Dear Friends in the Mission,

Blessed John Paul II has meant a lot to us here at Renewal Ministries, as he has to so many all over the world. Over the years we have so often had the experience of sensing the Spirit leading us in a particular way or drawing our attention to a certain truth only to have it confirmed by something that John Paul would say or write.

Beyond that, we have been privileged to receive some significant personal encouragement from him over the years. Some of you know that Anne and I lived in Belgium for four years from 1976–1980 at the invitation of Cardinal Suenens, one of the four Moderators of the Second Vatican Council. Gary Seromik, our faithful Renewal Ministries’ administrator for all these years, was also with us for the full four years. Cardinal Suenens would sometimes ask me to travel with him as something like a “lay secretary” when his usual secretary, Fr. Wilfrid Brievens, couldn’t go, or along with Fr. Wilfrid. (Incidentally it has been a joy to run into Fr. Wilfrid in recent years; he is still giving talks and serving the Lord, most recently at the Colloquy here in Rome that focused on the theology of “baptism in the Spirit”). Following the death of John Paul I, after only 33 days as Pope, Cardinal Suenens invited me to accompany him to Rome where preparations for the Conclave that eventually elected John Paul II had begun. Cardinal Suenens introduced me to some of the Cardinals who were considered “papabile”—candidates for being elected Pope—and had me give them talks, etc. Then the Cardinal entered the conclave and I didn’t see him again until October 16, 1978, the day that John Paul II was elected. Word swept through Rome that the election had happened—white smoke was coming from the Sistine Chapel chimney—but no one knew who had been elected. It was a beautiful, warm, clear October night, and the sun had set and many lights illuminated the façade of St. Peter’s as a huge crowd gathered. What a surprise to everyone that Karol Wojtyla, the Cardinal from Krakow, Poland, walked out onto the balcony overlooking the Piazza and was announced as the next Pope! The first non-Italian Pope in over 400 years!

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**What a surprise to everyone that Karol Wojtyla, the Cardinal from Krakow, Poland, walked out onto the balcony overlooking the Piazza and was announced as the next Pope!**

The first non-Italian Pope in over 400 years!

When this tapestry of John Paul II was unfurled from the balcony of St. Peter’s after Pope Benedict XVI declared him “blessed” deep emotion welled up from the crowd as well as those who were watching on television. Tears flowed and shouts of gratitude, joy and praise filled the air.
Dear Friends in the Mission,

looking the Piazza and was announced as the next Pope! The first non-Italian Pope in over 400 years! And what a Pope!

I returned with Cardinal Suenens as he left the Conclave and had dinner with him and another Cardinal who had been “favored” to emerge as Pope but didn’t. It was an interesting conversation with just the three of us. The Lord knew what was best for his Church at this time.

Cardinal Suenens had been asked by Pope Paul VI to stay close to the Catholic charismatic renewal and Pope John Paul II renewed the request. Not long after his election I was at a meeting of the predecessor organization of ICCRS (International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services) of which I was the first Chairman. Cardinal Suenens arranged for our international Council—perhaps 12 members or so—two from each continent, to spend an evening with John Paul in the Apostolic Palace. We showed a video of the 1975 International Conference in Rome, which I chaired and for which Gary Seromik played a major administrative role, shared our testimonies, sang and prayed. Then the Pope gave his testimony and told how as a small boy his father taught him to pray each day to the Holy Spirit, which he had done!

On another occasion Cardinal Suenens invited me to accompany him to “Pranzo” the main mid-day meal in Rome, with the Pope in his apartment. There were about 10 of us around the table and the food was good, but I really couldn’t concentrate on it. At that time, Msgr. Justin Rigalli, an American priest who was head of the English section of the Pope’s administrative structure, was also at the meal and interrupted: “Holy Father, I have been listening to some tapes that Ralph Martin has done on the crisis of truth in the Church and I think you would be interested in hearing what he has to say.” The Pope asked me to share the substance of the “crisis of truth” message that I had been speaking about for a few years and which was published in 1982 in book form as A Crisis of Truth: The Attack on Faith, Morality and Mission in the Catholic Church. He listened carefully and afterwards Msgr. Rigalli told me that the Pope told him that he was in agreement with what I said. Msgr. Rigalli is currently Cardinal Rigalli, Archbishop of Philadelphia.

There were a number of other meetings with the Pope over the years, including times when the encouragement was sorely needed. Sometimes it’s hard for lay people to be doing what we’re doing in the Church; to have the Pope look me in the eyes on several occasions and say, “you must continue what you are doing, you must continue what you are doing,” was immensely encouraging. God knows what we need, when we need it.

