Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As I mentioned last month we had a very special visit from the new Archbishop of Riga, Latvia, Zbignevs Stankevics. We have known Archbishop Zbignevs for many years and it was a joy to spend some time with him in his new capacity. This month I want to devote this space to sharing with you an interview I did with him while he was here.

RM: It’s been delightful to have you with us these past few days. For the benefit of our Renewal Ministries’ supporters can you tell us a little about your spiritual journey?

AZ: This was during the Soviet times. I was born in a Catholic family, but at the age of 13 I lost my faith. I became like a prodigal son and I was seeking happiness in my own manner, and I tried different ways to be happy. I was quite a diligent student in school, but I was strongly focused on sports. I was one of the top runners in Latvia and later I studied in the Polytechnical Institute. I liked cybernetics, artificial intelligence. As I neared graduation I realized I needed to find a meaning in life. I started to practice karate, also yoga. I was interested in Hinduism and Buddhism. I started to seek spiritual experiences, but I was disillusioned with Christianity. I thought it was for old women, that it wasn’t modern. After some years had passed, I began to believe that a supreme being exists, that God exists and I realized that I wanted to be united with Him. Despite all my spiritual striving, I was getting frustrated.

RM: You were trying to be one with God through yoga and Eastern religions, but were getting frustrated?

AZ: Yes, and I entered into a time of crisis. And at that point in my life I met some young people and they told me, “We are Christians and we are praying together, and we are sharing bible texts,” and they invited me to participate. After some months I accepted that Jesus could give me what I was seeking and that through Him I could be united with God. I turned back to the Church and I continued on pg 2
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

When I said yes, I experienced a strong peace and inner freedom in my heart. At that moment I was ready to take my bible and to leave all—my job, my apartment, everything I had.

fessed my sin. It wasn’t for the sake of pressure from the outside; it was coming from my heart. And so I discovered that I am called to be united with God, through Jesus Christ. From 1980-1990, I participated in an ecumenical community.

RM: Was it difficult to be a Christian in Latvia during that time?
AZ: It wasn’t easy. Some of my friends were arrested and they went to prison and one leader of our community was treated as psychotically ill, but it wasn’t true. The government authorities wanted to torture him and break him.

RM: At a certain point, things became easier?
AZ: Yes, in 1987 there was an amnesty for political and religious prisoners and they became free and we launched our activities again in a more open manner. About the same time I began to get the thought that perhaps I should become a priest. I prayed and talked to trustworthy people about this and at a certain point I just knew that this was the path that God was calling me on. When I said yes, I experienced a strong peace and inner freedom in my heart. At that moment I was ready to take my bible and to leave all—my job, my apartment, everything I had. After less than two months I started my studies in philosophy and theology in the Catholic University in Lublin in Poland. It was about that time that I first met you and Renewal Ministries at a conference in Warsaw, and again, the next year at an even bigger conference. And then a few years later you were speaking to 20,000 people in Czestochowa and you led people to pray for me on my journey to becoming a priest.

RM: And then what happened?
AZ: After six years I became a priest, and I started my service in Latvia. During this time, you may remember I had you come to Latvia and give some lectures at the Academy of Science and also speak to all our seminarians. And then after being ordained for six years I was sent to Rome where I studied for a doctorate in theology. Your book The Catholic Church at the End of the Age: What is the Spirit Saying? was an inspiration for me during this time and some of its themes contributed to my doctorate. And then just two years ago, I came back to Latvia and this past June 16th, the Apostolic Nuncio gave me a letter indicating that the Holy Father was naming me the successor of our Cardinal, the Archbishop Metropolitan of Riga, and it has revolutionized my life!

RM: It’s unusual to go from being a priest to becoming the archbishop of a major capital of the country. They didn’t put you out in the countryside to try you out in a rural area as an auxiliary bishop. What was it like when you received that letter?
AZ: I felt like I was in a dream. My heart melted and I was almost weeping, I was so deeply touched. After some minutes, I asked myself, what should I do? And the next thought was, I have to ask the Lord. The nuncio left me alone in the chapel with this decision to make. And I asked the Lord, “Lord, what are you thinking, is it necessary to accept it or not?” And then I remembered and it was if I heard these words: “You prayed for four years for the new bishop, for good discernment for the nuncio and all the persons involved in this process. You prayed for a bishop anointed by the Holy Spirit. Do you believe that this is my response to your prayers, and the prayers of many, the prayers of your prayer group?” I had asked my friends and members of my prayer group to pray for the right new bishop. When I understood that this was God’s response through the authorities of the Church to all the prayers, I realized I needed to say “yes.” My whole journey has been a saying “yes” to the Lord each step along the way. I want to continue to do so each and every day.

