Dear Friends in Christ,

I’m happy to report that your steadfast support of Renewal Ministries has enabled us to enter 2010 not having to cut back any of the ways we’re reaching out to people all over the world with the mercy of Christ. As Sr. Ann Shields and I prepare the “thank you” letters together we both feel waves of gratitude for your generosity. We literally thank God for you, as we sign the letters and send them out, and ask him to bless you and provide all you need to continue your life and mission.

Some of our donors have suffered greatly in the economic downturn and we pray for their return to “having enough and more.” At the same time others have stepped up to “stand in the gap” as never before. It is awesome to see the hand of God at work in this way.

We have scheduled 32 mission trips to 25 different countries for 2010 and are able to maintain our ongoing work in North America as well, with the TV, radio and various missions, conferences, seminars, and publications. The new programs for 2010 of The Choices We Face begin on Tuesday, March 2, at 6:00 PM Eastern Time on EWTN, and are available at other times as well through various networks and stations. You can also watch and listen to all our TV and radio programs directly through our website, www.renewalministries.net. If you have any trouble figuring out how to access our programs just call Christina Thomasheski at 734-662-1730 ext. 25 and she’ll help you.

And speaking of our website, last month we launched our redesigned website, which we hope makes it even easier to find what you want and have added features that we hope make it even more useful and interesting for you. Check it out and let us know what you think.

The 13 week series on my book, The Fulfillment of All Desire, ran four times over the past year on EWTN and finished its year run the last week of February. All 13 weeks of the program continue to be available on a professionally produced DVD album that many have already purchased.

Through your generosity Renewal Ministries has been supporting the work of renewal and evangelization in Lithuania for 18 years now. Over the years we have been able to help make possible retreats for priests as well as a wide range of other useful ministries.
Dear Friends in Christ,

found useful. One of my own daughters has told me multiple times how valuable it has been for her women’s group to watch a ½ hour program each week and then discuss it and pray. All the women now think their husbands should do the same! We continue to make the DVD available at a significant discount.

Crossing the Goal, with Peter Herbeck and friends, continues to produce new episodes and is helping men everywhere. Peter just recently received this note of encouragement from a man in Oregon.

“I really enjoy Crossing the Goal. I am a busy teacher who works on the other side of town with young kids and a working wife and do not have time to seek out other Catholic men who feel like I do about our church. Watching this show helps take the edge off my isolation. As I continue to be bombarded by the world at every turn, it is great to tune into your show and feel both renewed and redirected.”

We also continue to be grateful for opportunities to help strengthen priests throughout the world, through retreats, seminary work, and other occasions. We also are very grateful for the wonderful priest collaborators who help us in our mission work and minister to us personally. We are happy to be joining with the whole Church during this special “Year for Priests” in thanking God for our priests and praying for their holiness and perseverance. In this newsletter we are reprinting some thoughts on the priesthood that we received from Fr. John Rea, a Marist priest from New Zealand, who has been a long time friend of Renewal Ministries. He has been featured on The Choices We Face several times over the years and continues to carry out a wonderful ministry of renewal and evangelization with a special emphasis on healing.

As confusion, fear and hatred rise in the world it is more important than ever that we are rooted and grounded in Christ, and share Christ, the rock, with all we can.

Your brother in Christ,

Ralph Martin

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.

Here is a hypothetical example based on an actual experience. With the proceeds from the sale of their principal residence and some additional property, two of our longtime donors, John, age 71, and his wife, Jane, age 70, funded a $50,000 charitable gift annuity for the benefit of Renewal Ministries that guaranteed a rate of 5.2%, or $2,600 annually for both of their lives. John and Jane were pleased to learn that $1,713.40 of their annual annuity income would not be subject to federal income tax until 2029, at which time a lower tax-free portion of each annuity benefit would take effect. They were also happy to know that they would enjoy the immediate benefit of a $15,565.50 charitable tax deduction for this donation and were surprised to learn that any unused portion of this deduction could be carried forward for an additional five years or a total of six years. Moreover, Renewal Ministries was able to use a significant portion 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!”

THE GIFT THAT GIVES BACK THROUGHOUT THE YEARS...

For more information on how you can create a “Give and Gain” situation through a charitable gift annuity, contact

Gary Seromik
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.
The Lift Jesus Higher Rally
Saturday, April 24, 2010
Joy for Tough Times

**LOCATION**
Metro Toronto Convention Centre

**SPEAKERS**
Marcus Grodi  
Teresa Tomeo  
Ralph Martin  
Sr. Ann Shields  
Peter Herbeck

**YOUTH RALLY**
Calling all teens!
Jesus is your best friend!
Attend an awesome youth event

Don't come alone!
Invite someone to praise the Lord with thousands of others and Lift Jesus Higher!

