Dear Faithful Friends of Renewal Ministries,

A letter from Ralph Martin

Well, we’ve done it. We’ve gotten through another year with the gracious help of God and you. It’s been another year of really amazing opportunities to help hundreds of thousands come closer to Christ, become active in mission, and desire greater holiness. All of this has happened in the midst of the most severe economic downturn in decades. God, and you, have been faithful and we are immensely grateful.

The numbers are amazing: 104 transmissions of *The Choices We Face* all over the world, 92 transmissions of *The Fulfillment of All Desire*, 168 transmissions of *Crossing the Goal*, and 260 transmissions of *Food for the Journey* and *Fire on the Earth*!

Renewal Ministries conducted 40 missions to 32 different countries in 2009—Canada, China, Croatia, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Ghana, Haiti, Hungary, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Latvia, Liberia, Lithuania, Mexico, Papua New Guinea, Poland, Romania, Russia, Rwanda, Samoa, Serbia, Slovenia, Sudan, Tanzania, Trinidad, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, Vietnam, Zimbabwe, and Nigeria. People from more than 90 different countries accessed our website during the year!

Not to mention all the conferences, parish missions, seminars, schools of evangelization, priests, seminarians and religious ministered to, days, evenings, and weekends of renewal, retreats, teachings, books, CDs, DVDs, booklets and telephone ministry!

The New Year, as usual, appears full of promise and full of challenge. With the Lord and you, we can move forward with humble confidence.

Thank you for your faithful support of Renewal Ministries. May the Lord give you personally all you need to follow him this coming year, and bring consolation and strength to family members who are suffering, who are unemployed, and who are sick. And know that those who labor and suffer for the Lord never do so in vain.

United with you in the crucified/risen love of Christ,

Ralph Martin

Anne and Ralph were blessed to represent Renewal Ministries at the celebration of Fr. Michael Scanlan’s 50th anniversary as a Franciscan friar held at Franciscan University of Steubenville. Fr. Michael has been very close to Renewal Ministries over the years serving as a Board Member, Co-Host of *The Choices We Face*, and member of the FIRE team, as well as a personal friend and brother to many of us. He continues to serve as Chancellor of the University and sends his warmest greetings to all the Renewal Ministries’ family.
God is Great!

A recent book of some popularity is audaciously entitled, *God is Not Great* by author Christopher Hitchens. He is one of a small group of new atheist authors who have decided the time is ripe to unleash an aggressive attack on religion—in particular on Christianity and Catholicism—in an attempt to destroy the Church and its influence on society. At the heart of their argument is the denial of the existence of God. There is nothing new here; these are the same arguments that have periodically surfaced since the Enlightenment. They pit faith against reason, presenting the “rational secularists” as the good guys, and religionists, especially Christians, as the bad guys. Those who believe in God or gods are portrayed as irrational, fanatical, delusional fundamentalists who are the greatest obstacles to human progress and the source of society’s most intractable problems, including nearly every war fought in human history.

When I first heard this title I was shocked by it. Who would say such a foolish thing? In fact, the words of the Psalmist came to mind:

“The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ They are corrupt, doing abominable iniquity…” (Ps 53:1)

“For the wicked boasts of the desires of his heart, and the man greedy for gain curses and renounces the Lord. In the pride of his countenance the wicked does not seek him: all his thoughts are, ‘There is no God.’” (Ps 10:3–4)

The one who seriously denies that God exists, the creature who refuses “in the pride of his countenance” to give to God what belongs to him is the very definition of ‘the fool’ from a biblical perspective. The source of the foolishness is pride, a refusal of God, a rejection of reality, the denial of being, the conscious suppression of the truth about God, the deflation of God and the inflation of the creature. St. Paul touches this very theme in his Letter to the Romans:

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all the ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth. For what could be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.” (Rom 1:18–20)

From a biblical perspective, men deny God and refuse to acknowledge “his eternal power and deity” that can be “clearly perceived in the things that have been made” because of the wickedness that resides in the human heart. If I refuse to “honor him as God and give him thanks” (Rom 1:21), that is not a sign of enlightenment, or the heroic exercise of pure reason, in fact it isn’t primarily an intellectual act. It is primarily an act of the will, a decision to “exchange the truth about God for a lie.” (Rom 1:25) I prefer willful ignorance of the manifest truth about God to the thought of having to submit my mind and will to him.

