Dear Friends,

As many of you know, Ralph has been in Washington, DC since early January, at the request of Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit, finishing up an STL (Licentiate in Sacred Theology) degree. This involves taking three courses and writing a long thesis of about 150 pages in length, and also preparing ten different theological topics for possible public presentation before a panel of experts. In May Ralph will be given 48 hours notice about which of these topics he will present on, so he has to be prepared on all of them. He knows this is God’s will for him at this time but finds it pretty intense and challenging. There’s not much time for socializing! He believes it will help him in both his work for Renewal Ministries and at the seminary and is excited about his thesis topic on salvation. Anne and Ralph have managed to see each other occasionally, and talk frequently on the phone. Anne is very much supporting him in this time away, and encouraged him to say “yes” to this opportunity. Please “throw” a few prayers his way!

Here at home (Ann Arbor), Debbie Herbeck and Craig Pohl have been busy completing the process of preparing the new season of *The Choices We Face* which began to air the first week in March. I think you will be inspired and informed on many of the issues facing us today.

Peter Herbeck and I continue to record our weekly radio programs that seem to attract a growing audience. *Food for the Journey* is now heard on 65 Catholic stations in the US as well as stations in Canada and the Philippines. Peter’s program, *Fire on the Earth*, has not been in existence as long as mine but is now broadcast on 35 stations in the US. A large number of people

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Inside this Issue

The Gift that Keeps on Giving
Page 3

Jesus Makes All the Difference in the World
Page 4

Renewal Ministries’ Gathering—Coming Up!
Page 6

New Resources for Catholic Scripture Study
Page 7

Sr. Ann Shields joined Patti Mansfield (in yellow sweater) at a conference for more than 400 women in Lafayette, Louisiana. One of the highlights was the number of young women, excited about their faith, who attended the event.

continued on pg 2
Dear Friends,

At the Lafayette conference, hosted by the Catholic Charismatic Renewal of New Orleans, women had the opportunity to receive prayer for the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Afterwards, they extended their hands and prayed for God’s anointing on the rest of the women at the retreat.

download the program from our website as well and listen through the computer or download them directly to iPods. I’m enduring a learning curve as I attempt to grasp all this new technology so I can speak with some authority about options available to our listeners. In many ways it has been fun, though at this point I have only scratched the surface.

These email comments give you a sense of how powerful Catholic radio can be in reaching the hearts and minds of people.

“I just wanted to let you know that I love your show. In fact it’s become one of the anchors of my prayer life.”

“Along with Peter Herbeck’s program Fire on the Earth, your radio outreach fulfills its title as Food for the Journey. It has been an absolute pleasure to listen and/or watch programs through Renewal Ministries and a true lamp unto my feet. I am writing you today because I feel a grateful need to say thank you for the sole treasure you found in Christ. There is genuine passion for your love for Christ in your voice which offers me great peace. When I hear that passion in you (or Peter Herbeck or Ralph Martin) that new bell inside my heart begins to clang.”

“You are ‘gifted’ with the finest program in the media. I literally crawl out of bed early each morning to listen and learn from you and the Holy Spirit. (I am disabled with ultra-painful cord damage so I do not offer such a compliment lightly).”

Thank you for all the help and prayer you give us to make the radio and television ministry possible.

On the mission front, in March and April, we are sending mission teams to China, Ireland, and the Czech Republic. There will also be quite a few other mission trips during the summer months of 2009. If you are interested in hearing about them or considering joining a mission team this summer, please contact Jessica Sherwood at 734-662-1730 ext 32, jsherwood@renewalministries.net or just check out the Events Schedule and International Missions sections on our website at www.renewalministries.net.

As you read this issue of our newsletter, Easter will be just a couple of weeks away. There is a Gospel proclaimed during Easter week that I think we could do well to meditate on during the last two weeks of Lent. Read Luke 24:13–35.

Here are two followers of Jesus leaving Jerusalem to return home to what is familiar because they saw Jesus die on the cross. The One in whom they had put their hope is DEAD! All the hopes that had sprung up in their hearts as they followed Jesus had just been destroyed. And so they are doing what we often do when our “world” collapses—we go back to what is familiar, even if it’s not good, to seek the comfort of what we can understand. It is all
over for them; their dreams, aspirations, and hopes have all disappeared.

How many times have we found ourselves in such a predicament? Who or whatever we gave ourselves to has failed us. We just want to dig a hole and hide. So did these disciples. They left their friends, their companions with whom, perhaps, they had shared many dreams, inspired by Jesus’ words. They were leaving, “getting out of Dodge” as we would say…but notice something. They “left” Jesus and His friends but JESUS DID NOT LEAVE THEM! He followed them and engaged them in conversation. Read those verses again. Look at Jesus’ mercy and patience.