**For tickets/information:**
Call 416-251-4255 or Sadie at 905-270-2510
www.lift-jesus-higher-rally.org

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**Save the Date!**
2010 Annual Renewal Ministries Gathering
May 14–16 at Eagle Crest Conference Center Ypsilanti, MI
For more information contact Jessica at 734-662-1730 x 32 jsherwood@renewalministries.net

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**Please Pray...**

+ for all those suffering as a result of the devastation in Haiti. May they know God’s love, comfort and care in the midst of this tragedy.
+ that many people will attend the upcoming Lift Jesus Higher Rally in Toronto this April and encounter the power and presence of the living God.
+ that as we begin to air a new season of The Choices We Face, many viewers will be inspired to love the Lord and live as dedicated disciples.
+ for courage, strength, and deeper holiness for all our priests throughout the world as they labor for the gospel.
+ 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.
It happened sometime during the Exodus. The Israelites were drawn up in their tribes around the tent of meeting. They were grumbling and their discontent was aimed at Moses and Aaron. Then God intervened. He showed his presence in a bright and shining cloud above the tent. At the same time plague began to sweep from right to left through the ranks. Moses said to Aaron, “Take your censor, put fire therein from off the altar, and lay incense on it. Carry it quickly to the congregation for wrath has gone forth from the Lord...So Aaron ran into the midst of the assembly and made atonement for the people. He stood between the dead and the living and the plague was stopped.” (Num 16:42–48)

Moses gave the order and Aaron, whom he had ordained, exercised priesthood. He interceded, interposed, got in between. He put his life on the line. It took faith, courage, and faithfulness to the office of priest for him to run to that place of greatest danger where people were dying, cut down like grass before a scythe. In his action that day Aaron shows us plainly what it is to be a priest. It is to stand between people and God, to mediate, to be a go-between, a bridge between the Creator on the one hand, and men and women on the other.

Centuries after this event, the Lord God spoke through one of Aaron’s descendants, the priest/prophet Ezekiel, and said, “I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the gap before me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none.” What God was looking for was a priest, because that’s a priest’s role: “to stand in the gap on behalf of the land.” As it is written in the Letter to the Hebrews:

“Every high priest has been taken out of mankind and is appointed to act for men in their relations with God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.” (Heb 5:1)

God made his plea through Ezekiel. It was only answered fully when the Father sent his Son Jesus to be the bridge between himself and us, to fill the gap caused by the Fall. So it is that Paul instructs Timothy: “There is only one God, and there is only one mediator between God and mankind, himself a man, Christ Jesus, who sacrificed himself as a ransom for all.” (1Tim 2:5–6)

Again, in the letter to the Hebrews: “Jesus is the Apostle and High Priest of our Confession. Nor did Christ give himself the glory of becoming high priest, but had it from the one who said to him, ‘You are my Son, today I have become your Father,’ and ‘You are a priest after the order of Melchizedek and forever.’” (Heb 5:5–6)

The Lord Jesus is supremely priest in the Sacrifice of the Cross. And that sacrifice is represented, re-presented, re-enacted sacramentally in the Holy Eucharist. The ministerial priesthood is grounded in Jesus Christ and grounded in the Eucharist. Pope Pius XII sums up that twofold grounding in his 1947 letter on the Liturgy. “The august sacrifice of the altar is no mere simple commemoration of the passion and death of Jesus Christ. It is truly and properly the offering of a sacrifice wherein, by an immolation in which no blood is shed, the high priest does what he had already done upon the Cross, offering himself as a most acceptable victim. One and the same is the victim. One and the same is he who now offers himself by the ministry of his priests. Only the manner of offering is different.”

“One and the same is he who now offers himself by the ministry of his priests.” How can this be? Because as the Magisterium teaches us, “(Priests) are marked with a special character and are so configured to Christ the priest that they can act in the person of Christ the Head.” (Decree for Priests, par. 2) Ronald Knox helps us appreciate this statement with a useful parallel. He writes about the ministerial priest and quotes Genesis 2 on creation and John 20 parallel. He writes about the ministerial priest and quotes Genesis 2 on creation and John 20: “The Lord God fashioned man of dust from the soil. Then he breathed into his nostrils a breath of life, and man became a living being.” Centuries later God breathed into the face of man once more, “Receive the Holy Spirit, for whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven.”