There were many moving moments with him and Sr. Ann shares a special one in her reflection in this issue. A very special one for me was when I was asked to represent the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Leaders’ Conference which was meeting in Rome and address the Pope on our behalf, before he was about to speak to us, in the Vatican gardens. At the end of my remarks he invited me to come forward and gave me a big hug which was overwhelming.

But apart from the personal encouragement that he gave to so many, his teachings and his witness have been an enormous inspiration to us over the years in everything that we do at Renewal Ministries. His emphasis on holiness and evangelization has been our emphasis as well.

I hope you enjoy and are inspired by the reflections that others share in this newsletter as well.

We have also picked out from our various resources those which in a special way relate to John Paul II himself or to those themes that he so movingly articulated for us and the whole Church.

We are all blessed to have lived with him as our leader.

John Paul II, thank you! And pray for us!

Your brother in Christ,

Ralph Martin

Ralph Martin
My Memory of Blessed John Paul

There are some profound moments in my life when Pope John Paul spoke words that changed or deepened my relationship with the Lord and with the Church. His encyclicals, *Rich in Mercy*, *Toward the Third Millennium* and *The Consecrated Life* highlight the list. In my reading of each one, I could almost write a book about how the Lord taught me, inspired me, and convicted me in my own spiritual journey.

But for the purpose of this newsletter I will focus on recounting a moment with John Paul and Ralph Martin that literally gave me a new focus for my life.

In 1995 we were in Rome for a FIRE rally. After the conference as we were having dinner, we received a call from the Holy Father’s secretary inviting us to the Holy Father’s private Mass the following morning. After the Mass we were ushered into a large library room where the seventeen of us (speakers and staff) lined up to await the Holy Father. As he entered the room Father Michael Scanlan went to the Pope’s side to introduce each of us. The Holy Father came down the row and as he came to Ralph, Father Michael said, “And Holy Father, here is Ralph whom you know…” The Holy Father embraced Ralph with great warmth and affection. Ralph gave him a copy of his new book at that time: *The Catholic Church at the End of an Age: What is the Spirit Saying?* As the Pope received the book, he handed it to his secretary and said: “Oh, Ralph—I have already read it.” Then he grasped Ralph on both of his upper arms and said, “Ralph, what is the Spirit saying to the Church?” Standing next to Ralph, I thought, my goodness, how do you answer such a question when it is the Pope who is asking? Ralph was quiet for a long moment; he was praying. Then he said, “Holy Father, the Spirit is saying ‘JESUS’.”

The Holy Father shook Ralph as he grasped even more tightly Ralph’s arms and repeated, “Jesus”. Together those two men went on prayerfully repeating the name of Jesus.

I stood transfixed and when the Pope spoke to me and blessed me, I know that I spoke to him but I have no memory of what either of us said. I could only hear the name “Jesus” resounding in my mind, my heart, my soul. I knew in that moment that the most important thing in life was that Jesus be seen and known and loved. May I decrease and may He increase day by day.

Blessed John Paul, may we live life as you did, always allowing Jesus to ask you, “Do you love Me?” In short, may Jesus’ question to St. Peter always guide our lives as it did the life of Blessed John Paul.

Ralph presented the Pope with a copy of his book, *The Catholic Church at the End of an Age: What is the Spirit Saying?* and was told by John Paul that he had already read it!

“Holy Father, the Spirit is saying ‘JESUS’. ’ The Holy Father shook Ralph as he grasped even more tightly Ralph’s arms and repeated, ‘Jesus’. Together those two men went on prayerfully repeating the name of Jesus.”

Sr. Ann met John Paul in 1995 following a FIRE Rally in Rome.
I never had the privilege of meeting Blessed John Paul II, but I feel, like so many others, that I knew him personally. I love John Paul II—his spiritual vision, his teaching, his clarity, his compassion, his joy, his courage, his confidence in God, his openness to the present action of the Holy Spirit and his evangelical radicalism made him the most compelling, attractive and convincing disciple in my life.

One story from his life that touched me deeply occurred on the Holy Father’s historic pilgrimage to Israel in the Jubilee Year 2000. The trip was an important piece of the entire Jubilee Year itinerary of the Holy Father and something he was convinced the Lord wanted him to do, an event of great spiritual significance. Just prior to his departure, a firestorm of negative press against the pilgrimage came from prominent news outlets in Jerusalem and throughout the world. Jewish religious and political leaders expressed strong opposition to the Holy Father’s support for the cause of Pope Pius XII. The Holy Father declared Pope Pius XII venerable in 1990 and gave his support to the ongoing work for the cause of his canonization. The vocal opposition from Jewish leaders reached a fever pitch, causing some to advise Pope John Paul II to consider rescheduling the pilgrimage for another, less volatile time. Some of his key advisors counseled against it because they considered it too dangerous, but he thought otherwise.

