Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Happy Pentecost! This month I want to continue sharing with you the importance of being baptized in the Holy Spirit, which is how Jesus described the reality of what was to happen at Pentecost. If you missed part one in last month’s issue you can read the online version of it in the May newsletter (www.renewalministries.net). The whole teaching on being baptized in the Holy Spirit is also available on both CD and DVD; see the reply card enclosed with this newsletter. I also want to draw your attention to the ongoing reality of Pentecost which unfolds in so many ways in the world today, including in the work of Renewal Ministries. Read about Deacon Zoltán Kunszabó’s inspiring mission to Serbia in this issue of the newsletter! It’s only because Zoltán, a young married Catholic deacon from Hungary, father of five, and one of our country coordinators, has been baptized in the Spirit that he is able to minister in the power of the Holy Spirit.

So what does the experience of Pentecost and being baptized in the Holy Spirit mean?

“A crowd gathered and they were all astounded and bewildered and they said to one another, ‘what does this mean?”’ (Acts 2:12)

Peter stands up and explains it all. He tells the crowd that this is what Moses prophesized, what the Psalms spoke about, what the prophets talked about, what Joel and David prophesized. This is! This is the fulfillment of the Father’s plan—the outpouring of the Holy Spirit because his Son Jesus is truly the Messiah, sitting at the right hand of God. Peter quotes all the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit is doing what Jesus said he would do—he is reminding people of what this is all about by recalling the words of Jesus.

People want to know how to respond; “What are we to do, my brothers?” And Peter says to them, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you, too, will receive this gift of the Holy Spirit. For this promise is made to you and your children and to all who are far off whom the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:38–39). Immediately Peter tells them that it’s not just for them or for their children, it’s for EVERYONE whom the Lord is calling to himself.

It’s important to note that this isn’t just a unique experience to get the Church off the ground. This isn’t just for the special leadership group that the Lord gathers together. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Peter makes a very strong proclamation that being baptized in the Holy Spirit is for everybody.

As we continue on in the book of Acts, we see that this is an important pastoral strategy of the apostles.

continued on pg 2
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

They are serious about seeing that everybody they minister to is baptized in the Holy Spirit. They are concerned that every new group of converts comes into the same experience that they had on the day of Pentecost, of being baptized in the Holy Spirit, clothed with power from on high, receiving the promise of the Father.

What were the conditions that allow the disciples in the Upper Room to be baptized in the Holy Spirit? First of all, they are taught about it. They know the truth about it even though they do not fully understand it. They believe the Word of God, they obey the Word of God to stay in the city, and they pray for the fulfillment of the Word of God. These are the same conditions that are available today. How can people get baptized in the Holy Spirit? They need to be taught about it. They need to believe it. They need to do what the Lord asks them to do—repent and believe. They need to pray for the fulfillment of it. The baptism in the Spirit is not an esoteric mystery for only some people, it is for everybody.

“When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 8:14–15).

Because they are baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus these Samaritans receive something of the Holy Spirit, but not enough. The apostles can tell that something is missing. Haven’t you had that experience? You’re talking to someone and they’re a Christian, but something is missing? Recently I was teaching about the importance of being baptized in the Spirit and a conservative Catholic (of whom I am one myself!) said, “Are you trying to tell me that I’m missing something in my Christian life?” And an Irish priest interjected with boldness beyond what I was anticipating; “You’re right that I’m trying to tell you that.” It’s true, there’s more and we shouldn’t be shy or embarrassed about saying so! The apostles, the Scriptures, and the Holy Spirit want people to know what’s available to them and they want us to tell them.

“They then laid hands on them and received the Holy Spirit. When Simon the magician saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money and said, “Give me also this power so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit”’ (Acts 2:18–19). Unfortunately, there are not a lot of magicians following bishops around these days saying, “How much would it cost for me to be able to do that myself!” The Lord wants to do more. It’s not just about being baptized and confirmed in a rote way or getting a little bit of the Holy Spirit. To be baptized in the Holy Spirit is what it means to be a Christian.

Acts 10 is the story of Cornelius, a God-fearing Roman and his household. Peter is praying and the Lord tells him to go to the Gentiles. Peter says, “That’s against my religion, Lord.” The Lord essentially tells Peter that he is going to expand his notion of religion; that he wants more people to be included in salvation, so “go do what I tell you.” So Peter obeys. “While Peter was speaking to Cornelius and his household telling them about Jesus, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the word. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles…” (How do they know the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Gentiles?) …for they heard them speaking...
in tongues and praising God (Acts 10:44-46). There is an indication that something has been released in them that allows them to praise and worship God and manifest some charismatic gifts of the Spirit. “Then Peter said, ‘Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit even as we have.’”

