



RENEWAL MINISTRIES

CATHOLIC RENEWAL & EVANGELIZATION

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JANUARY 2025



Dear Fellow Disciples,

This marks the first month in fifty-one years that Gary Seromik, our office manager, chief administrator, finance person, and translator is not working for Renewal Ministries. He is retiring, and while we will miss him, we are grateful that he is willing to serve as a consultant for as long as needed to ensure a smooth transition.

Director of Operations Chris Baker is taking over many of Gary's responsibilities, so we expect everything to transition smoothly with the help of God's continuing mercy.

We held a retirement party for Gary, and he shared many wonderful stories of his work with us over the years. I first met Gary when I was giving a talk at his high school in Flint about a personal relationship with Jesus. The talk inspired Gary and some of his friends. A few months later, Gary caught up with me in Ann Arbor, as he began his studies at

the University of Michigan. Later, as senior in college, he sensed a call from the Lord to work in something "international" and came to my office to ask if we needed any help from someone fluent in many languages.

Did we ever! The Catholic Charismatic Renewal was spreading like wildfire across the globe—and since we were one of the first places where it developed, people from all over the world wrote to us and visited us. Gary's first language was Polish, and he also could speak English, Spanish, French, Russian, and Italian! He earned his undergraduate degree in French and Russian and his master's degree in comparative literature.

Wow, what a providential gift!

Gary's unique gifts have helped with many other aspects of our international work over the past half-century as well.

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Gary and Anilú Seromik and Anne Martin participated in the fiftieth anniversary of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Rome in 2017. ☺

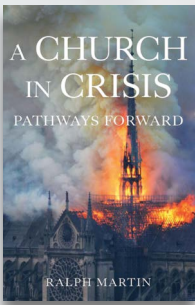
Gary Seromik, who retired at the end of 2024, is pictured with Director of Operations Chris Baker. Chris is taking on many of Gary's responsibilities. ☺



It is right that you should begin again every day. There is no better way to complete the spiritual life than to be ever beginning it over again.

// St. Francis de Sales





REVISITING *A Church In Crisis: Pathways Forward*

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

One highlight of Gary's time with us was when he moved to Rome for several months in 1975 to lay the groundwork for a big international conference held that year that included a closing Mass at St. Peter's Basilica. I discuss this event in more detail in my memoir, *A Life in the Spirit*, available at www.renewalministries.net/ralphmemoir. This proved to be a very significant turning point for the renewal and for the Church—and it would not have been possible without Gary's help.

Gary married Anilú, a lovely and holy woman from Mexico. Together, they raised four children who speak Spanish as their first language! They now have eleven grandchildren—all of whom are Spanish-speaking—with a twelfth on the way.

We are sorry to see Gary go but are looking forward to continue seeing him at our biweekly staff bible studies.

We all want to say to him,

Well done, good and faithful servant!

Please say a prayer of thanksgiving for Gary and his family and ask God's continued blessing on him in retirement.

Thank you for journeying with us—some of you for almost as many years as Gary! Your support makes all we do possible.

Your brother in Christ,

Ralph Martin

Ralph

Book Review by Jack Lynch
Former Renewal Ministries Producer

"Fear! Fire! Foes! AWAKE!!!"

These words from *The Lord of the Rings*, as dark forces of evil enter the hobbits' peaceful lives, seem appropriate for *A Church in Crisis*. Quoting from it:

"So many of our 'Catholics' have been captured by the enemy and are now enlisting in a campaign to shame and change the Church. The enemy is now well within the gates."

Sometimes a book is so critical, so important that it urgently deserves wide readership. Such is *A Church in Crisis*.

This book approaches current difficulties in the Church in a straightforward, hard-hitting way. Ralph Martin pulls no punches. He writes,

"Unless we face squarely the crisis we are in, there is no hope of discerning an appropriate solution."

Ralph also provides sound advice for how to address the crisis. The keys: courage, not being ashamed of the *whole* Gospel, disarming the universalist heresy ("virtually everyone is saved in the end"), and above all, overcoming "pastoral passivity" (which applies to parents as well as clergy). There are also helpful sections on Vatican II, culpability and guilt, and the Sexual Revolution.

