

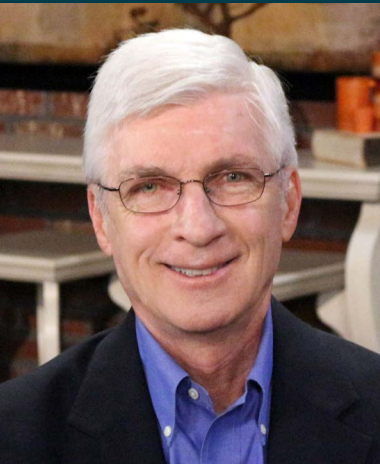


RENEWAL MINISTRIES

CATHOLIC RENEWAL & EVANGELIZATION

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AUGUST 2023



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Dear Friends,

I call you "friends," because I've traveled more in the last few months than perhaps ever before, and I am amazed and humbled by meeting many of you in person and hearing how long you have supported our work, how the Lord has worked in your lives, and how you are persevering! I know there are many others of you whom I haven't met who have similar stories to tell. Thank you, and thank God for his superabundant mercy to us.

As you know, one of the most special things the Lord allows me to do is speak to priests with a view to encouraging and challenging them—serving them with the power of God's Word and Spirit.

Peter Herbeck and I recently were privileged to speak to an exceptional group of Irish priests living in a toxic culture amid a confused and defeated Church. We joyfully proclaimed the Gospel in the small town of Knockbridge, near the bigger town of Dundalk, between Dublin and Belfast. With the help of committed laity, an excellent priest is leading the parish to become a center of renewal by offering tremendous help to the people being drawn there.

It was a privilege to serve them, and an unexpected honor to have Archbishop Eamon Martin (no relationship that we know of!) attend one of our talks. Archbishop Martin is the Archbishop of Armagh and the Primate of Ireland.

Since my grandparents immigrated to New York City from Ireland, it is always special to serve there.

An unexpected "bonus" of our visit was being asked to address the first meeting of Ireland's National Charis organization, which represents all the various streams of renewal in Ireland. We got off the plane at 7 a.m. and were unexpectedly whisked to a nearby hotel, where about ninety Renewal leaders soon appeared. Among them were many old friends whom we've known for many years—some of whom I met while living in Belgium.

Another wonderful opportunity to serve priests happened a few weeks later when I traveled to the Diocese of St. Paul in Alberta, Canada. It took fourteen hours and three planes to travel there. The new bishop, Gary Franken, was the Archdiocese of Vancouver's vicar general, a position now held by Catholic Renewal Ministries' Canadian Board President Msgr. Gregory Smith. Bishop Franken is a great young bishop facing a very difficult situation. He cares for a vast rural diocese where many priests have several mission stations to attend to, which keeps them continually traveling. Also, only



Archbishop Eamon Martin, pictured at Ralph's right, is the Archbishop of Armagh and the Primate of Ireland. He attended one of Ralph and Peter's talks during their recent time ministering to priests in Ireland.

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a few of the twenty-eight priests in his diocese are native-born Canadians. Most of the priests in his diocese are from the Philippines, India, Vietnam, and Africa. They are missionaries to Canada! **Just like in Ireland, the situation of the Church in Canada is very challenging. The various scandals in the Church and the very aggressive anti-Christian pressure from the government and major institutions have intimidated the Church, and not many are speaking the truth clearly.**

Several days into the clergy retreat, I was joined by John and Michelle Kazanjian, who are particularly gifted in teaching and praying for people in the area of deliverance. They too had long journeys to and from St. Paul and generously gave of their time and gifts. More than half of the priests asked to receive ministry from John and Michelle during times of personal prayer. Their presence and the priests' receptivity were great blessings!



Ralph spoke to Bishop Gary Franken and the priests of the Diocese of Saint Paul, Alberta, Canada—many of whom are from different countries. John and Michelle Kazanjian joined the retreat for the last two days and offered individual prayer sessions for the priests, which many signed up for.



Ralph gave talks at the Archabbey of Saint Vincent in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, for the Oblates of St. Benedict's day of recollection.



Additionally, I recently had the privilege of giving two talks at Ave Maria University's Marian Eucharistic Conference and to speak alongside Dr. Mary Healy at the Philadelphia Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference. The former event was hosted at the Malvern Retreat House, which is celebrating one-hundred years of hosting retreats that have touched tens of thousands of people. Then, I returned to St. Vincent's Archabbey in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, where last fall I did a day of recollection for seminarians. This time, I did something similar for the Oblates (the Benedictine third order). I also spoke at a parish mission in Phoenix, Arizona, and at two Legatus chapter meetings in Denver and Colorado Springs, Colorado.