There is a temptation to build a little shrine around Pentecost and talk about it as a special moment when the Church first began. But Peter is able to tell us NO, don’t do that! This is a permanent reality that the Lord wants to give each new group of Christians. This is something that Jesus wants to do for everyone. In Acts 11 Peter gets into trouble for baptizing Cornelius’ household. People think the cart went before the horse—that you are supposed to get baptized first then receive the Holy Spirit. Peter defends himself saying, “As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. Then I remembered what the Lord had said: ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ So if God gave them the same gift as he gave us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could oppose God? When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, ‘So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life too’” (Acts 11:15–18).

Acts 15 chronicles the debate about if the Gentiles must follow Mosaic Law. Peter gets up and says to the Apostles, “Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. God, who knows the heart bore witness by granting them the Holy Spirit, just as he did us” (Acts 15:7–9). There’s a definite identification of this subsequent experience of the Spirit as being the same as what happened to the apostles. Luke is purposely showing us that it’s really important that each new group of Christian converts be brought into this experience of the Holy Spirit.

When we are baptized in the Holy Spirit we say, “This is it—this is what it is all about!” The Holy Spirit is poured out, the love of God is poured out in our hearts, and we want to tell people about Jesus. Being baptized in the Holy Spirit is so important because we can’t become witnesses unless we really experience his love. I’m convinced that being baptized in the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential and important for the world and the Church. The Lord wants us to not be embarrassed or ashamed about it, but we should tell anybody we possibly can about it.

All of us are invited to renew our baptism and confirmation and ask God for more of the Holy Spirit.

Your brother in Christ,

Ralph Martin

P.S. As I write this Renewal Ministries’ income is down about 20% from what we had budgeted. We have been able to cut our expenses in anticipation of the economic difficulties about the same amount by eliminating paid TV airtime that we no longer feel is a priority given all the airtime we are getting in other ways. We want to do everything we can do to continue to support the work of Zoltán and our other country coordinators and all the people they are serving in so many countries. We are deeply grateful for those who have been able to continue their giving even though we know it is difficult for many. We are also grateful for those who are able to step up and perhaps give more than customary to help make up for those who can no longer give. Our help is in the name of the Lord. Who made heaven and earth.

Please Pray…

+ for all the Renewal Ministries’ missions throughout the world this summer. May the truth of the Gospel message take root in people’s hearts and bring about deep conversion and healing.

+ for the Renewal Ministries’ School of Evangelization in Minnesota this month. May it be a time of equipping and empowerment for all who attend.

+ that the Lord will continue to provide the opportunities and the financial resources for the ongoing mission work of Renewal Ministries throughout the world.

+ 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.
The flame of faith is in danger of dying out in many areas of the world because vast numbers of people have stopped seeking, thirsting after, crying out for, welcoming, and obeying the Spirit.

Catholics across the country and throughout much of the Western world live like unbelievers and by most social indicators, are nearly indistinguishable from their non-believing neighbors.

Victory in the Spirit

The gift of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is a vital dimension of life in Christ; an experience and reality we simply cannot live without, yet far too many people who have been baptized seem to have no concrete or experiential connection to the Spirit. Recently, Pope Benedict XVI spoke in dramatic and sobering terms about the state of the Church: “in vast areas of the world the faith is in danger of dying out like a flame which no longer has fuel…”

It is impossible for the flame of faith to die out because the “oil” of the Spirit cannot run out! The life of the Spirit, which is the power source of the Christian life, flows from the person of Jesus. As Lord, he reigns with all power and authority. He is an eternal wellspring of dynamic power and life and His Spirit has an infinite capacity for regeneration.

The flame of faith is in danger of dying out in many areas of the world because vast numbers of people have stopped seeking, thirsting after, crying out for, welcoming, and obeying the Spirit. Instead, many have failed to heed St. Paul’s warning: “Walk by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would” (Gal. 5:16–17).

The Church is weak because many of the baptized want to yield to the desires of the flesh more than the desires of the Spirit. By the “flesh” Paul is not simply referring to sexual sin, but to the drive within each one of us that is unredeemed, that seeks self-preservation and self-glorification above all else. The flesh is an inordinate desire for the world and those things that are set against the Lord and the Spirit.