Then, after He has explained the Scriptures to them, He appears to be getting ready to leave them and they beg Him to stay. Although they don’t grasp everything yet, Jesus’ explanation reignites that fire of love in them. THEY INVITE HIM TO STAY. And we too, brothers and sisters, in the midst of our anxiety about relationships, the economic conditions, job layoffs, lost savings, the uncertainty about the future, need to beg Him to stay. We need to read God’s word and believe and ask Him to increase our faith. He will never leave us, but will meet us where we are and show us the way through.

When Jesus accepts their invitation to stay, He reveals himself to them in the breaking of the bread. Suddenly, they SEE. He is not dead; He is alive! And so He is for you. He will not abandon you!

Be nourished on His Word. Receive the Eucharist as often as you can. Stay very close to others who can strengthen your faith. Don’t hide away and worry yourself “to death.” He is Risen! He is with us! He will shepherd us from darkness into light! Do not be afraid!

From all of us here at Renewal Ministries we wish you an Easter Season of joy and hope in the Risen Lord who will not fail those who put their trust in Him.

THE GIFT THAT GIVES BACK THROUGHOUT THE YEARS…

The charitable gift annuity is a unique gift arrangement that can help both you and Renewal Ministries. This type of annuity provides our donors with fixed payments throughout the years, thereby helping them to find a measure of certainty in these uncertain economic times, while supporting Renewal Ministries at the same time.

Two of our longtime donors, John, age 77, and his wife, Jane, age 76 (the names have been changed to protect the donors’ privacy, but the facts remain the same), funded a $100,000 charitable gift annuity for the benefit of Renewal Ministries that guaranteed a rate of 6.7%, or $6,700 annually for both of their lives. John and Jane were pleased to learn that $4,475.60 of their annual annuity income would not be subject to federal income tax. They were also happy to know that they would enjoy the benefit of a $31,535 charitable tax deduction for this donation. Because of these tax benefits, John and Jane realized that their effective rate of return was significantly greater than 6.7%!

Most importantly, John and Jane were thrilled that Renewal Ministries was able to immediately use $28,779.80 of their gift to complete several evangelistic projects that they personally had supported over the years. As John and Jane observed, “This program is a ‘Give and Gain’ situation for everyone!”

For more information on how you can create a “Give and Gain” situation through a charitable gift annuity, contact Gary Seromik at Renewal Ministries, P.O. Box 1426, Ann Arbor, MI 48106, Tel: 734.662.1730 ext 21, Fax: 734.662.4697, E-mail: gseromik@renewalministries.net.
Jesus Makes All the Difference in the World

“So what does Jesus give us that the other ‘messiahs’ in history don’t?” This question was posed to me during a break time at a conference I spoke at recently. The man who asked the question was a medical doctor and a fervent Catholic who said he is “regularly interrogated by colleagues who were once Catholic but who no longer believe.”

I was surprised by his question. I assumed what made Jesus unique, what sets him apart, was clear to every believer. He said his colleagues don’t see any significant difference between Jesus and many of the other “messiah” figures in history. For many, the modern perspective is that each “messiah” figure, in his own way, was basically telling us the same thing—believe in God and live the Golden Rule. Isn’t that what Jesus said?

Yes, Jesus did say that. But that doesn’t tell us what is most unique about Jesus. Unlike the other messiah figures, the important thing about Jesus is not only what he said, but who he was. In fact, who he was is the heart of the matter. Jesus is the only Son of God. He is divine, the second person of the Trinity. Jesus didn’t come simply to give us wisdom on how to be good, or how to live right, like a great philosopher or spiritual guru. Jesus came to give us something that no great spiritual leader could ever give. Jesus gave us the one thing that we most need and that he alone could give.

Jesus put it this way: “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). Jesus came to give us life. The apostles made this fact the center of their testimony to Jesus. In the prologue to his Gospel John tells us, “In him was life, and the light was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (John 1:4). Those are four of the most important and profound words in the entire Bible: “in him was life.” Jesus is different from any other religious teacher or leader because he possesses within himself what every human being most needs. We don’t just need wisdom, or greater moral clarity, we need to be changed, to be given a life that will never end.

That is precisely what the apostles received from Jesus and what they proclaimed above all else:

“And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who has not the Son of God has not life” (1 John 5:11).

