Part II

This is the second half of a two part article by Ralph that summarizes the major themes of his doctoral thesis on the problem of Universalism. In the first half which appeared in last month’s newsletter, he discusses the doctrinal confusion and prevailing modern worldview that jumps from the possibility of salvation apart from Christ and the Church to the probability or even presumption that everyone is saved. In this article, Ralph takes a closer look at the fundamental biblical worldview of the “two ways” and how it provides the most important motive and rationale for a Catholic understanding of evangelization.

Priests and theologians who give the impression that hell is a medieval superstition are not being faithful to the structure of reality as revealed to us in Scripture. They are seriously misleading people about the truth of our situation, they are not grasping the actual teaching of the Council, and they are doctrinally undermining an important rationale for evangelization.

Decades ago, it was already apparent to astute commentators that there were theological theories circulating which went way beyond what the Church understood the truth to be about the salvation of unbelievers. Despite these warnings, the drift to speaking of evangelization as an “enrichment” of human life, or simply as a command to evangelize by Christ, and the

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gradual disappearance of the biblical world view has only increased over time.

The tendency has been to repeat the argument from authority (we are commanded to evangelize) or to talk about the “enrichment” that knowing Christ brings to human life, rather than to elaborate the reasons for the deep necessity of such evangelization; namely, vast numbers of people within and without the Church don’t appear to be seeking God and trying to do his will and follow the light of their consciences. Instead, they are exchanging the truth of God for a lie, suppressing the truth, and living in rebellion and immorality; they desperately need to be invited to faith and repentance in order to be saved. Evangelization is about salvation. Something profoundly important is truly at stake.

There is a consistent message woven throughout the revelation of both Testaments. There are two ways, two choices. One leads to eternal life, the other leads to eternal death.

Mt. 7:13–14 is not an isolated text, but summarizes a fundamental theme of scriptural revelation—the two ways, two choices, the separation of humanity on the day of judgment, the weeds and the wheat, the sheep and the goats, the foolish and the wise, the vicious and the virtuous, the branches that bear fruit and those that are cut off and thrown in the fire, the saved and the condemned, the houses on rock, and those on sand, those who hear the Word and those who ignore it, the heavenly kingdom and hell, the just who are saved with difficulty, the godless who are condemned, those who die in their sins, those who die forgiven, those who love the light and those who love the darkness, those who receive Him and those who don’t receive Him, the repentant, believing thief and the mocking, unbelieving thief, etc.

It is important for us to see that it is not just unbelievers who are liable to eternal death but believers who are believers in name only. This teaching is reaffirmed strikingly in a text from Vatican II that is seldom cited:

“Even though incorporated into the Church, one who does not however persevere in charity is not saved. He remains indeed in the bosom of the Church, but ‘in body’ not ‘in heart’” [the footnote gives several citations from St. Augustine]. All children of the Church should nevertheless remember that their exalted condition results, not from their own merits, but from the grace of Christ. If they fail to respond in thought, word and deed to that grace, not only shall they not be saved, but they shall be the more severely judged.” [The footnote here gives citations from Lk, Mt, and James in support of what has just been affirmed]. (Lumen Gentium)

The citation of Romans 1 and the implicit reference to Romans 2 in Lumen Gentium 16 shows us that something is really at stake: eternal salvation or damnation. The gospel is a chance to “escape the wrath to come.” Judgment continually happens in history, but the “day of wrath,” the “day of the Lord,” will definitively pass sentence on the entire human race and there will be a permanent separation between those who believed and obeyed and those who didn’t. This isn’t just a theoretical possibility or an empty warning. The witness of the entire Bible—and indeed of all of human history—is to the actual historical realization of a choice for and against God.