St. John warns: “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him” (1 Jn 2:15). If we put the life of the flesh first, soon our life in the Spirit will be extinguished. The flame of love for God and our desire and capacity to live a life that pleases the Lord will go out. By yielding to the flesh our life as disciples is emptied of all dynamism and power. St. Paul so aptly said that we are “holding the form of religion but denying the power of it” (2 Tim 3:5). A powerless religion is exactly what vast numbers of people have embraced in their lives. Catholics across the country and throughout much of the Western world live like unbelievers and by most social indica-

tors, are nearly indistinguishable from their non-believing neighbors. We fornicate, commit adultery, cheat, steal, abort, are trapped in addictions to drugs and pornography, and divorce at the same rate as those who don’t know the Lord.

This clearly indicates an absence of the Spirit. It’s by the help of the Spirit that we are empowered to overcome the works of the flesh: “...if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live” (Rom 8:13). Without the Spirit we are helpless to overcome the drives within our fallen nature that resist the will of God in our lives. The Spirit enables us to subdue the flesh, and to overcome the temptation to connive with the powers of the world and the devil’s schemes. We are made capable of living in the freedom Jesus won for us: “now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Cor 3:17). It is freedom from the world, the flesh and the devil; it is freedom for the truth.

The Spirit reveals Jesus to us, making it possible for us to know Him experientially as the Truth: “And no one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 12:3). The Spirit reveals to us the majesty, glory and power of Jesus: “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him.’ God has revealed to us through the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Cor 3:17). The Christian life is a life in the Spirit. Hence St. Paul exhorts us, “If we live by the Spirit, let us walk by the Spirit” (Galatians 5:25). To walk by the Spirit is to live a radically new way of life, to resist, overcome, and gain victory over all the forces set against us.

Today many people despair of the condition of the Church, wondering fearfully if the Church will ever be able to adequately resist the powerful secular forces that are choking off its life. But there is reason to hope because the Spirit’s power, radiating from the person of Jesus, is unlimited. Jesus is Lord!

In the dynamic power of the Spirit we have all we need to live radically transformed lives, in full freedom as sons and daughters, no matter what our circumstances may be. The dying of the flame of faith is not inevitable; it comes as a result of millions of conscious choices to ignore the help of the Holy Spirit. To reignite that flame what is needed is repentance, a wholehearted turning back to the Lord and a total embrace of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.
It’s always a great joy to me when I pass the southern border of Hungary and enter the land of Serbia. It is a country which has suffered a lot in the last decades from war, political instability, and as a result, very deep poverty. But in the midst of hardship they have found a way back to a more ancient and simple lifestyle. Instead of enjoying the advantages of luxury they evaluate the treasury of personal relationships and community life. As the highway comes to an end at the border and I slow down on the narrow and dimpled roads, I feel I am making a journey back to the past and I have come home.

I came to visit and help my brothers and sisters here in the Catholic Church, which is the church of “non-ethnic-Serbs” (the majority is Serbian Orthodox), the church of the Hungarian, Croatian, German and Gypsy minorities (and as minorities they really need our help to strengthen their faith). This is why we’ve been here in the past few years, at the last fortresses of the Catholic Church in the Balkan Peninsula.

Under the peaceful surface it’s also a place of hidden wounds, sufferings and broken hearts. Many families lost fathers or sons in the civil war against Croatia or in Kosovo. Many people lost their jobs and lost every hope, many started to drink, and many fell to depression. Many people greatly fear that the next ethnic war will take place here in Vajdaság, the northeast and ethnically mixed state of Serbia. Every time we have come here to serve we feel it is our task is to bring Jesus’ hope and healing.

The foundation of our work in Serbia is an excellent connection with two communities in the city of Ada—the Új Élet (New Life) and the local Emmanuel community. The first weekend we held a discipleship school in the city of Becse on the theme of *New Communities in the Present Church*. It was a great help for me to have my friend, David Thorp from Boston with me. David gave the first teaching on *The Holy Trinity*, the foundation of every kind of community. On Saturday morning I continued with the teaching of the Vatican Council II on the *Church as Community*. Then David gave two teachings on St. Paul’s image of the Body of Christ. On Saturday afternoon in three teachings I explained the viewpoints of the Church on the present situation of the new lay communities on the basis of the Encyclical letter *Christifideles Laici*. We continued with our personal story of the New Jerusalem Community in Budapest, shared by Viktor László, the co-founder of our community. Our concluding message to the communities was, “Don’t give up! Although many church leaders say bad things about the new communities, the teaching of the Church says that these are the hope of the Church and the main sources of the New Evangelization. If the communities are faithful to their callings and also humble and obedient to the Church (the connection with the local Bishop is essential), the future is a wonderful unity between the two.”