I'm traveling more than I have in my life, and I marvel at how the Lord is giving me the energy and, I believe, the wisdom needed to contribute to each of these situations. I think all of us at Renewal Ministries are experiencing this blessing in different ways.

In fact, many of our speakers have been quite busy in recent months. I want to share with you just a snapshot of what they have been doing:



Peter and Debbie Herbeck recently discussed their new book on the EWTN show *At Home with Jim and Joy*.

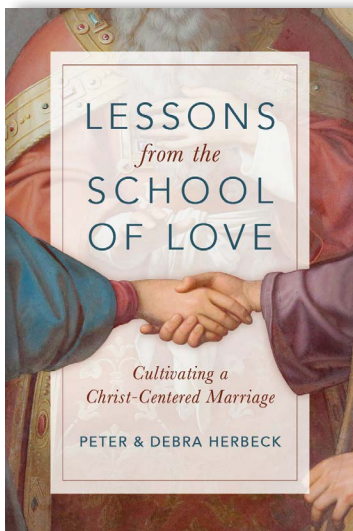
In addition to accompanying me to Ireland, Peter Herbeck spoke about the Eucharist on the feast of Corpus Christi at a parish in Michigan. He talked about how "the highest thing is to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to humble yourself in obedience to God as an expression of love." He also led a prayer evening at another local parish, which he described as,

a precious moment where the Holy Spirit encountered the people, his heart touching their hearts. The Holy Spirit is restoring and awakening in people's hearts the bridal identity of the Church and giving us the passion to want to worship the Lord, be with Him, and see He is the Bridegroom King.

Debbie Herbeck spoke in Greenville, South Carolina, at a Legatus chapter meeting and at a Catholic Information Center event with Peter and Rachel Herbeck. She also spoke at two different faith formation events for the Diocese of Raleigh-Durham, Virginia. She and Peter led a staff retreat for Father Gabriel Richard High School in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and taped shows about their new book, *Lessons from the School of Love: Cultivating a Christ-Centered Marriage*, at EWTN's studios in Alabama. Peter explained,

"We feel very strongly that the Lord is asking us to be open to helping strengthen family life, so we see this as part of an assignment that He has given us to do."

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An Invitation from Ralph

None of what I've shared in my letter this month would be possible without your faithful support. Therefore, I want to encourage you again to consider making an online monthly gift through Renewal Ministries Partners if you have not already done so.

We greatly appreciate all the ways you currently support us with occasional or regular giving, and we welcome you to continue giving exactly as you have been if that best suits your needs. However, Partners provides our ministry with many unique benefits:

- Digital donations better enable us to faithfully steward gifts.
- As our social media outreach grows—our You Tube Channel has over 70,000 subscribers and millions of views—we can help these new friends "give where they are."
- Most importantly, it helps us connect more personally with supporters through gifts like video calls with Peter, myself, or others on our team that allow you to ask us questions and get personal updates about what is happening
- We also have special film segments from *The Choices We Face* for Renewal Ministries Partners. These brief videos contain conversations that won't be available elsewhere.

Please visit www.renewalministries.net/partners to learn more or sign up today!

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Pete Burak spoke at the Cleveland Young Adult Conference on the power of the Holy Spirit and being empowered for mission. Afterward, several young adults thanked him for reminding them that evangelization is not a trivial or earthly endeavor but a responsibility with eternal ramifications. He also spoke at the Wichita, Newark, Charlotte, and Jacksonville Legatus chapters about how to respond to the crisis of discipleship with young adults. Legatus members in each location shared about their heartache over the younger generation and how his talk both challenged and inspired them to get back in the game with the Lord. Finally, we hosted the second biggest Pine Hills Boys' Camp this summer, and Pete reported that the Holy Spirit showed up in power! The theme was Romans 12:2,

"Do not be conformed to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind."

The boys profoundly encountered Jesus, made decisions to follow Him, and received a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Please pray that the Lord brings an abundant harvest from the seeds that were planted and that the girls' camp is equally blessed!

Rachel Herbeck, id's director of missionaries, also has been responding to many opportunities to preach and teach. She spoke at St. John Nepomu-

cene parish in Ennis, Texas, where Fr. John Dick is pastor. He is a longtime supporter of Renewal Ministries who has found our books and booklets to be very helpful in the formation of his people. Rachel described her time preaching on receiving more of the Holy Spirit and the Father's love as "a powerful night in which the Holy Spirit was moving people to tears and to a deeper openness and reception of the love of the Father." Rachel also spoke at a women's conference with Heather Khym in the Vancouver, Canada, area. Rachel's talk on *Jesus the Bridegroom King* focused on allowing Jesus to reveal Himself as both our bridegroom and king who comes to remove any idols inhibiting total intimacy with Him.