There are those who we see in history actually choosing the way that leads to life and others who actually choose the way that leads to death, those who choose the blessing and those who choose the curse. (Deut. 30:15–20) We see the difference between the wise and the foolish (Sirach 21:11–28), between those who serve God and those who refuse to serve him, between those who fear the Lord and trust in him and those who wickedly defy him and trust in themselves (Malachi 3:16–21), between those who believe and those who refuse to believe, between those who truly know the Father and those who don’t, between those who grieve and quench the Spirit and those who don’t, between those who worship the one God in Spirit and truth and those who have exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worship the creature, between the city of God and the city of man, between those who love the brethren and those who don’t, between the good and the wicked. This separation which exists even now is finalized and the eternal reward and punishment appropriate to each individual and grouping is carried out definitively on the great Day of Judgment.

In order for the new evangelization to flourish there is a need for clear teaching
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and bold preaching in the power of the Holy Spirit, which communicates the revealed Word of God as it comes to us in sacred Scripture, Tradition, and the contemporary Magisterium, including the neglected last three sentences of LG 16.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself, and has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man. Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment.” (Jn 5:25–29, RSV)

“For if God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but condemned them to the chains of Tartarus and handed them over to be kept for judgment; and if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (to destruction), reducing them to ashes, making them an example for the godless (people) of what is coming; and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man oppressed by the licentious conduct of unprincipled people (for day after day that righteous man living among them was tormented in his righteous soul at the lawless deeds that he saw and heard), then the Lord knows how to rescue the devout from trial and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who follow the flesh with its depraved desire and show contempt for lordship.” (2 Peter 2:4–10, NAB)

If the “new evangelization” is truly to flourish and the good news of God’s offer of mercy and eternal life is to be promulgated widely in the power of the Holy Spirit we have a decision to make. May we choose wisely, courageously and faithfully.
What Mercy!

As I prayed before writing this article, I was struck by how this spring is spiritually packed with Church feasts. I think the Lord wants us to take note of what I call special signs of His mercy, if we have eyes to see and ears to hear.

First, of course, is the Resurrection—the event without which we would have no hope at all. We are born to live eternally and we will, if we repent of our sin, because of what God did for us helpless creatures through His Son’s death on the cross. What mercy, brothers and sisters, what mercy!

Second is the great feast of Divine Mercy which we celebrated on May 1st this year. Do you understand the absolutely pivotal part that divine mercy plays in our own salvation and that of others? Does the grace of this feast operate in your daily life?

“Everything that exists has come forth from the very depths of my most tender mercy. Every soul in its relation to Me will contemplate My love and mercy throughout eternity. The Feast of Mercy emerged from My very depths of tenderness. It is my desire that it be solemnly celebrated on the first Sunday after Easter. Mankind will not have peace until it turns to the Fount of My mercy.” (Diary of St. Faustina, #699)

Remember when Jesus says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit...”? The word Jesus uses here for poor is better translated as beggar—one who is completely dependent on another for support. We don’t like dependence; we strive for independence and in some areas of human life, it is essential. But, in our relationship with God we need to see and willingly embrace our dependence. We cannot make ourselves holy or good or truly wise. We need the Holy Spirit, and we celebrate its outpouring upon the Church in the Feast of Pentecost on June 11th of this year. We desperately need God’s Spirit to reveal to us our true condition—how poor and helpless we really are. But, we are, by grace, sons and daughters of God by baptism and realizing who we are in truth enables us to humble ourselves before God and to tell Him we cannot live apart from His mercy. I cannot, you cannot, and we cannot save ourselves! It is that simple and that profound. If we yield to a posture of loving dependence upon God for life and breath, if we do good deeds as a sign of our gratitude for God’s salvation, (we cannot earn it), THEN we come more and more into a place of peace and trust. Ask the Holy Spirit during this great Feast of Pentecost to help you become truly poor!

Then we are in a place to be channels of God’s mercy to others. Almost sixty years ago, my mother gave me a poem to memorize for some parish event. I haven’t recited it since then but the other day while reading a letter...
from a despairing woman imprisoned for murder, the poem came back to me and I sent her a copy of *The Touch of the Master’s Hand* with the assurance of my prayer.

’Twas battered and scarred,
And the auctioneer thought it scarcely worth his while
To waste his time on the old violin, but he held it up with a smile.