On Sunday afternoon I was invited to the gathering of the New Life Community in Ada. It was great to see my old friends again and also wonderful to meet some new families. After a long and very zealous time of worship I gave my message to approximately 40 brothers and sisters. The Holy Spirit led me to teach on the need for deepening conversion and the obstacles to it. I felt the message was strong, and after the service many came to me and spoke about their situations and they expressed the desire to change their lives.

Monday morning I left to visit Csóka, a little city of 5000 inhabitants, almost everybody Hungarian-speaking and Catholic. The purpose of my visit was to see the parish priest, Fr. József Mellár and work out the plan for a City Mission there in April. The original idea came from my discussion with the local bishop last September who asked us to do this and promised also to come and serve. The morning with Fr. József was wonderful. Instead of enjoying the advantages of luxury they evaluate the treasury of personal relationships and community life.

But in the midst of hardship they have found a way back to a more ancient and simple lifestyle.
and three lay leaders was excellent; the Spirit was on us, and we put together the whole four-day program, with cultural events, children’s program, sport activities, street-missions, and, as a highlight, a mission afternoon, called FIRE in the cultural hall of the city. After the preaching the Bishop will celebrate the Holy Mass there and personally pray for the people!

Afterward I drove to Szabadka, the capital city of the state Vajdaság. I met with Ágota Bálint, the leader of the local Catholic Charismatic Community that is four years old. I then attended their weekly meeting in the chapel filled with about 100 community members and visitors. I spoke about the spiritual hunger of the people and about the solution—that only Jesus can fill it! At the end there was a common prayer to call upon the Holy Spirit together and many people were really touched by the Spirit. At 10 o’clock we drove to the small studio of the local Radio Maria. I spoke for an hour about my conversion and my life with Jesus Christ. We were really happy as we went to the small, ice-cold church for mass which was wonderful. After mass we continued the gathering together in Aunty Erzsi’s kitchen. The whole community, around 20 people, worshipped in the really crowded kitchen for hours and hours. I was very happy to see a lot of musicians and a relatively high number of men. The living faith of these local farmers was really touching for me. The Spirit led me to teach on the coherency of spiritual life and everyday work. At the end I prayed with everybody personally and I gave prophecies. I really felt from the Lord that this community will be the basis of revival in the area. I was really blessed to be with them this evening!

Wednesday morning I met Márta in Apatin, near the gypsy settlement where she works with a community. The destitution of the area was apparent at first sight. But it was much worse to see the destruction of the human bodies and souls—the symptoms of many kinds of sickness. That morning I blessed their houses with my local helpers, he blessed us and encouraged us to continue.

After lunch on Tuesday I left Szabadka to start the third part of my mission, in the western side of Serbia, near the Croatian border. This is a poorer part of Vajdaság, with smaller Hungarian speaking communities and a large and very poor gypsy population. My main helper here is a wonderful lady, Mára Dezs who lived a really crazy life before her conversion and was involved in different crimes. Five years ago she was invited to the annual Rejoice My People Festival in Ada and after the mission talk she gave her life to Jesus Christ. Now the priests in the neighborhood call her Sant Marta of Apatin after the city she lives in. She leads three communities and takes care of homeless people—some of whom have come to faith and been totally renewed by Jesus.

We began our mission in the small village of Kupuszina where she leads a community. We had to visit the local parish priest, who was a bit suspicious towards the Charismatic Renewal. But at the end of a long conversation he proclaimed that now he understood much more and he will hold a charismatic mass once a month in his church, together with the community. We were really happy as we went to the small, ice-cold church for mass which was wonderful. After mass we continued the gathering together in Aunty Erzsi’s kitchen. The whole community, around 20 people, worshipped in the really crowded kitchen for hours and hours. I was very happy to see a lot of musicians and a relatively high number of men. The living faith of these local farmers was really touching for me. The Spirit led me to teach on the coherency of spiritual life and everyday work. At the end I prayed with everybody personally and I gave prophecies. I really felt from the Lord that this community will be the basis of revival in the area. I was really blessed to be with them this evening!