RM: Has the Lord already started to give you light and wisdom about how you should lead the Archdiocese in your new responsibility?
AZ: Yes, even before I was officially ordained He began to give me light and indicated that I

continued on pg 3
needed to make some decisions right away for the good of the Church. For many years I knew some things needed to change and the Cardinal gave me permission to start making the changes right away. The Lord is giving me more light and grace than I have ever received before.

RM: Can you share with us some of the priorities you see as you move into this new responsibility?

AZ: My first responsibility is to keep my heart free for the Lord and to be united with Him. This is the foundation for everything else. My next priority is to build unity with my priests, to enter into deep spiritual unity with them. This unity needs to extend to my lay collaborators whom I value highly.

RM: I know that for many years you have been very concerned about giving encouragement and confidence to lay people. You were involved with a lay community for a while and then you were director of an institute that helped form lay leaders.

AZ: Yes, I want to awaken a sleeping giant, because without this awakening, we can’t transform our society and our country. We need mature lay people and formation is very important. Slowly, I am finding such mature lay people. We are praying together, we are seeking discernment together and as we have this spiritual unity we are going forward.

RM: I know there are about 2,600,000 people in Latvia and maybe 23% are Catholic. What do you see as the main challenges facing the Church in Latvia right now?

AZ: During the communist period our whole country was quite wounded. We don’t find it easy to trust others because of this and we are used to being very alone. We need to recover a sense of trust in one another and learn how to work together as a team.

RM: With the collapse of communism has come a very rapid “westernization” of the country and rapid economic and political change. How is this “opening to the West” affecting the Church?

AZ: Unfortunately this rapid secularization is negatively affecting the Church. After entering into the European Union, our vocations greatly diminished. Ten years ago, we had 47 seminarians, now we have 23. We are not ready to manage our freedom with responsibility. We need to learn how to do this from those who have found a way to maintain their Christian commitment in the midst of this secularism.

RM: In some ways, what communism didn’t destroy, Western materialism is now trying to destroy.

AZ: And even more efficiently! Yes, it’s more dangerous than communism.

RM: During communist times the seminary in Latvia was the only functioning seminary for the whole Soviet Union, except for Lithuania which had its own seminary.

AZ: The first Cardinal guided the Church in Latvia through the period of communist slavery. Our second Cardinal guided our Church from this slavery into the land of freedom. But now we have discovered that this freedom is very dangerous. We are not ready to manage it. My challenge is to help our people manage this freedom and to use it in a responsible way.

RM: Archbishop, thank you so much for being with us. We are going to invite all of our Renewal Ministries friends to pray for you and for Latvia. God bless you.

AZ: God bless you and thank you. Let’s stay in touch with each other.

There is more good news! Fr. Jan Liesen, a friend of Renewal Ministries for several years who has taught at our bible schools and co-authored the Come and See Bible Study: Wisdom with our board member Laurie Manhardt , was ordained an auxiliary bishop of the diocese of ’s-Hertogenbosch in the Netherlands last month. Also, a young deacon who we met in Lithuania on one of our first mission trips has now also been ordained as a bishop there.

And thank you, dear friends and supporters, for all you have done all these years to make this work possible.

In Christ,

Ralph Martin

Please Pray...

+ for Fr. Francis Martin, a friend of Renewal Ministries and noted biblical scholar, who suffered a serious heart attack and is having a difficult recovery.

+ the upcoming missions to Slovakia, Czech Republic, and Mexico this month.

+ for Archbishop Zbignevs Stankevics as he serves the new archbishop of Riga, Latvia.