It’s plain to see that there is nothing new about this “new atheism.” It’s as old as the fall of Lucifer and the Garden of Eden. It sounds new because of its supposed scientific grounding and the way it is being marketed, but at the end of the day it’s the same reality. Fallen man refuses to acknowledge God and to accept with gratitude the condition of being a creature. In the pages of these books one can sense the rage against God. I believe they are simply a manifestation of the “spirit of the age.” They are a kind of anti-evangelization, cheerleaders for the rising tide of secularism and “dictatorship of relativism” repeatedly spoken about by Pope Benedict XVI. They seek to provide intellectual covering and fuel for the growing secularism in the West. They use terms and politically correct euphemisms, to legitimize their cause against God and the Church. They are, “advancing the cause of science,” “defending reason against superstition,” “promoting progress and authentic human development,” “freeing society from the inherent intolerance, bigotry, and hatred of religion.” “freeing rea-
son from the myths and enslaving delusion of the religious mind."

**God is Great!**

These are the times we live in. In the days ahead I believe this open hostility to God and the attacks on the Church will increase. God is permitting it. He has a plan. At the beginning of this new calendar year, let’s make a pledge to stand strong in the Lord and to declare the greatness of our God! When the foolishness of men seems to be on the rise, let us seek wisdom and take to heart the words of the Psalmist:

> “Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and his anointed, saying, ‘Let us burst their bonds asunder and cast their cords from us’...Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, with trembling kiss his feet, lest he be angry and you perish in the way...” (Ps 2:1–2, 10–11)

Let us serve the Lord with fear! With holy fear, with filial fear, with secure confidence in his presence and power and let us offer our whole lives in service to him!

> “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host by the breath of his mouth...Let all the earth fear the Lord, let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him! For he spoke and, and it came to be; he commanded and it stood forth...behold the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love...” (Ps 33:6–9)

Lift your eyes to the heavens! See what the Lord has made and consider the futility and madness of the atheists’ boast against God. Here we are, on this small planet we call Earth, in this tiny, obscure solar system which is a tiny part of a tiny galaxy we call the Milky Way. The atheist who pounds his chest and shakes his fist at the God who isn’t there, is an infinitesimal, beyond tiny, part of our planet which is itself an infinitesimal part of our galaxy. Our God made it all! He is the very definition of greatness. In fact, he alone is great.

> “He determined the number of the stars, he calls each by name...” (Ps 147:4)

> “For he commanded and they were created: he established them forever and ever...” (Ps 148:5)

And it is this great God who loves you personally and has sent his Son to save you from your sins. So let us determine together, at the beginning of this new year, by God’s grace, to live each day for “the praise of his glory.” (Eph 1:12) “May all who seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee! May those who love thy salvation say evermore, ‘God is great!’” (Ps 70:4)

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**Please Pray...**

- that this new year will bring greater hunger for the Lord, deeper conversion, and desire for holiness in all God’s people.
- that the Lord will provide the resources and opportunities to allow Renewal Ministries to continue bringing the Gospel message 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.*
Mission to Transylvania

Since WWI, Transylvania has been part of Romania, except for a brief Hungarian occupation during WWII. It is inhabited by a considerable Hungarian population and although not exclusively, our outreach was geared to this ethnic group, specifically to the youth in the region. People are hungry for God all over the world, and Transylvania is no exception. My husband Deacon Steve began working there in 1997, and this was my second visit since October of 2008.

Our two week itinerary consisted of youth rallies in five cities: Oradea (Nagyvárad), Caraie (Nagykároly), Cluj (Kolozsvár), Odorheiu (Udvarhely), and Miercurea Ciuc (Csíkszereda). Organizing rallies in five cities was no small undertaking; it included willing helpers, generous funding and weeks of planning. KFT, literally translated, “Catholic Youth Meeting,” is the banner under which these rallies were advertised. Announcements on Maria Radio, fliers, posters, and word of mouth all gathered the youth. We visited with local clergy to get input and some local pastors, like Fr. Attila of Udvarhely, were very receptive and also willing to help in the future. I had the opportunity to speak with him in German and translate some of our conversation, since he spoke only Hungarian and German. Before holding these rallies we were invited to give several interviews on Maria Radio in Oradea, which even broadcasts in parts of the U.S.

Our team included a youth pantomime team from Arad, Romania, a brother rap duo from Budapest, the Cluj music team, the organizer Tibi, and Deacon Steve and me. At each rally, we began with prayer and praise, which always set the tone. This was followed by some form of entertainment to “break the ice.” Sometimes it was a story with a moral told by Tibi which invariably brought great laughter because of his acting talent. Other times it was a pantomime, or a concert by the Christian rap group. Then Deacon Steve gave teachings, often using the Scriptures to help the youth make applications to their own lives. This year’s topics included: Those Who Were Seeking the Lord, The Rich Man, The Holy Spirit, and The Universal Call to Mission.