In the face of all the opposition, a number of unexpected, but powerful voices began to emerge within Israel in support of the Holy Father. One of those voices was Edith Tzirer, a Holocaust survivor who told the moving story of how Pope John Paul as a young seminarian, had helped her in her time of greatest need. On Liberation Day in 1945, Edith then 14, was painfully thin, tubercular and alone. She had just been released from the Skarzysko-Kamienna labor camp. Wearing her camp uniform, she was riding a train to Cracow, where she had lost contact with her family at the beginning of the war in 1939. The train ran out of fuel and stopped in a small town. While the other passengers ate and drank, Edith sat off in a corner. A young tall and handsome seminary student with blue eyes approached her and asked, “Did you eat? Did you drink?” She hadn’t in a number of days and he went and brought her a cup of tea, her first in three years. She said the man told her to come with him and board a cattle car bound for Cracow. She told him she was too weak to walk. “He picked me up and I fell back down again like a sack of flour,” she said. “He took me on his back and carried me. We walked for three, four kilometers—I’m not sure—through the snow.” The man told her that his name was Karol Wojtyla. Years later, in 1978, her life established in Israel, she read in a newspaper that Karol Wojtyla had been named Pope. “I almost fainted,” she said.

Once her story was published in the Jerusalem papers, the public sentiment toward the Holy Father’s visit completely changed. Later, during one of the most dramatic and moving moments of his time in Israel, Edith was able to meet the Holy Father personally at the Hall of Remembrance at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem—fifty-four years after he had carried her on his back.

It was a powerfully symbolic moment of grace and healing. One rabbi expressed his own thoughts and feelings this way: “Today, a bridge was built over the river of blood that has flowed through our past…”

I remember how moved I was listening to the whole event on the radio with Debbie and our four children. It was a moment of great anointing. I fought back tears as the radio commentator described the Holy Father’s meeting with Edith Tzirer.

At that moment I sensed the Lord telling me that this one act of love, done in and for Jesus Christ, some fifty-four years earlier, had the power to overcome all those who sought to oppose the Holy Father’s pilgrimage to Israel. Love silenced all opposition. And it is that kind of love, that self-donating love in imitation of Jesus that will literally echo into eternity.

The Holy Father’s historic pilgrimage to Israel in the Jubilee Year 2000 was a memorable event of great spiritual significance.
Reflections on Blessed John Paul II

John Paul II—“Follow Me”
By Monsignor Gregory N. Smith

Msgr. Gregory Smith wrote this article on the occasion of Blessed John Paul’s death in 2005, when he was a doctoral student in Rome. What he said holds true now on the occasion of his Beatification. Msgr. Smith is Chairman of the Board of Renewal Ministries of Canada.

“Follow me.” Two words hold the key to understanding the message of Pope John Paul II, according to one of his closest collaborators. But these words, used by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger in his funeral homily, are not John Paul’s. They belong to Jesus, who says “follow me” no less than 18 times in the Gospels. The late pope sought no personal disciples. For him, “follow me,” meant only one thing: “follow Christ.”

To even begin to understand the impact and appeal of the late pope, one must turn to look at Jesus Christ. John Paul was convinced that his chief task was to reintroduce the world—especially youth—to Christianity’s founder and his radical message. For him, to know Christ was to know how to live and how to love, in good times and bad. It meant being loved by God himself. Knowing Christ was like breathing the air of the mountains that Karol Wojtyła loved to hike; there was nothing stuffy about it.

No words could rival what the pope’s actions taught about Christ. John Paul embraced his would-be assassin, accepted disability with good humour, carried on with determination and patience through pain and illness. Right to the moment of his noble and very public death, he was “a living gospel for all to hear,” in the words of the Mass celebrated on the feast days of apostles.

These actions were not original, but imitated Christ, who forgave his executioners and made his death a symbol of ultimate victory, much as the dying pope did. Again, John Paul’s wordless “follow me” meant only, “follow the One I am following.”

Analyzing the incredible outpouring of devotion we recently saw in Rome without reference to Jesus is like trying to fathom Pavarotti or Casals without knowing music. An outpouring it certainly was. Nothing in my experience begins to compare, not even the papal visit to Vancouver of 1984. Everyone I talked to had a story; a hasty flight from Medicine Hat, fifteen hours from Sicily by bus and boat—and an immediate return. After nine hours in line, one young man said simply, “How could I not say a final good-bye?”