+ 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.
A Communion in Mission; the Third International Priests’ Retreat, Uganda

The vision and mission of Renewal Ministries can be summarized as: evangelization and renewal. We believe the Lord has commissioned us to respond to the Church’s call for a new evangelization, which is simply the continuation of the Great Commission given to the apostles by Jesus himself: “Go make disciples of all nations…” (Matthew 28:18) An essential and irreplaceable element of that mission is personal renewal and empowerment in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the “primary agent” of the Church’s mission. We are convinced that the success of the new evangelization is dependent upon the action of the Holy Spirit. In the words of the recent Popes, what is needed is a “new Pentecost.” A new Pentecost means a personal Pentecost, the experience of the realities that Jesus said would accompany the outpouring of the Holy Spirit:

“You heard from me, for John baptized with water, but before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 1:4–5)

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses.” (Acts 1:8)

It is our conviction that these words of Jesus are meant for everyone. All are called to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. Every baptized person is meant to experience firsthand the reality of the Holy Spirit’s power. When that happens, when someone is baptized in the Holy Spirit, the Spirit imparts power, often accompanied by a new passion for and a fresh understanding of the central place of evangelization in the life of every believer.

That’s the starting point of the Church’s mission. It’s exactly what happened to the apostles on the day of Pentecost. They were touched, empowered, baptized in the Holy Spirit and they were transformed by that encounter. They received spiritual gifts, new insight, energy, boldness, conviction, compassion and clarity about the message they were called to proclaim as they sought to “go and make disciples of all nations…”

We believe that the Lord has called Renewal Ministries to help communicate in many and varied ways to individuals and groups of all kinds within the Church, the fundamental and irreplaceable truth that the new evangelization depends upon the experience of a new Pentecost. We want the message of the recent Popes to reach every level of the Church’s life. We share the conviction and passion communicated by Pope Paul VI about the Church’s greatest need in our time: “this need is the Spirit... the Church needs her eternal Pentecost; she needs fire in her heart, words on her lips, a glance that is prophetic.” (Pope Paul VI, General Audience, 11/29/72) The Church needs fire in her heart! It’s from there, from the abundance of the heart, as Jesus said, “the mouth speaks.” There will be no word on our lips without this interior fire. The word that has power to change comes forth from this fire or it does not come at all.

This is why Pope Benedict XVI has continually called the Church to cry out to God for the experience of a new Pentecost. “Let us rediscover, dear brothers and sisters, the beauty of being baptized in the Holy Spirit…” (Benedict XVI, Pentecost 2008)

It is a thrilling time to be alive and living as a disciple of Jesus in His Church. We are being led by the Lord himself to lay hold of, once again, the fundamental realities of Pentecost. He’s giving us new power, he’s putting his word in our hearts and on our lips, he’s giving us prophetic insight and a new ability to speak
to our generation a word that gives life, that brings hope and that produces real change. He is bringing us back to our beginnings, to the foundations of our faith.

Standing Together

We feel privileged to be caught up in this work of the Lord at this time in the life of the Church. We’re especially grateful for the many bishops, priests, deacons, religious sisters and dynamic lay people the Lord has led us to partner with in countries all around the world. From the beginning of this ministry, the Lord repeatedly told us prophetically that he had already prepared people who shared this same essential vision to stand with us, and that he was going to open doors all around the world for us to walk through where we would find many who were ready to respond to this grace of a new Pentecost and new evangelization.

Every month we bring you stories from many different countries, peoples, and cultures that testify to the work of the Holy Spirit in our time. We see the Holy Spirit bringing about a “communion in mission” among many diverse people. He is opening our hearts to the same fundamental realities—to deep, personal conversion, the experience of a new Pentecost, the reception of spiritual gifts, new clarity about the central message of the Gospel, a desire for holiness, a growing zeal for souls, and a new resolve to respond with all our hearts to the Great Commission.

This past July we sponsored the 3rd International Priests’ Retreat at Gamba, Seminary in Kampala, Uganda. Over 350 bishops and priests continued on pg 6

Fr. Francis Martin and the Greenhaws with some of the seminarians from Gamba who served at the Priests’ Retreat

“He’s giving us new power, he’s putting his word in our hearts and on our lips, he’s giving us prophetic insight and a new ability to speak to our generation a word that gives life, that brings hope and that produces real change.”
Many priests were baptized in the Spirit, some were healed and many experienced a whole new level of freedom and forgiveness in their personal lives.

from five different East African countries attended and many were returning attendees of the 2005 and 2008 retreats. Led by a dynamic team which included Bishop Joseph Bagobiri of the Diocese of Kafanchan, Nigeria, Fr. Francis Martin, Lloyd and Nancy Greenhaw, our country coordinators for Uganda, and me, the retreat built upon the foundations laid at our two previous retreats.