Meanwhile, all of Renewal Ministries' normal work goes on: producing our weekly YouTube videos and daily radio programs, providing ongoing outreach to young people, preparing to film a new season of *The Choices We Face*, sending out the booklets and products that build up the faith of many, reaching out to young adults through id, hosting twice-monthly Bible studies to help our staff continue growing together in the Lord, and many other things.

We couldn't do the work we are doing all over the world in as many as forty countries a year without you! We couldn't reach thousands of priests each year without you! We couldn't give hope and understanding to so many who are confused by the culture and distressing Church happenings without you!

Thank you!


Your brother in Christ,

Ralph Martin

Ralph

Our staff Bible study is nearing the end of the Book of John. Coming together in this way helps us serve the Lord with a shared purpose and increased zeal.

 Pine Hills Boys' Camp combines faith and athletics in a fun and supportive environment.

 Mary Lenaburg, Rachel Herbeck, Ali Hoffman, and Heather Khym spoke in Vancouver, Canada.



A Lesson from Africa: ‘Lord, Smash Our Idols’

FR. PETER RYAN, SJ

Fr. Peter Ryan, SJ, is a professor of theology and a spiritual director at Sacred Heart Major Seminary, as well as a good friend of Renewal Ministries. We hope this story of his recent time in West Africa inspires our readers as much as it did us!

Do you have idols in your life? Are you prepared to let the Lord smash them so you can follow Him wholeheartedly?

To emphasize how important it is to give up our idols so we can follow the Lord with undivided hearts, I'd like to share my experience of literal idol smashing. It happened during my visit to the parish of my brother, Fr. Bill Ryan, in Togo, West Africa.

During my visit, a prominent family in Fr. Bill's parish made the grace-filled decision to give up the physical idols they had placed on their property. They wanted to follow Jesus unreservedly. They asked my brother to go to their property and destroy their idols—and he entrusted much of that task to me!

We knew it would be foolish to carry out this mission without a great deal of prayer support, so we recruited intercessors. And the family, partly because they understandably feared retaliation from demons, prayed intently every evening for a week before the idol-smashing event.



Frs. Bill and Peter Ryan responded to requests to destroy idols in Togo, West Africa. The parishioners wanted to wholeheartedly follow Jesus.

We began with a well-attended Saturday morning Mass, followed by a procession in which hundreds of parishioners walked from the church to the family's home—and to the homes of other parishioners who decided to follow that family's good example. The excitement was palpable! We sang about Jesus being the victor, and the enthusiastic musical accompaniment, especially the insistent beating of the drums, left no doubt that we believed Jesus really does win the victory!

When we arrived, we held a powerful prayer service, and we blessed barrels of holy water and a great quantity of salt. Next, we dug up the idols, which were buried around the property, smashed them with sledgehammers, and sprinkled holy water and blessed salt very liberally. Then we threw the idols into a great bonfire, much to the delight of the people, whose faith was greatly strengthened that day! And we planted a huge cross where the idols had been.

Partaking in that event, it was impossible not to realize that we, too, have our idols. They include not just things that are obviously sinful, like internet pornography, which is truly a scourge from the pit of hell. They also include things that may be fine in moderation but that can distract us from what Jesus would have us do. Thankfully, Jesus is the true smasher of idols! We must beg Him to unearth and smash our idols so the Holy Spirit can find ever more room in our hearts.

After smashing their idols, parishioners placed a cross at the site where they had been to reclaim it for Christ.



We, too, have our idols. They include not just things that are obviously sinful . . . They also include things that may be fine in moderation but that can distract us from what Jesus would have us do.



Sainthood: It's What We're Made For

BY ELIZABETH RZEPKA

In the spring of 2012, I came across an article that had become a viral sensation: a guileless new restaurant review from an eighty-five-year-old woman in Grand Forks, North Dakota. It caught my eye because I had just returned to Michigan after interviewing for a job twenty minutes from Grand Forks. That, and it was a rave review for Olive Garden. I thought, “Where am I going?!” I couldn’t conceive of a place that had never heard of Olive Garden. I immediately googled “Trader Joes” (285 miles away) and “Panera” (224 miles away). Where was I going?