Some youth were brought by friends and others just came out of curiosity. Others attended because they were seeking the truth and still others came for physical, emotional, or spiritual healing. Prayer ministry followed each talk. Everyone was invited to come forward, leaving burdens, problems, pain behind. This time six priests waited to pray along with the team, an amazing grace that had never happened before. At first there was the usual hesitation, but as soon as one brave person responded, others followed. Music filled the hall, and the Holy Spirit began to move. It was powerful; tears flowed and laughter was heard as the gifts of the Holy Spirit were poured out. There was joy and thanksgiving. Transformation could be seen on dozens of faces. How great is our God! This is a highlight of every trip because lives are visibly changed. God’s work and faithfulness were confirmed in the testimonies:

- “I came to KFT to come closer to God. I wanted to experience His love, and to see how He helps me to live with my uncertainties, to get rid of my self-pity. I want to give myself totally to God.” (Zsuzsanna Madar, high school senior)
• “I came to KFT because I have never been there. I knew something about the program and because of this I wanted to meet God, to take part in the worship and the prayer ministry.” (Antonia Gyorgy, high school senior)

• “I came to the rally because I experience Jesus every time I am here. I decide here, every time, that I will walk with God every day. I receive here encouragement from the brothers and sisters. It is very good to be here and to live in the presence of God. I also meet my friends and we rejoice together in Christ!” (Zita Majlat, high school senior)

• “KFT is a renewal for me. It is a blessing for all my community members to receive strength, teaching which builds us up, and gives us the opportunity to have new relationships. Both personally and for the community, it is a genuine meeting with God and with our fellow men and women. It is also good that we have the opportunity to serve.” (Gergo, university sophomore, music minister, community leader)

• “I was raised in a Christian family and I began to go to church regularly in the first grade. Since I met this amazing group at church, my life has changed. I began to know God better, I got closer to Him and I received many wonderful friends. In the eighth grade I had to decide for myself what I would be studying in the next four years of high school. I was very confused. I prayed a lot and in the end, God answered my questions. Now, four years later when I’m facing my final exam, I thank God for helping me in choosing my right career. I am trying very often to explain to my parents that although we don’t have money, God will solve the problem. It’s only a question of trust and faith, because He is Almighty. I won’t stop believing in and loving Him no matter what will happen. He is the only one who knows what’s right for me and who wants my best.” (Roberta Rosa, 18 years old)

In addition to the large rallies, workshops were offered for the youth—ATV rides, paintball, arts and crafts (beading, making rosaries and balloon animals), play acting, card tricks and movies—all of these activities intended to foster community and friendships. Many participated in past years and they came to see friends, renew acquaintances, have fun, and enjoy the Lord.

Renewal Ministries is making a difference. We bring Christ’s love, hope, and promises, and lives are changed. There must be a “voice crying out in the wilderness.” Is it I, Lord? I will go, Lord, if You lead me! +

These young people came to the Catholic Youth Meeting to meet the Lord, be empowered by the Spirit and encouraged by their brothers and sisters. They left full of faith and hope for the future. (Left to right): Antonia, Zita, Gergo and Zsuzsanna.

A highlight of our mission trips is to witness the transformation of lives and the visible change in people as they encounter the Lord in our times of prayer ministry.
“We had the opportunity to speak with fifteen young seminarians about the gifts of the Holy Spirit and then pray with them for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.” Liberia

“After three years, the Bishop also allowed us to pray with lay people. We were able to minister to 80 people who have a weekly prayer time in the Cathedral. We taught, then prayed for healing and everyone came forward. As people outside the church saw what was happening, they came in. The bishop told me that many non-Catholics also came for prayer. We think we prayed with more than 200 people that afternoon.” Vietnam

“Each day we had two hours to teach evangelization. We had the opportunity to move from venue to venue so that we could talk to all the 4000 plus youth…For most of Samoa it was the first time Catholics ever went to the streets to share their faith.” Samoa

“Your visit to Kuron was such a big event for the community. God did many wonders and miracles in Kuron after you left. People received a lot of visions through dreams with the biggest being open and forgiving one another. To me this had a very big impact in the life of the community of workers in Kuron.” Sudan

“The other day there was probably about 130 of us sitting in the dirt of the garbage dump. We sang together. We prayed together. We laughed and cried as one people. Then it was time to leave. About 12 of us got out…the rest stayed; they live there.” Mexico