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us…” (1 John 1:1–2)

John is telling us what he saw, what he knows to be true about Jesus. In him, the most astounding wonder, a reality beyond our wildest imagining has taken place. Eternal life, the divine life has appeared, here on earth, in a person. A life that “no eye has seen” was made manifest in space and time, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. St. Peter said, “We were eye witnesses to his majesty” (1 Pt 1:16). The apostles all tell us of what they saw and
touched. That is, they were the first to see the power of the life that was in Jesus, a power that was stronger than death itself.

Eye witnesses to his resurrection, they saw firsthand, that it was “not possible for him to be held by it (death)” (Acts 2:24). The life that was—and is—in Jesus is the only power this world has ever seen that is stronger than the power of death. And it is precisely that life and the power to transmit that life which sets Jesus apart. No one else can impart what human beings need to live beyond death. No teaching, philosophy, spiritual insight or religious system can make eternal life come to be.

This eternal life flows from Jesus like a fountain. He is the wellspring of eternal life. He said as much, “The water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:14). Again, “My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they know me; and I give them eternal life and they shall never perish” (John 10:28).

“They shall never perish.” Only Jesus can make this claim. To perish means to age, decay, and die. Philosophers describe human life as “being toward death,” with death having the last word. All the wisdom, money, and power of this world cannot stop or reverse this inevitable process of our being toward death. We cannot escape it on our own power. Jesus destroyed this process in his human flesh when he passed from death to life. We proclaim this fact often at Mass: “Dying he destroyed our death, rising he restored our life…” And with that proclamation we simply echo the words of the apostles:

“No great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven for you…” (1 Pt 1:3–4)

Peter is rejoicing in the reality of his own, and our own participation in Jesus’ existence beyond death. The imperishable, undefiled and unfading existence born in the resurrected humanity of Jesus has become our own. That is what it means to be saved. The only way to be saved, to live forever, is to be united to that life which will never die. It is, in Peter’s words, “to become partakers in the divine nature” (2 Pt 1:4). There is no other life beyond death; there is only separation from that life, which we call Hell. Jesus himself said, “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him” (John 3:36).

For those who are baptized, who live by faith, and who seek by God’s grace to obey the Son, need not live in the fear of death or hell. The knowledge of what Jesus has not only taught us, but what he has done for us, fills our hearts. We know that it is “from his fullness that we have all received grace upon grace” (John 1:16).

That is what makes Jesus different than all the other ‘messiahs’ or spiritual teachers that have emerged throughout history. No other person can truthfully say to you and me, “Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one; I died and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and Hades…” (Rev 1:17–18) Jesus didn’t come just to teach us how to live well, how to be good, how to find happiness here on earth, or how to prolong our lives. He came to conquer the power of death and bestow upon all who believe in Him, the gift of eternal life.

By Peter Herbeck, Director of Missions

“In him, the most astounding wonder, a reality beyond our wildest imagining has taken place. Eternal life, the divine life has appeared, here on earth, in a person.”

“Jesus didn’t come just to teach us how to live well, how to be good, how to find happiness here on earth, or how to prolong our lives. He came to conquer the power of death and bestow upon all who believe in Him, the gift of eternal life.”

The theme of the Jacksonville conference was “Be Strong, Take Heart”, from Joshua 1:9. Debbie Herbeck gave a reflection on the Israelites’ journey to the Promised Land, and spoke about the obstacles we face in knowing true freedom in Christ.

By Peter Herbeck, Director of Missions
**Please Pray...**

- for the *Lift Jesus Higher Rally* in Toronto this month; that God’s word would be proclaimed with clarity and power and many would come to know the personal love of Jesus Christ.

- for safety and protection as we travel to Mexico City with students from Fr. Gabriel Richard High School in Michigan to serve the poor in the garbage dumps there.

- that our upcoming missions to Czech Republic and Vietnam would be filled with the presence and power of God.

- for the prayer intentions of all our supporters and their family members, especially as they face the challenges of illness and economic uncertainty.

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

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**You’re Invited to the Annual Renewal Ministries Gathering!**

*Pentecost Weekend: Friday May 29th, 2009 through Sunday, May 31st*

St. John’s Retreat Center in Plymouth, Michigan

*Our theme* this year is taken from the words of Jesus, “I am with you always.” Join us for a weekend of encouragement, strengthening, and equipping as we learn how to face these difficult times in the power and wisdom of the Holy Spirit.

**Special Highlights include:**

- Friday night guest speaker Bishop Robert Carlson, from the Diocese of Saginaw, Michigan.