Bishop Joseph and Fr. Francis gave powerful presentations each day and Lloyd and Nancy led evening sessions that were directed toward helping the priests open up more fully to the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Many priests were baptized in the Spirit, some were healed and many experienced a whole new level of freedom and forgiveness in their personal lives.

In 2005, at our first International Retreat, we introduced the priests to the Fraternity of Priests, a network of support that grew out of the annual Priests and Deacons Retreat at Franciscan University of Steubenville. Since that time the Fraternity has grown rapidly throughout Uganda and is spreading to surrounding countries. The Fraternity is another concrete expression of the “communion in mission.” Priests are opening their lives to one another, being accountable, offering personal support and encouragement to one another, and breaking the isolation that so many priests experience in their lives. Following upon the success of the Fraternity of Priests, a Seminarians Fraternity has grown over the past two years and now has over one hundred members of its own. Key leaders from the Fraternity of Priests have provided excellent leadership and support for the seminarians. Within this support network the priests and seminarians have found opportunity to continue to carry on the themes of the retreats and to grow in the grace and vision of the new Pentecost together.

In his closing comments at the end of the retreat, Archbishop Cyprian Lwanga of Kampala exhorted all the priests to take this grace of a new Pentecost to every parish and diocese throughout Uganda and to their home countries. He underlined a very important point about the Church’s charismatic dimension: it is for everyone! It isn’t limited to a particular movement, but it is a reality and grace that God desires to pour out on the whole Church. He exhorted the priests to be bold and to embrace their responsibility as priests to help all the baptized open their hearts to a personal Pentecost and to respond wholeheartedly to the new evangelization.

The hard work over the years of our brothers and sisters from the Emmaus Center and the Office for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, led by Joseph Alumansi and Joseph Auno, has born great fruit. They have provided excellent vision and leadership for the retreats and have been an ongoing support for the priests and seminarians throughout the country of Uganda. The leaders of the Fraternity of Priests, including Fr. David Byaruhanga, Fr. Silverio Twinomugisha and Fr. Alex Ojacor, among others, continue to provide anointed leadership for the fraternity.

Staying on Course

The challenge for all of us is to continue the work that Lord has begun in us. We’re grateful for the many brothers and sisters around the world who have joined us in this “communion in mission.” We look forward to continuing to work together to promote renewal and evangelization both here in the United States and abroad. With your help, through your prayers and financial giving, we can respond to the amazing opportunities the Lord opens before us. +
Don’t Give Up!

By Msgr. Gregory Smith

Don’t give up! When things got tough, Abraham—our father in faith—didn’t give up on God. When hope seemed futile, Sarah did not quit hoping. The Letter to the Hebrews presents Abraham and Sarah as models of faith, but their lives weren’t smooth and untroubled just because they put their trust in God. And they didn’t get exactly what they expected. As Hebrews 11:13 says, “All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them.” Or as William Barclay writes, “To Abraham, God’s promise never came fully true; and yet he never abandoned his faith.”

Abraham was able to accept this because of perseverance. The Catechism says that Abraham’s prayer was a battle of faith marked by trust in God’s faithfulness and by certitude in the victory promised to those who persevere (2592). The Catechism also says that we need humility, trust, and perseverance in order to battle what we experience as failure in prayer: “discouragement during periods of dryness; sadness that, because we have ‘great possessions,’ we have not given all to the Lord; disappointment over not being heard according to our own will; … and so forth” (2728).

In Don’t Give Up!, a booklet by Ralph Martin, he focuses on persevering in the fight against sin, but it applies to persevering faith in general. Ralph offers ten keys to perseverance.