“Father always invites his parish and anyone else on his mailing list for a Sunday afternoon meeting with us. This time it will include a talk, a personal sharing by a team member, a couple of songs and an opportunity for prayer ministry. We’re expecting about 50 people and, as always, there will be believers from every denomination as well as secularized Christians and Moslems.” Turkey

“We had the privilege of helping feed 750 children. The staff cooked huge pots of beans and rice and piled the plates high. It seemed like some of the plates were bigger than the kids! All of the students, including preschoolers, ate everything, down to the last grain of rice!” Haiti

“The event was an annual highlight for the city; major politicians attended including the mayor of the city, national members of Parliament, and a representative to the European Union. Even more amazing, was the incredible number of young people that not only attended the all day event, but eagerly responded to an invitation to commit their lives fully to Jesus.” Slovakia

“When I arrived at the gypsy settlement 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…I visited 20 homes until 11 pm and prayed over 90 people individually.” Serbia

“Divine Mercy came in power to the Metro Toronto Convention Centre where more than 4,500 adults and 1,500 youth gathered for the 17th annual Lift Jesus Higher Rally.” Ontario, Canada

“Our ministry focused on forgiveness and healing. We anticipated thirty people but a crowd of over 100 arrived and the Holy Spirit touched many of them during the time of prayer.” Czech Republic

“The church was packed with almost 300 people and a good number of young people. Many
of them followed our talks carefully from their bibles, busily taking notes, which is a rare sight amongst Catholics. After the talks we prayed over everyone there.” **Croatia**

“Two retreats were given for sisters representing six different religious communities based on a Life in the Spirit Seminar adapted for consecrated women. I am confident that the experience of the new Pentecost will enrich their lives and those they serve…what they learned will help uproot witchcraft and superstitious practices among the people.” **Tanzania**

“During our two week visit we had the opportunity to preach at thirteen different parishes and two conferences to more than 2,500 people and each night we prayed over people for two to three hours.” **Slovenia**

“We led worship and gave a teaching about the new fire of Holy Spirit. I think the biggest shock for the audience was that we stood up there in the front of them as a group of seven men together with two priests.” **Lithuania**

“Not even torrential rain could dampen the excitement of almost 50,000 people who gathered for the outdoor Mass and rally.” **Rwanda**

“We met with 120 diocesan leaders from the renewal for all day training. The following day we held a city-wide prayer meeting. There were testimonies of people being freed from years of bondage to fear, oppression and memories of abuse.” **Ghana**
On the Road

Who except God can give you peace?

Has the world ever been able to satisfy the heart?

St. Gerard Majella

January 2010
Mission to Mexico
January 17–23
Jim Murphy and Team
Contact Jessica Sherwood at 734-662-1730 x32
or jsherwood@renewalministries.net

Palm Beach Gardens, FL, Men’s Conference
January 23
Peter Herbeck
Contact Jim Manhardt at 772-321-3886

February 2010
Lincoln, NE, Parish Mission
February 4–8
Sr. Ann Shields
Contact Al Zach at 402-786-2705

San Diego, CA, Catholic Retreat
February 5–7
Ralph Martin

Phoenix, AZ, Catholic’s Men’s Conference
February 20
Peter Herbeck
Contact: www.cmfp.org or 602-740-0485

Manchester, NH, St. Marie Parish Mission
February 21–23
Sr. Ann Shields
Contact Karen Hettrick at 603-647-2597

Port Huron, MI
Holy Trinity Parish Evening of Renewal
February 25
Ralph Martin
Contact: www.porthuronsjo.com

Livonia, MI
St. Michael the Archangel Parish Mission
February 28–March 2
Ralph Martin
Contact: 734-261-1455 x207
or swilliams@livoniastmichael.org

March 2010
Vero Beach, FL, Parish Mission
March 4–6
Peter and Debbie Herbeck
Contact Ken or Phyllis Shearn at 772-321-7401

Birmingham, AL, Taping of Crossing the Goal
March 8–12
Peter Herbeck

St. Paul, MN, IPF Symposium at St. Paul Seminary
March 11–14
Ralph Martin

Indianapolis, IN, Legatus Retreat
March 18
Ralph Martin

Akron, OH, Catholic Men’s Conference
March 20
Ralph Martin
Contact: www.cmfneo.com

Omaha, NE, Institute for Priestly Formation Council Meeting
March 25
Ralph Martin

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PLAN AHEAD FOR NEXT YEAR’S RENEWAL MINISTRIES GATHERING

When: Friday, May 14–Sunday, May 16, 2010
Where: New Location!
Eagle Crest Resort in Ypsilanti, MI (Only minutes from Metro Detroit Airport)
Check www.renewalministries.net for more registration information

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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