Wednesday morning I met Márta in Apatin, near the gypsy settlement where she works with a community. The destitution of the area was apparent at first sight. But it was much worse to see the destruction of the human bodies and souls—the symptoms of many kinds of sickness. That morning I blessed their houses
and prayed over the families. I visited 20 homes until 11 at night and prayed over 90 people personally. They grabbed me to go from one house to another and in every place I read from the Gospel and preached to the family as the Spirit led me, and afterward I sprinkled the Holy Water in every room and then prayed for every single person there, especially for the sick. I really felt that I literally spread light to the darkness. Each family was touched, although the men do not usually attend the community. I saw what I’ve also seen before, that the poor and the needy are open to God every time. They were so thirsty for every Word of God, every prayer, every blessing, every hug, and every good word! The gentle presence of the Lord Jesus was with us all day. I will never forget Stivo, a 50 year old father who saw great light and felt incredible fire inside during the prayer. “I feel like I was blind but now I see!” he cried out and ran to call together all the relatives for prayer. In his case the Word of God was really fulfilled, “The people who sit in darkness have seen a great light!”

We then had a mission gathering for Márt’a’s local community and visitors. More than 60 people came together in a relief organization’s timber house, including 20 teenagers by bus from another village, to hear the message about the return of Jesus Christ. At the end almost everybody came forward and committed their lives to the Lord. On that day I finished after 11 pm and I was really tired but it was one of the best days in my whole life!

During these days I stayed in the Carmelite Monastery of Zombor, the biggest city of the area. On my last evening there we started with a charismatic mass. There were 200 people from the city and the area. I read the gospel and preached on the biblical foundations of the Christian healing ministry. After mass we had Adoration of the Holy Eucharist, then I gave personal blessings with the monstrance to everyone. This form of the healing ministry is very suitable in a classical Catholic environment. At the end here everybody was very content, the non-charismatic priests, the community members and the simple members of the parish. The Lord revealed His great light again to the people!

That evening it was very hard to say goodbye to everyone. I felt it was one of the best missions in my whole life. I served at every level of Church life and everyday life, from the Bishop’s palace to the gypsy huts. For everything I give thanks to the Lord Jesus Christ who opened every gate and every heart!

“I will never forget Stivo, a 50 year old father who saw great light and felt incredible fire inside during the prayer. ‘I feel like I was blind but now I see!’ he cried out and ran to call together all the relatives for prayer.”

A community of believers from the small farming village of Kupuszina gathered in Aunty Erzsi’s crowded kitchen to worship together for several hours. The living faith of these local farmers was really very touching.
On the Road

“Christ gives us help and strength, never deserts us and is true and sincere in his friendship.”

St. Teresa of Avila

June 2009

Mission to Serbia
June 3–22
Don and Pat Turbitt and Team
Contact Jessica at 734-662-1730 ext 32 or jsherwood@renewalministries.net

St. Paul, MN, RM School of Evangelization
June 4–7
Peter Herbeck, Lloyd and Nancy Greenhaw
Contact: deaconmike@core-ministries.org

Steubenville, OH
Men’s Leadership Conference
June 7
Peter Herbeck

Livonia, MI, St. Michael the Archangel Parish
Evening of Renewal
June 9
Ralph Martin
Contact number: 734-261-1455 ext. 20

Rockville, NY, Diocese of Rockville
Workshop on Holiness and Evangelization
June 13
Ralph Martin
Contact John Palmer at 516-678-5800 x408

Mission to Papua New Guinea
June 29–July 5
Lloyd and Nancy Greenhaw and Team
Contact Jessica at 734-662-1730 ext 32 or jsherwood@renewalministries.net

Steubenville, OH, Franciscan University
Graduate Theology Course
June 22–July 10
Ralph Martin

July 2009

Mission to Slovenia
July 8–13
Don and Pat Turbitt and Team
Contact Jessica at 734-662-1730 ext 32 or jsherwood@renewalministries.net

Mission to Zimbabwe
July 13–23
Lloyd and Nancy Greenhaw and Team
Contact Jessica at 734-662-1730 ext 32 or jsherwood@renewalministries.net

Steubenville, OH
Religious Sisters Conference
July 14–16
Ralph Martin
Contact: 1-800-437-8368 or www.franciscanconferences.com

Mission to Mexico City
July 19–25
Jim Murphy and Team
Contact Jessica at 734-662-1730 ext 32 or jsherwood@renewalministries.net

Lafayette, LA, Catholic Charismatic Renewal “Lighting the Way in the Darkness”
July 24–26
Peter Herbeck
Contact: Marilyn deMahy at 337-265-3773 or LafCCR@bellsouth.net

Steubenville, OH, Don Bosco Conference
July 25–26
Ralph Martin
Contact: 1-800-437-8368 or www.franciscanconferences.com

Mission to Poland
July 30-Aug 10
Don and Pat Turbitt and Team
Contact Jessica at 734-662-1730 ext 32 or jsherwood@renewalministries.net