1. Know how important perseverance is!
2. Ask God for it. If enduring was a purely personal effort, it would be too terrifying to think about. So we ask God for help; we not only ask for the strength not to quit, we even ask him for the grace to want to persevere. Ralph writes, “Strength to persevere is a gift that’s given, that we need to ask for and receive.”
3. We must break with sin. We need to know that perseverance means following Jesus without compromise. We can’t pick and choose the areas where we want to persevere.
4. We can learn perseverance from the saints. That’s what we’re doing when we recall the example of Abraham and Sarah, but there’s a whole litany of saints who can inspire us by their patient endurance of every kind of trial and help us by their prayers.
5. Sometimes we just need to put our heads down and push ahead. We just need to bear the yoke, knowing that “when your faith is tested this makes for endurance” (see Jas 1:2–4).
6. Trust that we will never be tested or tempted beyond our strength. This is a promise straight from Scripture and we need to hold on to it like someone grabbing a life preserver in a stormy sea. St. Paul says, “No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength… Along with the test he will give you a way out of it so that you may be able to endure it” (ICor 10:13). If that promise could sink deep in our hearts it would bring about a trust greater than Abraham’s.
7. Look to the Scriptures as a source of strength. They are filled with encouragement for every sort of trial, warn us against turning back and—of course—tell the story of Jesus’ own perseverance and the victory it won for us.
8. Pray! Don’t just pray for things to change—pray for the strength to face what doesn’t change. In Luke’s gospel, Jesus tells the disciples to pray always and not lose heart. As St. John Vianney said, “All saints began their conversion by prayer, and through prayer they persevered.”
9. Participate in the perseverance of Jesus. St. Paul says “By the might of his glory you will be endowed with the strength needed to stand fast, even to endure joyfully whatever may come…” (Col 1:11) We need to draw on the strength and energy that comes to us as a gift from God, especially available in the Eucharist, where Christ himself is given to us as the fullest source of encouragement and strength.
10. Finally, remember that the reward is heaven! St. Paul says that he considers “the sufferings of the present to be as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed in us” (Rom 8:18). “The joy of heaven,” Ralph Martin concludes, “is worth any price that must be paid. And any price that must be paid is as nothing compared to the glory and joy of heaven.”

Msgr. Greg Smith is a board member for Renewal Ministries in Canada and is presently pastor of Christ the Redeemer Parish in West Vancouver, British Columbia.
On the Road

October 2010
Cleveland, OH, National Prayer Gathering
October 2
Ralph Martin
Mission to Slovakia, Czech Republic
October 7-23
Tom Edwards and Team
Contact Jessica at 734-662-1730 ext 32 or jsherwood@renewalministries.net
Camden, NJ
Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference
October 8–10
Peter and Debbie Herbeck
Contact Pat Loughran at: 570-823-6921
Wynnewood, PA
Catholics United for the Faith Conference
October 9
Ralph Martin
Contact: annemwilson@yahoo.com or 215-247-2585 or http://cuf.homestead.com/cuf.html
*Ann Arbor, MI
Renewal Ministries US Board Meeting
October 10–11
*Omaha, NE
Institute for Priestly Formation Meeting
October 13
Ralph Martin
Livonia, MI, St. Michael the Archangel
October 14
Debbie Herbeck
Contact Sharon Williams at 734-261-1455, ext 207 or swilliams@livoniastmichael.org
Mission to Mexico
October 17–23
Jim Murphy and Team
Contact Jessica at 734-662-1730 ext 32 or jsherwood@renewalministries.net
*Grosse Pointe, MI
Executive Seminar Retreat
October 23
Peter and Debbie Herbeck
Louisville, KY
Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference
October 23
Ralph Martin
Contact Bob Garvey at bgarvey@aol.com or 502-435-6186
Minneapolis, MN
National Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference
October 29–31
Peter Herbeck
Contact: 1-800-338-2445 or www.nsc-chariscenter.org
November 2010
*New Ulm, MN
Faculty and High School Retreat
November 5–9
Peter Herbeck
Mission to Rwanda
November 6–27
Lloyd and Nancy Greenhaw and Team
Contact Jessica at 734-662-1730 ext 32 or jsherwood@renewalministries.net
*Event closed to public

I will not mistrust God, though I feel myself weakening and on the verge of being overcome with fear… I trust He will place His holy hand on me and in the stormy seas hold me up from drowning.

Saint Thomas More

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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