When I made the move a few months later, I quickly learned that it was a town with no clothing stores, no coffee shop, and no Olive Garden. It was also a place with arctic temperatures for months at a time (twenty-below is normal, forty-below actually happens). The material trappings—or lack thereof—of my new home often surprised me. There were no cool restaurants, no arts scene, no classical music concerts. The area was a glacial plain, and I had never seen land so flat in my entire life. When people from Michigan asked me how it was, I’d answer, “Flat. And cold. And there are a lot of sugar beets.”

On the cusp of my thirtieth year of life, I had left a job I loved, friends I loved, a school I loved—the whole wonderful life I’d built up to that point—and moved to a seemingly barren northern Minnesota.

My thesis director said,

*“It isn’t the end of the earth,
but you can see it from there.”*

I did this because of the conviction, after years of prayer, that the Lord was asking me to step out in faith and radically trust Him. When I got in the car and drove almost one-thousand miles, I didn’t even know where I’d live, my new job title, or the exact nature of the job I’d be doing. For those who don’t know me, I was born a type-A planner in the extreme, so this level of trust was not natural.

While discovering and embracing my new reality, I started my work as a diocesan coordinator of catechesis and youth ministry, which very often involved a lot of driving between small towns in the “land-rich” diocese. Twice a year, I drove hours to attend regional diocesan directors’ meetings with my counterparts from all the dioceses of Minnesota, South Dakota, and North Dakota. At one of the first meetings I attended, I learned that everyone was twice my age, except one other young

woman: Michelle. She started her position at the Diocese of Bismarck after spending six years as a FOCUS missionary. She had a radiant smile and the warmest disposition. She spoke freely and joyfully of her love of Jesus. She had infectious missionary zeal. We joined forces in proffering Eucharistic adoration, the sacraments, more time in prayer, and love of the Scriptures as necessary ways of helping people meet Jesus. We bonded immediately and decided we should carpool to future meetings. I treasured my growing friendship with Michelle and the hours spent in the car together and during the downtimes of these days-long meetings. My new home was in the third-smallest diocese in the country and there simply weren’t a lot of people, so I was immeasurably grateful to encounter Michelle—someone who matched my zeal for the Lord and spoke of Him like I did, as an intimate friend who I deeply love.

However, late in 2014, Michelle was diagnosed with stage four cancer at the age of thirty. A year later, on Christmas Day, she passed away. Michelle was beloved by countless people and losing her was a devastating sorrow. I keenly felt the loss of this friend who had uniquely supported me in radically following Jesus.

But we know, as the Roman Missal says,

*“For your faithful, Lord,
life is changed not ended.”*

“

**I did this because
of the conviction,
after years of prayer,
that the Lord was asking me
to step out in faith and
radically trust Him.**

And on November 1, 2022, I started getting rapid-fire texts from friends in Minnesota and North Dakota, as a special Mass began. I was back in Michigan, watching via livestream, as Bishop David Kagan said these words:

We need to recognize that while becoming saints requires a supernatural grace, it's also normal and possible because it's what we're made for.



After having consulted with the Holy See, my brother bishops and the faithful of this diocese; and having verified the existence of a true and widespread reputation of sanctity, enjoyed by her during her life and growing ever stronger after her death, as well as ample evidence of the granting of graces and favors by God through her intercession, I, David D. Kagan, Bishop of Bismarck, do hereby make public the petition of Father Thomas J. Grafsgaard, the postulator of this cause, and thus declare I am initiating the Cause of Beatification and Canonization of the Servant of God Michelle Christine Duppong.

I wept in amazement, in gratitude.

***“How is this possible?
My friend could be a
future Saint?!”***

A month later, I was in the Renewal Ministries' office, preparing a slide show for Ralph Martin. A picture flashed across the screen—St. John Paul II hugging Ralph—and Ralph exclaimed,

“Hey! That's me with a Saint!”

Another picture—Ralph and St. Teresa of Calcutta—and again Ralph said,

“There I am with another Saint!”

I found myself flooded with thoughts about our relationships and encounters in this life and how they intersect with our pursuit of heaven.

As Catholics, we treasure our friendships with our heavenly brothers and sisters. We rely on them and their prayers. We find hope in their witness that we too can finish the race and make it to our eternal home. But do we ponder our own eternal destiny or that of the people around us? Do we daily have our hearts fixed on heaven? Do we live in such a way that when we die, we too might be saints?

Do we recognize that every person we encounter will one day be in either heaven or hell?

The Church teaches that all those in heaven are saints. Full stop. Not everyone in heaven is formally canonized, but everyone in heaven is a saint!