But the big story was not fondness—it was faith. At Mass in St. Peter’s on Thursday, a senior bishop recounted how he’d met a young man the night before who pleaded to be admitted. The bishop explained that it had proved impossible to accommodate everyone. Still he pleaded. “I came here for the young people’s celebration during the Jubilee Year 2000,” he said. “I was a convinced atheist and I came to mock. “But in the Pope’s presence I was moved to think—and I found my faith.” Touched by the story, the bishop admitted the man to St. Peter’s through a side door. He knelt beside the pope’s body and sobbed for ten minutes. “Grazie, grazie, grazie,” was all he said.

The lasting contribution of John Paul to the Church and the world will be seen in the sprouting of the seeds of faith he planted. In this sense, his work has not ended but is just beginning. The undeniable sense of loss felt by many of us is greatly tempered when we realize that the good news the pope announced—messages of hope, peace, love, and human dignity—did not originate with him and cannot die with him.

Understanding his pontificate in this way leads to important consequences. If the late pope’s appeal comes from his Master and not his mastery of communication, then his death does not mean the loss of an irreplaceable figure. If he has shown his successor, other bishops, priests and indeed every Christian the power of the undiluted gospel, then the phenomena of his pontificate will continue. Indeed, if he has shown all people of good will the need to live their beliefs and convictions even against strong social currents, then the renewal of societies he championed will continue.

This is the challenge that issues from the life and death of John Paul II: to admire or to imitate? The challenge confronts, of course, every Catholic. Will we respond by leaving the “cafeteria line” of individualistic faith, and embrace the uncompromising doctrines that were the hallmark of this pontificate? Will bishops and priests of the third millennium be formed by the example of the pope, and strive with all their energy to live the gospel without compromise, preaching as much by what they do as by what they say?

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“John Paul’s wordless ‘follow me’ meant only, ‘follow the One I am following.’”

This inspiring banner was placed in St. Peter’s Square for weeks before and after the Beatification.
Reflections on Blessed John Paul II

He challenged all of us—people of good will—to live our beliefs with greater charity, consistency and courage. He invited those who suffer, who fear or face death, to live their trials with serenity and purpose, as he did.

John Paul II led—by following.

**John Paul II Reflection**

*By Gary Seromik*

Recently my son sent me a quote from the forthcoming book by a Swiss Guard at the Vatican during the early years of Pope John Paul II’s pontificate. “When you were with the Holy Father,” he reminisced, “you felt like you were the reason he got up in the morning.” I felt that his short reflection encapsulated my own experience of several random encounters with Pope John Paul II over the years. It seems to reflect the experience of many others. However brief the encounter might be, you felt both personal warmth and a sense of deep sanctity when you were in his presence.

My first encounter with him was with a friend on a visit to Poland a couple of years before he was elected Pope. It was during the annual Theology Week, which was devoted that year to “charismatic renewal.” We were invited there as guests. Cardinal Wojtyla was one of the sponsors of the event, and would always spend a day there. As the only foreign guests there, he made a point to visit with us, showing a keen interest in my Polish origins. Little did I suspect at the time he would be elected Pope one year later.

After he was elected Pope, he continued to surround himself with people, which I attributed to the Polish penchant for hospitality. Polish rectories, in particular, always seemed to be a beehive of activity. He regularly opened his early morning Mass to guests, often inviting a few to have breakfast with him afterwards.

I met him four times over the years, three of which were connected with my work with the international office for the Catholic charismatic renewal, now known as ICCRS. The second and third occurred during an international leaders conference in 1981—back to back! One evening during the conference, the conference delegates met with him in the Vatican Gardens. I was part of a smaller group that was presented to him in the course of that meeting. The next morning, the Polish delegates to the conference had invited me to tag along with them to the Holy Father’s morning liturgy as a representative of Polonia, or those Poles residing abroad.

With a twinkle in his eye—and much to my chagrin—he heartily shook my hand and jokingly noted, “Didn’t I meet you last night? You keep popping up everywhere!” A couple of weeks later, he was shot by a would-be assassin. Ten years later, I was in Rome while working on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Through a contact in the Vatican, I casually inquired if I might attend the Pope’s morning liturgy. To my surprise, there was a message at the hotel when I came back from dinner instructing me where to show up early the next morning. Illness and age had clearly taken its toll on Pope John Paul II. Yet, he seemed to spend an even greater time in prayer before Mass than I had remembered. I remember having a greater sense of the sacred. Afterwards, though, he still had that same glint in his eyes and exhibited a keen interest in each person that was presented to him. Indeed, you did feel like you were the reason he got up in the morning.