That’s what priestly ordination is, a new creation. In the hour our priests were ordained they were forever changed. They were torn apart and re-made in the deepest roots of their being. In the depths of their personality, where all of us are most truly ourselves, at the level of life-directing and life-determining choices, they were set on a new path, a fresh course, the way of Christ, Priest and Head. This is a more shattering and radical change than any seen or

Father John Rea, SM is a New Zealander of Irish and Scottish stock. He has taught high school and been director of lay Marists, but has spent most of his life conducting retreats and parish missions. He has ministered in New Zealand, Australia, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, the United Kingdom and the U.S. He has been a priest for 54 years.
measured in the world about us. It is a transformation comparable in some ways to that which takes place in an infant when it is baptized. And, dare I say it; it is something like the change in the bread and wine at the Consecration but, of course, not substantial.

Here is cause for awe and wonder—the mystery of the Catholic Priesthood—mere men become Christ in and to and for the world. In the words of St. John Chrysostom, they lend their voices and their hands to Christ. The Second Vatican Council states they assume the person of Christ himself. (*Decree for Priests*, par. 12) A likeness to the Lord is branded into their being and so the Catechism describes priests as icons of him in whose priesthood they share. John Paul II enlarges on that and calls these men “living and transparent images of Christ the Priest.”

That’s the poetry. In plain language, when a man is ordained a ministerial priest he undergoes an ontological change. It’s a change of relationship, first to Jesus and then to the Church. St. Thomas Aquinas describes the Sacrament as a permanent quality in the intellect, empowering the priest to put holy order into the way the people he serves relate to God. The Lord Jesus is prophet, priest and king. He gives the ministerial priest a share in all three roles. The first is through preaching and teaching, the second through worship in Mass and Sacraments, the third by pastoring the flock. Each interacts with the other two and the Holy Eucharist controls all.

Pope Benedict has a helpful insight related to this in one of his sermons. He quotes St. Augustine who reminds his listeners that John the Baptist calls himself a “voice crying in the wilderness.” John was a voice, says Augustine, but Jesus is the Word. John was a voice for the Word made flesh. And this, the Pope says, is exactly what the priest is, a voice for the Word of God incarnate. At Mass priests say, “This is my body. This is my blood.” They speak in the person of Jesus. They are a voice for Jesus. And once they have spoken, He is there, body, blood, soul, and divinity, under the appearances of bread and wine. At Reconciliation they say, “I absolve you from your sins.” And is it Fr. Smith or Fr. Jones who absolves the penitent? No, they are merely a “voice for the Word” and it is that Word, the Lord Jesus, who sets the captive free from sin. Our priests preach from lectern and pulpit. Again, provided it is God’s word they are proclaiming, and not their own wisdom, they are voices for the Living Word who is Jesus Christ our Lord.

Wonder of wonders, ministerial priests speak and the Word made Flesh responds by changing Bread and Wine in to his own Being, freeing sinners from their burden of guilt, healing the afflicted, proclaiming God’s truth. From the moment they are ordained, and forever, priests are in Christ and for Christ and with Christ at the service of humankind.

In Leviticus God repeatedly demands that Old Testament priests be holy men. (cf. Lev. 21) If the Lord demanded that they who served shadows be holy (cf. Heb. 8:5), how much more ought they be holy who bear the image of Christ the Priest and act on his behalf?

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.” (1 Cor 4:1)

In this Year for Priests especially, let’s pray for our priests. Let’s pray that they be holy, that they be faithful to Him who called them, and faithful to us for whom they are called.
Mine is the story of an ordinary man who was born in a little town in the Slovakian mountains, the place “behind God’s back” as we used to say about unimportant places. I was born in 1968 to a believing family; faith was present around me from the beginning of my life, as were attempts to kill this faith. It was a time of the Communist regime and everything regarding the faith was forbidden; even simple attendance at mass was complicated. My mum who was a teacher could only attend church in the small forest villages where the Secret Police weren’t as active. Doing anything more was very dangerous and your future and sometimes even your life were always in danger.

As a child I passed the old monastery in my town and wondered why it was empty and its church closed. Only later I learned that it was used in the 1950’s as a concentration camp for 866 priests and monks from Czechoslovakia who were held there in prison for at least two years. When I was thirteen I had two offers in front of me: to join the Communist party and have an excellent future as a young leader or to hold onto the faith of my parents and have no future. Then God intervened in my life in a simple and very effective way. One day a young man caught me on my bike and asked me whether I would like to meet in a small group. I hardly knew this man named Michal; I had only heard he was doing strange things in secret while working as an engineer in the steel factory. And because he said there were going to be some girls there, I agreed to go.

