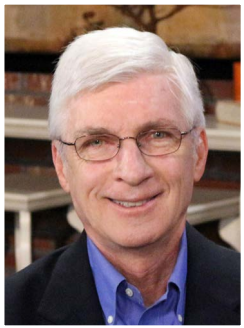




RENEWAL MINISTRIES

Proclaiming Jesus through Catholic Renewal and Evangelization

July 2017



A letter ▶
from *Ralph Martin*

Dear fellow members of Christ's own Body!

*I think our whole life is a journey to discover more and more the wonder of being created **IN THE IMAGE OF GOD!!** And the even greater wonder of being re-created—the image restored through the grime of sin and the wounds of the world—through union with the death and resurrection of Jesus in faith and baptism through the power of the Holy Spirit.*

Even though we celebrated the feast of Pentecost last month, along with the fiftieth anniversary of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal with special events in Rome (to be reported on next month!), I still find myself thinking a lot about the amazing role of the Holy Spirit in each of our lives.

It began with re-reading *The Confession of St. Patrick*—a short account that he himself wrote of his conversion and mission in Ireland—where I found a strange formulation that puzzled me for a long time. Patrick wrote:

On yet another occasion I saw a person praying within me. I was as it seemed inside my body and I heard him over me, that is, over the inner man. There he was, praying with great emotion. **All the time I was puzzled as I wondered greatly who could possibly be praying inside me. He spoke, however, at the end of the prayer, saying that he was the Spirit.** In this way I learned by experience and I recalled the words of the Apostle: *the Spirit helps the weaknesses of our prayer; for we do not know how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself pleads for us with signs unutterable that cannot be put into words. Again: The Lord our Advocate pleads for us.*

At first, I thought Patrick must be mistaken, and it was certainly Jesus who was praying within him, but then I eventually realized that Patrick was given a vivid experience of the Holy Spirit as a PERSON and not just an impersonal force or energy that we can sometimes imagine Him to be. A PERSON PRAYING WITHIN US WITH GREAT EMOTION! How wonderful, how amazing, how helpful, how encouraging! **So let us join our prayer with the prayer of the person of the Holy Spirit, crying out for the will of God to be done in us and in all men and women!**

The second insight I received into the Holy Spirit occurred during Holy Week, when Anne and I were watching one of those videos about the life and death of Jesus. It wasn't one of the famous ones, but one that was free on our video service. I don't know if the actors who played the apostles were simply not the greatest actors, but I got such a strong sense of how amazing it was that the Lord entrusted His mission to these very human men who seemed quite ill equipped for such a mission.

We know from the Scriptures that they were "uneducated," which made the Pharisees wonder where they got their right to teach.

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I recently gave nine talks to all of the priests in Hawaii. It was a great privilege to encourage them in their ministry!

Let us thank God for the gift of the Holy Spirit to each of us personally, for the gift of the indwelling PERSON of the Holy Spirit!

Continued from page 1

And then I thought: "Wow, where would we be, where would the Church be, where would one billion Christians alive today be, if the Holy Spirit hadn't fallen on the apostles and given them such a vivid experience of the risen Jesus and such an infusion of supernatural courage, clarity, certainty, boldness, and fortitude that they actually were to carry out the mission, even to the giving of their lives in martyrdom?"

Thanks be to God for the gift of the Holy Spirit!

Jesus was really speaking the truth when He told the apostles it was better that He left them and returned to the Father, so the Holy Spirit could be given to them and to "all those whom God is calling to Himself."

...

And the reports just keep rolling in ☺

A local celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal was held in the Detroit area recently, and one of the people who attended was a senior at the local Catholic high school, Fr. Gabriel Richard. She felt inspired to go back to her school and propose that the whole senior class be given an opportunity, during school time, to go through a Life in the Spirit Seminar, where they would be offered the opportunity to commit their lives more fully to Jesus and pray for a release of the Holy Spirit in their lives. To her and everyone's amazement, the administration and faculty agreed,

even to the point of giving up class time so this could happen. I was privileged to give the final session of the seminar, and about ninety-five seniors were there for the conclusion. Many graces were poured out. **What lessons can we draw from this? Step out, launch out into the deep, and follow the inspirations the Holy Spirit give us!**

Many of you continue to do this. Many of you continue to order copies of our booklets to give out to others, as a way of planting seeds and awakening people to who Jesus is and what's happening in the world. One woman was inspired to propose to her cluster of parishes that everyone be given a free copy of Peter Herbeck's booklet *Welcome the Spiritual Gifts*. The parishes agreed, and this woman is underwriting the purchase of 3,500 copies to hand out to these parishes!