- Saturday evening Pentecost Vigil Mass and prayer meeting at Christ the King Parish in Ann Arbor.

- Small group time for personal sharing and personal prayer ministry.

For more information contact Jessica Sherwood at 734-662-1730 ext 32 or jsherwood@renewalministries.net.
As someone involved in evangelization and pastoral ministry for many years, Dr. Peter Williamson knows how hard it is for Catholics to keep the faith much less live it fervently in today’s world. Dr. Williamson observes that “the same was true in St. Paul’s time when he wrote to the Christians in Rome: ‘Do not be conformed to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your minds that you may discern the will of God.’” He says, “In my experience, there is no better way to renew one’s mind and help others do the same than by studying God’s word in Scripture.”

This past fall, co-editors Peter Williamson and Mary Healy, both professors of Sacred Scripture at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit, Michigan, launched The Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture. This 17-volume New Testament series responds to the desire among Catholics to do in-depth bible study in a way that integrates Scripture with Catholic doctrine, worship, and daily life. The studies are helpful tools for preaching, catechesis, evangelization, and other forms of pastoral ministry, and they also offer ordinary Catholics a scriptural resource that will enhance their understanding of God’s word and deepen their faith.

Now available are The Gospel of Mark by Mary Healy, which coincides with the Sunday Gospel readings in 2009, Year B, and First and Second Timothy, Titus, by Fr. George Montague, helping readers focus on the writings of St. Paul. The studies are written in a conversational style, provide interesting background information, and address the questions that perplex readers most.

Future volumes will include studies by well known Catholic scholars such as Scott Hahn, Curtis Mitch, Fr. Francis Martin, Timothy Gray and others. The aim of The Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture (CCSS) is to integrate the insights of modern scholarship and the living tradition of the Church—the great heritage of the Church fathers, saints, and scholars—who prayed and reflected on God’s word and experienced its power over the last two millennium.

Each commentary features:
- The text of the New American Bible, the translation approved for liturgical use in the US.
- A set of references that links each passage to related Scriptures, Catechism sections, and
- Lectionary uses of the text.
- An exegesis section that explains each unit of the text.
- Sections on Reflection and Application.
- Biblical Background sidebars providing historical and cultural information.
- Living Tradition sidebars with material from Church documents and the writings of saints and Church Fathers.

At a time when the Catholic Church is rediscovering the scriptures as having a central place in her life and mission, The Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture (CCSS) provides outstanding biblical scholarship that is affordable, readable, spiritually nourishing, and focused on the needs of living as a Christian in today’s world.

For more information about CCSS go to www.CatholicCommentaryOnSacredScripture.com. We are happy to offer this new series in this month’s Reply Card. Please go to www.renewalministries.net and click on “Bookstore” to view the other fine Scripture study materials we already make available.
Even though Ralph is hard at work at his studies and has cut down his travel schedule for these four months, there are weeks when a lot goes on besides studies. Here Ralph met in Washington with the Executive Council of “Youth Arise,” a group of leaders working with youth in many different countries. In the same week he addressed the Franciscan TOR Friars who are seminarians and studying in Washington, led by Fr. Dave Pivonka, TOR, a board member for Renewal Ministries. Ralph also spoke at a parish in nearby Virginia.

A man can bear all things provided he possesses Christ Jesus dwelling within him as his friend and affectionate guide.

St. Teresa of Avila

On the Road

April 2009

Lincoln, NE, Men’s Conference
April 4
Peter Herbeck
Contact Matthew Hecker at: mhecker2@unl.edu

Mission to Mexico City with High School Students
April 13–18
Jim Murphy, Debbie Herbeck

Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Lift Jesus Higher Rally
April 18
Sr. Ann Shields, Peter Herbeck, Tim Staples, Debbie Herbeck, Craig Pohl
Contact: www.lift-jesus-higher-rally.org or call 416-251-4255 or 905-270-2510

Mission to Czech Republic
April 29–May 16
Tom Edwards & Team

May 2009

Long Island, NY, Day of Renewal
May 9
Sr. Ann Shields
Contact John Palmer at 516-678-5800 ext 408 or jpalmer@drvc.org

Mission to Vietnam
May 17–27
Don Turbitt & Team (men only)
Contact Jessica at 734-662-1730 ext 32 or jsherwood@renewalministries.net

Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference
May 22–24
Ralph Martin
Contact: www.catholicrenewalservices.com or 204-895-7544

Plymouth, MI, Renewal Ministries Gathering
May 29–31
Contact Jessica at 734-662-1730 ext 32 or jsherwood@renewalministries.net

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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