**He Helped Us Follow the Master’s Call**

*By Lloyd Greenhaw*

“It is rare that anyone should lay down his life for a just man, though it is barely possible that for a good man someone may have the courage to die.” (Rom 5:7) It was for that good, just man John Paul II, who touched us in such a profound way, that we were willing to die to a comfortable way of life and embark on an exciting adventure that continues to this day. We followed him as he followed Jesus, and through him Jesus spoke to our hearts and involved us in His mission that will never end until He comes in glory at the end of time. JPII inspired us to give ourselves more fully to Christ as His disciples as John Paul had so obviously done.

It all began while we were living in Florida. We had just moved from Louisiana where I had been the director of the Charismatic Renewal Office in Baton Rouge. We felt the Lord had given us a vision of a ministry which was to be a “Ministry to Ministries”. We never wanted to be a “big deal”, only to serve. We felt the call to ministry, but didn’t know how to go about it. At that time, I represented a large foreign manufacturer of automotive equipment and was third in the nation in sales. As a result, Nancy and I won a free trip to Europe and planned to rent a car and drive from Germany to Rome for Pentecost Sunday.

When we arrived in Rome we were met by a man who had been recommended by a
friend in Louisiana, and he gave us tickets for the crowded Pentecost celebration. We asked our new friend to go to Mass with us the next day, and he accepted. He picked us up in a Mercedes stretch limo and we thought that was a pretty cool way to go to Mass. The VIP treatment was only beginning!

As he escorted us through the various security checkpoints we were a little surprised that at every point we were waved through without being searched. As we finally entered St. Peter’s we could barely contain our joy; here we were, Catholic Charismatics at the very heart of the Church on Pentecost Sunday! Our friend led us closer to the altar where John Paul II was going to celebrate Mass until we finally were put in the section reserved for foreign diplomats and heads of state. Nancy and I occupied the two seats that Corzine Aquino and Cardinal Sin had sat in the year before. We were right next to the Pope! It turned out that our new friend worked in security for the Vatican and his son was an altar boy for the Pope.

When John Paul II came out of the door by the Pieta, accompanied by a sea of Cardinals, while the Sistine Choir sang, we just sat and cried! As we looked intently at the Pope while he was celebrating Mass, Nancy leaned over to me and said, “He is in travail for the world.” To capture that special moment she later painted a watercolor of him with his head on his papal staff. We could almost hear his groans as his face contorted in pain as the one sacrifice of Calvary was represented. He was truly standing “in persona Christi”.

Looking back, something happened that day. It is as if the Lord had us there with that holy Pope, and he imparted to us a special anointing to “go to the nations” and confirm the Word with signs and wonders. We still do not fully understand, but we know we were changed forever.

The Courage of John Paul II
By Peter Thompson

I had the great joy and privilege of meeting Pope John Paul II one year prior to his death in 2004, following the general audience that takes place each Wednesday morning in the Paul VI Auditorium.

At that time I was serving on the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services (ICCRS) Council at the Vatican. Many of my predecessors had the joy of meeting John Paul II over a meal when he was younger and much stronger. When I met him he was extremely frail yet I was deeply moved by his courage in holding an audience at this time of declining health. He valiantly bore his cross of suffering, giving of himself to the flock and meeting with us after a tiring audience. We were introduced individually by Bishop Joe Grech of Australia, who is now recently deceased. I remember the piercing gaze he gave me, looking deeply into my soul. No words were passed as he was virtually unable to speak at this time, but no words were necessary. We know that he continues to intercede with great power in heaven, especially that the work of renewal will flourish and bear great fruit in the Church.
On the Road

“Do not be afraid to welcome Christ and accept his power! Open, indeed, open wide the doors to Christ. Let him guide you! Trust in his love!

Blessed John Paul II

July 2011

Mission to Turkey
June 28–July 11
John Kazanjian and Team
Contact Kathleen at
kkittle@renewalministries.net
or 734-662-1730 ext 132

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

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

Mission to Ghana
July 29–August 9
Brent Heiser and Team
Contact Kathleen at
kkittle@renewalministries.net
or 734-662-1730 ext 132

Mission to Vietnam
July 31–August 22
Don & Pat Turbitt and Team
Contact Kathleen at
kkittle@renewalministries.net
or 734-662-1730 ext 132

August 2011

Mission to Kenya
August 7–19
Peter Thompson and Team
Contact Kathleen at
kkittle@renewalministries.net
or 734-662-1730 ext 132

Mundelein, IL
International Conference for Bishops and Priests on Exorcism and Deliverance
August 8–12
Ralph Martin
Contact: www.healingministryarchmilw.com