Another form of inspiration that someone followed was one woman in California, who was inspired to name Renewal Ministries as one of the beneficiaries in her will. We received \$80,000 from her estate as a way of continuing her support for this mission, even though now she is on "other side," the "better side," interceding with greater clarity and fervor than ever for the salvation of the world. We had a Mass celebrated for the repose of her soul, as we do for all of our donors when they pass. We consider them still part of the Renewal Ministries' family, now as intercessors on the other side.



Recent SHMS graduates
Fr. Mathias Thelen & Scott Sollom



Another happy development was that a large class graduated from Sacred Heart Major Seminary, where I teach. **Our own i.d.9:16 Director Pete Burak received his MA Degree in Theology. Also, Fr. Mathias Thelen, a close friend of Renewal Ministries who has spoken and prayed for people at our last two Gatherings, and Scott Sollom, my son-in-law and the father of five of our grandchildren, who teaches catechetics and theology at Franciscan University of Steubenville, both received their Licentiate in Sacred Theology (STL) Degrees. Praise the Lord!**

May His name be forever praised!

Your brother in Christ,

Ralph Martin

Ralph

P.S. I've written an article on St. Mother Teresa's "dark night" on pages four and five of this newsletter. Don't miss it!



Seniors at Fr. Gabriel Richard High School in Ann Arbor, Michigan listen as Ralph delivers the final session of a Life in the Spirit Seminar.

Suffering is a Gift?



[Agony in the Garden by Frans Schwartz, 1898]

We recently received the following question about whether suffering can be a gift. One of our staff members responded to it, and we thought it would be of interest and help to our supporters.

Q: I recently received a word that "suffering is a gift." Please discern this for me. I think it's true, but it scares me a little. I've always prayed for less suffering.

A: Yes, suffering is a gift. A difficult one to receive, but one that can yield great fruit in our lives, if we unite it to Jesus and walk the road of suffering with Him. If we face our suffering without the Lord—if it does not bring us to the point of seeing our true dependence on Him—then it will not bear the same fruit. It would still be a gift, but it would be one we were not willing to accept and let make us more like Him.

It's understandable that suffering scares you.

But when you seek Him in your suffering, and when you can try to see His goodness, even in life's sorrows, you can begin to see how He is bigger than even our worst hurts, how He pours His very heart into our brokenness and pain, and how He never leaves us alone, but does indeed carry us. When you are suffering, there are days when Scripture will be no more than words on a page. But if you continue to turn to those Words each day, you will find comfort in them. You walk through one trial with Him, and you see His faithfulness. Then, when the next trial comes, you will have less fear and more trust. And slowly, when you see His faithfulness time and time again in the struggles life inevitably brings, trust will replace the fear in your heart. Try praying the words on the Divine Mercy image: "Jesus, I trust in You!" Add to it: "Help me to trust more!" And He will.

It also is understandable that you would pray for less suffering.

Isn't that what we do for others, when we lift up their needs in prayer? That is part of the beauty of the fact that Jesus was human. He understands our desire to not suffer. And He certainly never wants us to suffer simply for the sake of suffering. Find comfort in the fact that Jesus, before His Passion, even prayed, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me." But then, He showed us what is even more important—that we do the will of the Father: "Yet, not my will, but yours be done" (Lk 22:42).

SUFFERING CAN HUMBLE US IN A VERY GOOD WAY; IT CAN ALLOW US TO SEE HOW VERY MUCH WE NEED GOD, AND HOW BROKEN WE ARE WITHOUT HIM.

Suffering helps us detach from our own will and accept what the Lord has for us. While not always easy, His plan is richer than what we would choose for ourselves!