When we look at the historical records of the saints, we see that they often encountered one another: St. Francis and St. Dominic, St. Catherine of Siena and Bl. Raymond of Capua, St. Augustine and St. Ambrose, St. John Paull II and St. Teresa of Calcutta, St. Francis de Sales and St. Jane de Chantal. Pondering both my friendship with Michelle, who is on the path toward canonized sainthood, and Ralph's time with two people already recognized as saints left me with the profound realization that, hopefully, we live each day in the company of people who will one day be saints in heaven. It also left me with the weighty reminder that we each have a part to play in the refining and purifying journey that helps others get to heaven. May we be more aware of this awesome reality and its accompanying demands.

We need to recognize that while becoming saints requires a supernatural grace, it's also normal and possible because it's what we're made for. St. Paul tells us,

***“This is the will of God,
your sanctification.” (1 Thes 4:3)***

And St. Peter tells us,

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which has granted to us his precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the divine nature. (2 Pt 1:3-4)

The Saints were once what we are now. We sometimes perceive of them as distant and other than us, making a chasm between us and them that doesn't need to be there. If we are really living for heaven, we probably know saints-in-progress now. **Michelle didn't seem like an unattainably holy person. She was like other people I know who are wholeheartedly pursuing the Lord. She got up every day and loved Jesus and others. She suffered and died well. She received that suffering as being from the Lord, and she touched innumerable lives in doing so.** Her example can remind us that none of us knows what stepping stones we're laying in others' paths to heaven through both our littlest and biggest offerings. Our day-to-day lives do not happen in isolation; they impact other people. And each of us is able to impact people *for heaven*.



When I first considered moving to Minnesota, I asked, “Where am I going?” Yes, I was headed to simpler life, stripped of familiar material comforts, a place that was flat, cold, and full of sugar beets. But I was also going to a place of saints-in-the-making. I was going to a place to cleave to Jesus more radically, to foster life-changing relationships, and to be refined, purified, and simplified so as to grow in holiness. I was going to a place where I would play a daily role in helping others on their journey to saintliness—and where I would meet people, like Michelle, who would help me in mine. I hope every day that the answer to the question, “Where am I going?” will always first and foremost be heaven.

Let's pursue being saints together. My friends, I can't wait to be with you and Michelle in heaven.

EVENTS AUGUST 2023

Complete event list: renewalministries.net/events

* Not open to the public.

Charleston, SC
FOCUS Summer Projects*
July 31-August 2
Ralph Martin

Ann Arbor, MI
Video Project*
August 4-5
Pete Burak

Jackson, MI
Pine Hills Girls' Camp*
August 5-12
Debbie Herbeck & the Be Love Revolution Team

Ann Arbor, MI
Special Video Project*
August 7-10
Ralph Martin, Peter Herbeck, & Pete Burak

Indianapolis, IN
Theology on Tap
August 10
Pete Burak
Details: indycatholic.org/theologyontap

Houma, LA
Legatus*
August 22
Pete Burak

St. Paul, MN
Day of Recollection for St. Paul Seminary Faculty & Staff*
August 24
Peter Herbeck

Ann Arbor, MI
The Choices We Face Filming*
August 28-31
Ralph Martin & Peter Herbeck



PLEASE PRAY

► That the Lord will bless our friendships so that they honor and magnify Him and help others experience his love in a greater way.

► That the Lord continues to open doors for us to share his Word to all in need of his strength and light.

► For the prayer intentions of all our supporters and their family members, especially as they face the challenges of illness and economic uncertainty.

My whole strength lies in prayer and sacrifice; these are my invincible arms; they can move hearts far better than words.

// St. Therese of Lisieux

MISSIONS

Slovakia
August 12-21
Peter Herbeck & Deacon Zoltan Kunszabo



THE CHOICES WE FACE

The Choices We Face is the longest-running Catholic television program in the world! Each episode explores an important topic concerning the faith. Watch these and other episodes on our website at:

www.renewalministries.net/the-choices-we-face

AUGUST TOPICS & GUESTS:

Come and See **Anna Carter**

Anna Carter of Eden Invitation shares her experience with same-sex attraction and how God invited her to minister to others. (08/06/23)

The Adventure of Discipleship **Daniel Keating**

Theology professor Dan Keating shares about choosing a life of consecrated celibacy and the core of Christian discipleship. (08/20/23)

Healing Through Forgiveness **Fr. John Burns**

Fr. John Burns talks about God bringing healing and freedom into places of deep brokenness and suffering. (08/27/23)



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