“What am I bid, good folks?” he cried.

“Who’ll start the bidding for me? One dollar, one dollar, do I hear two?”

“Two dollars and who’ll make it three?”

“Three dollars once, three dollars twice and going for three.”

But, no. From the room far back a grey bearded man
Came forward and picked up the bow,
Then wiping the dust from the old violin
And tightening up the strings, he played a melody pure and sweet
As sweet as an angel sings. The music ceased and the auctioneer
With a voice that was quiet and low,
Said: “What am I bid for this old violin?”

As he held it aloft with its bow.
“..."Three thousand once, three thousand twice and going and gone.” said he.
The people cheered, but some of them cried,

“We do not quite understand. What changed its worth?”

Swift came the reply: “The touch of the Master’s Hand!
And many a man with life out of tune, and battered and scarred with sin
Is auctioned cheap to a thoughtless crowd much like the old violin.

A mess of pottage, a glass of wine, a game and he travels on.
He is going once, he is going twice, he is going and almost gone.
But The Master comes and the foolish crowd never can quite understand,
The worth of a soul and the change that’s wrought
By the touch of The Master’s Hand.
(Poem by Myra Brooks Welch)

By the power of His Spirit, by the love and mercy flowing from His Sacred Heart (July 1st), may we humbly receive the mercy God has for each of us and in gratitude for what God has done for us, be channels of that mercy to all we meet.

“Let no soul fear to draw near to me, even though its sins be as scarlet…
Mankind will not have peace until it turns to the Fount of My Mercy.”

Please Pray…

+ for a greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Church during Pentecost, bringing deeper conversion, and empowerment for holiness and mission.

+ for upcoming mission trips to Slovenia, Italy, Papua New Guinea, and Turkey this month. May God’s word go forth in power for deeper conversion and renewal in the Spirit.

+ 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.*
What do you get when you combine eight college students with plenty of sunshine, spring break vacation and lots of togetherness? Before your mind gets too far down the road, imagining the decadence of youth culture and lamenting the wasted (no pun intended) energy and zeal of unconverted Catholic youth, let me tell you that my intention here is to inspire and encourage you. So let me rephrase the question. What do you get when you combine eight dedicated, converted Catholic college students with a week of service to the poor, daily prayer and fellowship?

Make no mistake about it, our purpose and intention was to serve the ongoing mission work of Renewal Ministries in Mexico City and our team of young people worked together selflessly and joyfully to accomplish this goal. We spent three days in the garbage dump distributing food and clothing and providing basic medical care to several hundred men, women and children who live and work amid the garbage. We also visited Mother Inez and the mentally handicapped children in her orphanage and spent time in a government facility for senior men. As we encountered each person, in simple, yet profound ways—through a smile, a hug, a prayer, a song, or a brief conversation—we tried to communicate to them their immense dignity and value, and God’s personal love and care. In a practical sense, this mission trip was a huge success.

But in the weeks that followed, as I’ve prayed and we’ve reflected together as a mission team, I’m getting another perspective on the value of the mission. I can see God, who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us (Eph 3:20), doing a marvelous and wondrous work in the lives of these young people. For those of us praying for the future of the Church, for children, grandchildren, family members, friends and co-workers, this is what should fill us with hope and remind us of how much the Lord desires to work in every human heart.

Conversion

Throughout the week, free from daily distractions and the noise of technology, these young people freely and eagerly responded to God’s Spirit at work within them to bring them to deeper personal conversion and transformation. As they led morning prayers and Scripture reflection, ministered to the poor and to one another, there was an outpouring and awakening of natural and spiritual gifts. God was equipping them to serve Him and they understood with clarity their true identity and purpose in Christ. Serving amongst the poor helped them encounter Christ more personally. Leaving Mexico, we challenged each other to continue to seek after Christ and to live wholeheartedly for Him.

Communion

Conversion naturally leads to communion. Knowing more confidently who they are and what God has made them for, enabled these
Now in college, Natalia Collins and Matt Quinn both participated in the Mexico mission trip as high school seniors and eagerly returned to serve this year.