When we suffer, it helps to simply have faith and to trust that since God loves us, He must be allowing it for some reason that will work for our good. (Consider the metaphor of a tapestry: The back looks like a jumbled mess of different-colored yarn. That is like us looking at our lives; they don't always make sense. But God sees the beautiful image on the other side of the tapestry. He knows what He is about!) The key is to continue trusting He

walks with us and loves us. Have faith! If you can't find it, ask for it! And if you can't pray, say His name! "Jesus! Help me!" can be a beautiful prayer, when it is the best your heart can muster, and you say it many times a day. Simply sitting with the Lord in Adoration also is a beautiful prayer; let your presence speak for you, even if your mouth can find no words to say. He will hear, and He will answer. In fact, suffering also helps us develop perseverance: "Whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing" (Jas 1:2).

Suffering can help strip away our blindness to the needs of those around us. It helps us better understand how to reach out to them, and hopefully, how to bring the Lord's love into their lives. So many of the Lord's children are broken, and we are the ones He wants to send into the battle to serve and love them!

Finally, when we unite our suffering to the Lord, He never wastes it!

He uses it to answer prayers and help lift the burdens of others in ways we can't imagine, and that is such a beautiful part of the mystery of being part of the Church—of the body of Christ on earth!

Mother Teresa's 'Dark Night'

What did it mean for her? What does it mean for us?



Ralph Martin recently spoke at Ave Maria University in Florida about *Mother Teresa and John of the Cross: The Truth about Dark Nights*. He said, "I find people somewhat fearful that her experience could happen to them. Please be assured: this almost certainly won't happen to you. It was a very unique gift that God gave Mother Teresa, in light of the very unique vocation she was called to." We are sharing a condensed version of his talk below. We pray it is a blessing to you!

Even though the main lines of Mother Teresa's experience of "darkness" had long been known, the full publication of her private letters in *Come be My Light: The Private Writings of the Saint of Calcutta*, edited by Fr. Brian Kolodiejchuk, drew world-wide media coverage.

Some secularists interpreted her talk of darkness as a sign of hypocrisy and even accused her of not really believing in God—but this signifies a very superficial and partial reading of her letters. Some believers were disturbed and confused to hear of her prolonged experience of aridity or emptiness in her relationship with God. Some thought the letters were too disturbing to publish. This last concern, while understandable, is unfounded, since the letters in question are part of the official record compiled in the process of canonization and are generally made public. And by now we must know that efforts to "edit" the life or writings of a saint (as the sisters of Therese of Lisieux tried to do), only detract from the awesome witness to holiness that is found, albeit in sometimes unexpected and disturbing ways. In the long run, I think these letters will bear great fruit.

4

The book left me awe-struck at the depth of Mother Teresa's holiness. Her faith and her heroic service were more profound than I ever imagined.

While Mother Teresa received remarkable communications from the Lord and significant consolation at the beginning of her mission, for almost fifty years, she was left almost totally bereft of such consolation.

She carried out her mission with almost no affective experience of God's love and presence.

She saw the fruit her work was producing. She saw that when she spoke to people, they came alive and grew in the experience of God's love, but she herself for the most part felt only emptiness.

During the first ten years of this "darkness," she was deeply troubled by it and sought to understand what was happening by consulting a few trusted priests. She wondered if this prolonged darkness was a sign of her great sinfulness and imperfection. It wasn't until she met Fr. Neuner, a Jesuit working in India, that she came to grasp some of her suffering's special meaning. He

explained this wasn't the typical "dark night" St. John of the Cross describes; it wasn't just for her own purification, but was a special gift from God to participate in Christ's sufferings, particularly in His sense of abandonment in the garden of Gethsemane before His crucifixion. She was forever grateful:

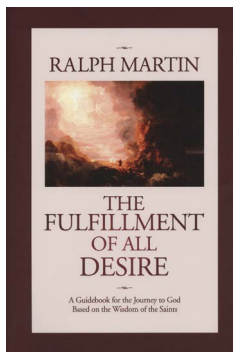
For the first time in these eleven years I have come to love the darkness. For I believe now that it is a part, a very, very small part of Jesus' darkness and pain on earth. You have taught me to accept it as a "spiritual side of 'your work'" as you wrote. Today really I felt a deep joy; that Jesus can't go anymore through the agony but that He wants to go through it in me. More than ever I surrender myself to Him. Yes, more than ever I will be at His disposal." (241)

In fact, Mother Teresa had prayed for just such a participation in Christ's agony years previously!