We began to meet in secret in households every week, each time in a different place. There were no notes, no pictures, and no records. We had to put everything into our memories. Suddenly I saw more young people

Behind God’s Back

Bohus and his wife Alena live in Podolinec, Slovakia with their four children.

As a teenager, Bohus began his journey with the Lord in the mountains and small forest village of his birth. Twenty years later, this village continues to be both a gathering and launching place for God’s people and the work of evangelization.
who were believers ready to follow Jesus. I jumped from the anonymous church where anybody could be a secret policeman into the band of brothers and sisters who were on fire for Jesus. We spent weekends and holidays in forests speaking about God, praying and rejoicing in our faith. My parents were afraid as the secret police were trying to catch us every time. But for us it was an adventure like in the time of the early church. I still consider those times as the best of my life. Our faith was so vibrant and we were literally laying down our lives for the faith. I was sixteen and staying in a lumberjack camp in the deep forest, sleeping for two weeks on a table. Desperate to live a life of freedom and meaning, I gave my whole life to Jesus kneeling in the night under the old wooden cross in the midst of the forest. Many of my colleagues in that camp said I was too emotional and too young for such a decision, but Jesus took this little prayer very seriously.

We were trained very well in faith and pastoral work but we never thought we could work openly for God. But then in 1989 Communism suddenly fell down like a house of cards. The Church could come out of hiding. Our young leader Michal turned out to be a secret priest. We were surprised after ten years of working together almost every day that we did not know this. But we were not shocked because looking back on those ten years we could see there was no situation that would ever discredit him as a priest. His was the testimony of a holy life without the possibility to express his priesthood openly. Those years together helped us form a very strong friendship and partnership as disciples so that even with different vocations we have been able to stay together. I then married Alena, one of the first members of that small group.

Fr. Michal returned to the ruined monastery in my town. We didn’t know how, but we wanted to continue working together for the Church. Fr. Michal’s way was obvious—after many years of only celebrating the mass alone in his home he could now serve as a priest publicly. But my path as a layman was not as clear. I dreamed about working full-time for the Church and Fr. Michal said: “I can offer you a lot of work but no money.” I said yes and began to work in the monastery just for breakfasts. My parents and in-laws were afraid again; we were newly married and to be a husband and work for free was not a very wise decision. But God has led my life since I was very young and He has built His way in the wilderness.

After twenty years I still work in that monastery. We now have four children and God has built a missionary fellowship of 43 people called The River of Life. We all share the same calling to go to the ends of the world and make disciples. God has opened many doors in those years. He has sent the right people from all over the world to this tiny town “behind God’s back” to teach us and then He has sent us to bring his life to many places in Europe, America, Asia and Africa. I’ve begun to believe that God really loves unimportant places and ordinary men and women.

By Bohumir Zivcak, Ph.D.
"This daring ambition of aspiring to great sanctity has never left me. I don’t rely on my own merits, because I haven’t any; I put all my confidence in Him who is virtue, who is Holiness itself."

St. Thérèse of Lisieux

March 2010

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

Vero Beach, FL, Parish Mission
Thursday, March 4–Saturday, March 6
Peter and Debbie Herbeck
Contact Ken or Phyllis Shearn at 772-567-5165

Lansing, MI
St. Mary’s Cathedral Lenten Retreat Day
Saturday, March 6
Ralph Martin
Contact number: 517-484-5331

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

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

Los Lunas, NM
Archdiocese Women’s Day of Renewal
Saturday, March 13
Sr. Ann Shields, SGL
Contact bsirael01@qwestoffice.net

Indianapolis, IN, Legatus Retreat
Thursday, March 18
Ralph Martin

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

Lansing, MI, Diocesan Youth Conference
Saturday, March 20
Sr. Ann Shields, SGL
Contact Pat Rinker at 517-898-5676

Taylor, MI, Knights of Columbus
Event open to public
Wednesday, March 24
Sr. Ann Shields, SGL
Contact Donald Zub at 313-291-0062

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

Lincoln, NE, Men’s Conference
Saturday, March 27
Peter Herbeck
Contact Matt Hecker at 402-417-3208

April 2010

Mexico City Mission with Fr. Gabriel
Richard High School
Monday, April 5–Monday, April 12
Jim Murphy, Debbie Herbeck and Mission Team

Pittsburgh, PA
Crossing the Goal Men’s Conference
Saturday, April 10, 9:00am
Peter Herbeck
Contact dave@crossingthegoal.com
or info@cmfpitt.org

Saginaw, MI, Diocesan Retreat
Friday, April 16–Sunday, April 18
Sr. Ann Shields
Contact Dr. Ed Hogan at 989-797-6662

On the Road

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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Design
Anne Martin

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