by candlelight, followed by a healing service and many people reported being touched and healed.

Tuesday, August 12: After Mass we packed the small car to travel three hours back to Hatare. As we entered the city we saw what was once called the Jewel of Africa. Now, most shops have very little to sell and most people walk, unable to even afford the bus. This night we stayed in a beautiful house with a widow and her children, who are refugees from Eritrea. She told us that last year over 1000 people a day died of AIDS/HIV. We are not sure of that number, but it is a scourge of biblical proportions.

Wednesday, August 13: We had a small meeting planned with Archbishop Robert Ndlovu, and the few minutes he had given us stretched to more than a half hour. We were very impressed with his honesty and humility. He talked of his duties and told us that many of the Catholics he knows are starving. They do not even have bread. When he goes to visit some of the villages they insist on giving him food. He wants to refuse because he knows they need it, but it would be an insult. So he brings it back and gives it to the poor in Harare. He said he had already talked to Bishop Alexio about inviting us back to hold priests’ retreats to teach Unbound, and a national program of reconciliation. He and the other bishops published a document condemning the corruption and violence of the recent election. The government retaliated by beating up a number of priests and nuns. As we started the journey home, our faith was built up by this good man. Bringing hope to our brave shepherds makes all our hardships worthwhile. Despite the heavy influence of witchcraft and the political unrest, the country is ripe for revival and God moved powerfully in signs and wonders.
On the Road

Be attentive to the voice of grace.

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

December 2008

Toronto, Ontario
December 8
Renewal Ministries Canadian Board Meeting
Ralph Martin, Peter Herbeck, Sr. Ann Shields, Gary Seromik

Ann Arbor, MI, St. Catherine of Siena House,
Evening of Reflection on St. Catherine
December 9
Ralph Martin

January 2009

Milwaukee, WI, Men of Christ Conference
January 10
Peter Herbeck
Contact Kevin O’Brien at:
Kevin@menofchrist.net

Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux, LA, School of
Evangelization 2
January 15–18
Peter Herbeck, Lloyd and Nancy Greenhaw
Contact: Dcn. Doug at doug@houma.com

Lafayette, LA, Women’s Retreat
January 16–18
Sr. Ann Shields
Contact: 504-828-1368 or www.ccrno.org

February 2009

Orange Park, FL, St. Augustine Diocese Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference
February 6–8
Peter and Debra Herbeck
Contact Mike or Linda Cavallo: 904-683-7517

Lake Ridge, VA
Diocese of Arlington Morning of Prayer
February 7
Ralph Martin
Contact: www.seas1.org

Garden, MI
Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference
February 13–15
St. Ann Shields
Contact John Hogan at:
jhogan123@centurytel.net or 906-283-3212

Newark, NJ, University Students Retreat
February 20–22
Ralph Martin
Contact: tlawmaster@gmail.com

Manchester, New Hampshire
Evangelization Conference
February 27–28
Peter Herbeck
Contact Christopher Paul at
crpaul@comcast.net

Please Pray...

+ for our brothers and sisters in Zimbabwe as they face extreme poverty and political unrest. May the Lord protect and strengthen them by His grace.

+ that many would encounter the Lord in a deeper and more personal way during this Advent and Christmas season.

+ for the prayer 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.

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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