As a young woman, she had resolved “to drink the chalice to the last drop.” After founding the Missionaries of Charity, she again resolved “to drink only from His chalice of pain and to give Mother Church real saints” (141).

Fr. Neuner’s explanation gave her a measure of peace and even joy, but didn’t take away the pain of not being able to experience the sensible/spiritual consolation of God’s love and favor, which often seemed on the verge of being unbearable.

Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa summed up well the reasons why God led Mother Teresa by this unusual path, and the publication of the full text of the letters and the commentary of Fr. Kolodiejchuk confirms this interpretation. I actually discuss Mother Teresa’s unique experience of her “dark night” and its relationship to the “ordinary dark nights” as taught by John of the Cross in chapter seventeen of *The Fulfillment of All Desire*.



Because the Lord knew Mother Teresa’s remarkable mission would be greatly blessed and that the whole world would come to admire it, the special gift of acute “spiritual poverty” was given to Mother Teresa as a protection against pride. God gave her the experience of “nothingness” and “emptiness” as a gift to protect her from the adulation she would receive, including the reception of the Nobel Peace Prize.

Also, because of the specific nature of the mission He called her to, He gave her the gift of knowing what it was like for those she was serving—those abandoned by their families, rejected, unwanted, left alone to die on the streets of Calcutta, or children abandoned by their parents. She could understand and feel deep compassion for these abandoned ones, in part because of her own experience of “darkness” and abandonment.

And finally, she was given to a remarkable degree the gift of being one with Jesus in His Passion, out of which comes so much redemptive power—a gift she had asked for on more than one occasion.

Yes, she experienced temptations to give up, to despair, even temptations to blasphemy and unbelief, but to be tempted is not to sin. Her heroic perseverance in the face of such interior suffering is truly awe-inspiring. What an example to us in our need to persevere no matter what the difficulties, no matter what we experience or don’t experience!

On the other hand, there are dangers in misunderstanding Mother Teresa’s unusually sustained experience of darkness. This darkness accompanied her for so long because of her very special vocation. It is not the normal, purifying “dark nights” John of the Cross discusses. Nor is every experience of aridity, emptiness, or darkness a purifying or redemptive “dark night.” It is very helpful to avail ourselves of the wisdom of our spiritual tradition to understand this better.

“One must really have suffered oneself to help others.”



In brief, John of the Cross teaches there are three reasons why someone may experience deep aridity, emptiness, or darkness in their prayer or relationship with God. (See Chapter 14 of *The Fulfillment of All Desire*.)

① “Lukewarmness” or infidelity in “doing our part” in sustaining our relationship with God.

We may become careless about regular prayer and spiritual reading, we may not frequent the Eucharist and Reconciliation, we may fill our minds and hearts with worldly entertainment, we may not be diligent in rejecting temptation, we may not develop relationships with others who desire to follow the Lord. This carelessness and infidelity lessens our hunger for God and desire to be with Him, and produces lukewarmness and repugnance for things of the spirit. This is not a purifying darkness, but rather the result of laxity, and the only solution is to repent and take up the spiritual practices that dispose us for union with God.

② Physical or emotional illness.

The saints advise us to try to get better, pray for healing, go to the doctor, but keep on as best one can in living a fervent Christian life. And if one is not healed, it’s an invitation to join our suffering with the suffering of Jesus and offer it as reparation for our own sins and as intercessory prayer for others.

③ We are ready to move to a deeper level of faith, hope, and love.

Sometimes God purposely removes the experience of His love, presence, or favor—but not their reality—in order to give us a chance to believe, hope, and love more deeply and purely. This true “dark night” may be quite intense and last for a long period of time, or it may happen intermittently, interspersed with times of sensible consolation. A true dark night is accompanied by deep, painful longing for God. This is acutely present in Mother Teresa. One sign that it is an authentic dark night is that we don’t in our aridity try to fill the emptiness with worldly or fleshly consolations, but remain faithful in seeking God even in the pain of His apparent absence. The authentic dark night isn’t an end in itself, but is intended to prepare us for an even greater union with and experience of God.