Working along side our Mexican brothers and sisters from a local parish, we distributed food care packages to more than 300 people in the dump one day.

young adults to love and care for one another with genuine love and respect. We went from being a team, to being a family. And as we served and worshipped side by side with our Mexican brothers and sisters it opened our eyes to the reality of the body of Christ and what it means to share both the joy and suffering of life in Christ. Leaving Mexico, we challenged each other to always remember that we are never alone, that the Lord is present to us as we live in communion with one another.

Mission
Each young person raised their own funds and participated in the mission because they felt called by God to go. But more importantly, they left Mexico City knowing they were sent by God, back into the throes of ordinary life, ongoing challenges, and future decisions to be on mission, engaged in the Master’s work and empowered to bring His life and love to all.

What do you get when you combine conversion, communion, and mission with young people throughout the world? New disciples who infuse the Bride of Christ with a radiant love for the Bridegroom, and serve His Kingdom with energy and zeal.

To catch a glimpse of our mission trip, go to http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FsR_uuqShmw and for more information on Renewal Ministries’ missions go to www.renewalministries.net or contact Kathleen at kkittle@renewalministries.net.

“...they left Mexico City knowing they were sent by God, back into the throes of ordinary life, ongoing challenges, and future decisions to be on mission, engaged in the Master’s work and empowered to bring His life and love to all.”
On the Road

June 2011

Mission to Slovenia
May 25–June 6
Don and Pat Turbitt and Team

Rimini, Italy
National Conference of the Italian Renewal
June 2–5
Ralph Martin

Canton, OH, Living Bread Radio Event
June 3–4
Peter Herbeck
Contact: info@livingbreadradio.com
or 888-966-2903

*Omaha, NE, Legatus Meeting
June 8
Sr. Ann Shields

Mission to Papua New Guinea
June 8–27
Lloyd & Nancy Greenhaw and Team
Contact Kathleen
at kkittle@renewalministries.net
or 734-662-1730 ext 192

*Birmingham, AL
Crossing the Goal Taping
June 27–July 1
Peter Herbeck

Mission to Turkey
June 28–July 11
John Kazanjian and Team
Contact Kathleen
at kkittle@renewalministries.net
or 734-662-1730 ext 192

July 2011

San Francisco, CA
Catholic Charismatic Conference
July 1–3
Sr. Ann Shields, SGL
Contact Carlos at tonypoo@msn.com
or 650-726-2587

Mission to Tanzania
July 5–22
Tom Edwards and Team
Contact Kathleen
at kkittle@renewalministries.net
or 734-662-1730 ext 132

Mission to Hungary
July 11–17
Deacon Steve Thomashefski and Team
Contact Kathleen
at kkittle@renewalministries.net
or 734-662-1730 ext 132

Cleveland, OH
Catholic Charismatic Conference
July 15–17
Peter Herbeck
Contact Joe or Sue Palmieri at 440-774-1191
or conference@oberlin.net

Mission to Ukraine
July 24–31
Deacon Steve Thomashefski and Team
Contact Kathleen
at kkittle@renewalministries.net
or 734-662-1730 ext 132

Mission to Mexico
July 24–30
Jim Murphy and Team
Contact Kathleen
at kkittle@renewalministries.net
or 734-662-1730 ext 132

Bloomington, IL, St. Isidore Parish Event
July 27
Peter Herbeck
Contact number: 630-529-3045

*Events not open to the public

Holy Spirit, inspire us with the horror of sin.
Come and renew the face of the earth.
Shed Thy light in our souls.
Engrave Thy law in our hearts.
Inflame us with the flame of Thy love.
Open to us the treasures of Thy graces.
Teach us to pray well.
Enlighten us with Thy heavenly inspirations.
Lead us in the way of salvation.
Grant us the only necessary knowledge.
Inspire us in the practice of good.
Grant us the merits of all virtues.
Make us persevere in justice.
Be Thou our everlasting reward.
Litany of the Holy Spirit

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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