MEXICO MISSION LEADERS

Debbie Herbeck and Butch Murphy led Renewal Ministries' mission trip to Mexico with high school students from Fr. Gabriel Richard in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Butch is the Country Coordinator for Mexico.



Spreading the GOSPEL in Mexico

“ THIS IS WHAT WE DO: WE CARE FOR OTHERS. ”

For thirteen years, Renewal Ministries has been taking area high school students on a mission trip to Mexico, where they minister to people who live in a garbage dump, visit the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and spend time at a home for special needs orphans and at a government-run facility for elderly men. About thirty students went on this year's mission.

“It's grown to be a part of the school's culture,” said Debbie Herbeck, who helps lead the trips with the students from Father Gabriel Richard High School (FGR) in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The school faculty also is making its second mission trip to Mexico this summer. “The mindset is: ‘This is what we do: We care for others.’”

“The students who go get more deeply evangelized,” she continued. “You see freedom and joy on their faces as they give themselves away for a week. Also, the ability to disconnect from their teenage world—they have to leave their phones at home—is life-changing. It teaches them to communicate face to face with others, to be present and attentive, to listen, to love.”



Students praying at the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

The week begins with a pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

“We dedicate our mission to Our Lady, tell the story of what happened there, and climb up Tepayak Hill as Juan Diego did,” said Debbie, “it's no longer just a story, but a message for us too. The Virgin Mary appeared, and within ten years, eight million native Mexicans were converted, baptized, and came into the Church. Now, the Lord and Mary are sending us to share the same message.”

One of the services Renewal Ministries offers in the dump is a basic medical tent. Since mission teams return to the site every few months, medical personnel are able to distribute medicine for things like high blood pressure, diabetes, and thyroid problems. The team also distributes clothing, shoes, and toiletries for the people living in the dump. The students' fundraising efforts also allow for the purchase of two tons of food, for almost 1,000 people. The team also offers haircuts; spends time playing and doing some catechesis with the children; and provides prayer ministry and—thanks to a priest on the team—offers Mass and the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Unfortunately, a fire completely destroyed thirty “homes” and the roof of the handcrafted chapel just two days before the team's arrival this year. Thankfully, the team learned about the fire in time to have each member pack a tarp and rope—enough to provide some shelter to each family that lost a home. Donations also came in for a new roof, and the team was present to pray as the chapel was re-dedicated.



In addition to playing soccer or coloring with the children, the youth also practice the “ministry of presence,” said Debbie. They learn to notice people who may be sitting on the outskirts—people who may just need someone to sit with them, hold their hand, and listen: “We’re there to love, to show them they are valued, and that they have much to teach us,” she explained.

The team also visited an orphanage that is home to 230 mentally handicapped children and young adults. According to Debbie, when you are with Mother Inez, who started the home fifty years ago, you have the clear sense that you are in the presence of a saint. Mother Inez, now in her early nineties, spoke and prayed individually with the students.

Debbie described the most moving part of their visit:

“As the students gathered around Mother Inez, she told them, ‘I won’t be here much longer; my time on earth is almost done. I am asking you and pleading with you to carry on the work I’ve begun.’”



“This was more than a plea to continue visiting the orphanage,” Debbie continued. “She was commissioning the students to be disciples of love in the world. In fact, the reading the next morning was Jesus’ commissioning of the apostles. Many students were deeply touched by her message and heard the Lord personally call them. I felt the Lord gave a few of them His heart for the poor and for love in a very significant way.”

The team also visited a home for elderly men who have no families. Debbie explained, “It is very moving for these men to have young people want to spend time with them, listen to their stories,



“They encounter Jesus in the poor, and they learn, in very simple yet profound ways, what it means to be His love to others.”

and pray with them. In a place that sees little joy or hope, we livened it up with dancing and singing Disney songs. One young woman on our team had recently experienced the death of her grandpa, and it was very healing for her to talk and pray with these men. There were so many ways God was present and caring for us throughout the week.”

At the end of the week, the team gathered to pray for a deeper outpouring of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. “After a week of encountering Christ in the poor and one another in such a profound way, everyone was open to a deeper anointing of the Holy Spirit,” said Debbie.

“That night, in the ‘upper room,’ our meeting place at the top of our hotel, the Holy Spirit came, and began to prepare these young disciples for the mission ahead of them back home—in their own families, friendships, and schools.”

The lessons from Mexico, and God’s work in and through them, stay with many students for the rest of their lives, said Debbie:

“They encounter Jesus in the poor, and they learn, in very simple yet profound ways, what it means to be His love to others. It gives them a window into the potential of who God is calling them to be and opens their eyes and hearts to a world that desperately needs to know God’s love—through them. It also gives them a genuine experience of what it means to be a community of missionary disciples. This deep connection with one another is what they desperately desire.”

I AM CHANGED

Testimony of a former mission team member

University of Michigan junior Lauren Yurko exemplifies the impact the Mexico mission can have on a student’s life. Because of her time in Mexico, Lauren added Spanish to her Biopsychology, Cognition, and Neuroscience major. She feels called to do mission work and wants to be better able to converse with people—something she hadn’t considered before her trip.

Lauren recalls three experiences with people in the dump that she reflects on nearly every single day:

- ▶ The first was with a boy named Alexis, who offered her a sip of his water—even though he hadn’t seen fresh water in months.
- ▶ The second was with children who used their bubble solution—a precious and rare toy—to help wash her face, after she had let them paint on her skin.
- ▶ The third was with a girl named Lupe, who—after other children were flocking to Lauren to ask for cheese, when she was cutting it for sandwiches—said she didn’t want the cheese; she only wanted to sit with Lauren, because she looked a bit stressed out. While Lauren sliced cheese, the girl sat with her, braided her hair, and rubbed her back.

In each instance, “they were giving everything they had for me and not focusing on themselves,” said Lauren.

“The joy I experienced in the dump changed who I want to be.”

“Every day, I think about how they had so little and gave so much. It’s inspired me to live more simply and to give whatever I have—to look out for others, to serve my community, and to be more of a friend to people.”

On the Road

July 2017 ENGAGEMENTS

Ralston, NE

“Your Kingdom Come” Healing Retreat

July 14-15

Dr. Mary Healy

Details: www.eventbrite.com/e/your-kingdom-come-tickets-33914199283

Pittsburgh, PA

CCR Jubilee Conference

July 20-23

Ralph Martin, Dr. Mary Healy

Details: conference@nsc-chariscenter.org

Rochester Hills, MI

Outdoor Awaken Night at St. Mary of the Hills

July 21

Peter Herbeck

Contact: dierkesw@aol.com

Lincoln, NE

Retreat for the School Sisters of Christ the King*

July 26-August 4

Sr. Ann Shields

Albuquerque, NM

Southwest Regional Catholic Conference

July 28-29

Ralph Martin

Details: abqccc.org

Attleboro, MA

Fraternity of Priests Conference*

July 31-August 1

Ralph Martin

* Not open to the public.

For a complete listing, visit:

RenewalMinistries.net/Events

“Most people believe that freedom is the ability to do whatever you want. This understanding however puts it at odds with obedience. So freedom and obedience end up in complete opposition to each other. And this is precisely how our culture views the matter. Our faith suggests something completely different. We understand both are to be united. Freedom is ordered toward truth; it is not the ability to do whatever we want. It's the ability to do what we were created to do.”



Fr. Paul Scalia

Please Pray...

- FOR the Lord to open our eyes and hearts to the many small opportunities to love and serve others available to us each day.
- FOR all family members and loved ones who have fallen away from the faith, that the Lord will allow seeds to be planted in their lives that will one day bear fruit and allow them to say “Yes!” to the Lord.
- FOR the prayer intentions of all our supporters and their family members, especially as they face the challenges of illness and economic uncertainty.

MISSIONS

Cameroon

June 22-July 1

Peter Newburn

Ghana

July 1-14

Emmanuel Tamakloe

Tanzania

July 5-19

Tom Edwards

Hungary

July 10-15

Dcn. Zoli Kunszabo

Gambia

July 14-August 14

Emmanuel Tamakloe

Latvia

July 19-24

Donald Turbitt

Hungary

July 31-August 5

Dcn. Zoli Kunszabo

For more information about missions, contact Kathleen at 734-662-1730 ext. 132 or kkittle@renewalministries.net



RENEWAL MINISTRIES

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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, conferences, retreats, and other international evangelistic events.

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