A Church in Crisis is a "tour de force"! Again, from the book:

"This crisis affects the very foundations of faith, the core of the Gospel message of salvation and redemption."

Read it and recommend it to others!

ORDER ONLINE:
renewalministries.net/acc

ORDER BY PHONE:
(734) 662-1730



- ▲ Gary (at right) is the godfather of Ralph and Anne Martin's daughter Catherine. She was baptized while they were living in Belgium to serve the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.
- ▼ Gary and Anilú with their children, sons- and daughter-in-law, and grandchildren, in late 2022.



A Family on Mission

BY ANNA FEOLA



Anna Feola is the wife of Country Coordinator Anthony Feola. Below, she shares how their entire family participates in Anthony's missions. The report for the mission to Papua New Guinea that Anna mentions is on pages four and five of this newsletter.

My childhood memories are filled with airport runs to see my dad off to yet another mission field. I looked forward to photos and videos of beautiful faces and landscapes across the globe along with colorful souvenirs on his return. However, it was the stories of lives transformed by the power of the Gospel that stole my heart and defined my perception of mission.

This formation shaped the missionary legacy that I want to pass along to my own children—a legacy that reaches all the way back to Our Lord's closing remarks in Matthew's Gospel. His words opened the missionary floodgates to the nations and continue to echo through the centuries to everyone who has ears to hear:

*"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations."
(Mt 28:18-19)*

When Anthony proposed to me twenty-five years ago, we were on a path toward overseas missionary work. During our engagement, we spent six months on mission in Sweden, Kazakhstan, and China. Returning stateside, we married, and the Lord blessed us with five chil-

dren. Though only one of us could travel overseas at a time for many years, we continued to approach every mission as a united front. In fact, "mission" expanded to include every aspect of our marriage and family vocation.

Through the work of Renewal Ministries, our family participates in overseas mission by praying for the missionaries and conversion of hearts, by investing financially as the Lord enables us, and by sharing Anthony with the precious souls in various nations. Our children join us in prayerfully discerning the timing and details of every opportunity. **With each new mission Anthony embarks on, we give our collective "yes." Daily lifting up every aspect of the mission, from souls hearing the Gospel, to logistics, to divine protection and provision, our prayers at home carry Anthony through many spiritual battles abroad for God's glory.**

One year, his itinerary took him through Istanbul mere days before a terrorist attack rocked the international terminal he had recently passed through. We experienced incredible peace knowing Anthony was in God's hands.

The Lord also has released prophetic words through our prayers an ocean away. Recently, when Anthony was serving in Papua New Guinea, the Lord revealed to me his desire to "visit Papua New Guinea with an outpouring of his Spirit to avenge the blood of martyrs and answer the prayers of missionaries who have sown in tears." Unbeknownst to me, the people Anthony was serving have a special devotion to Bl. Peter To Rot, a twentieth century martyr from Papua New Guinea in the process of being canonized. This word brought great encouragement and joy to the local church at which Anthony was serving. Many responded to the Gospel, received baptism in the Spirit, and began boldly and exuberantly evangelizing in the streets! All glory be to God.

Jesus reminds us,

*"The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."
(Mt 9:37-38)*

There is nothing more rewarding than entering fully into this mission with Our Lord as a family. We have discovered powerful graces that flow in and through a domestic church that responds to Christ's commission to pray, give, and go as He leads—whether it be across the street or abroad. What a joy it is to be a small part of laboring in this great harvest!

"Mission"
expanded to include every aspect of our marriage and family vocation.



SPREADING THE GOSPEL IN

PAPUA NEW GUINEA



BY ANTHONY FEOLA
Country Coordinator
for Papua New Guinea

Anthony attended Word of Life Bible Center in Uppsala, Sweden, and spent his young adult life doing international missions in Sweden, India, Africa, Kazakhstan, and China. Years later, the Lord brought Anthony back home to the Catholic Church. He has since traveled with Renewal Ministries to Turkey, Cameroon, and Mexico, where he has served the poor, shared the Gospel, and ministered at lay leader and priest retreats. He is the director of adult discipleship at Christ the King Catholic Church in Ann Arbor, Michigan. He resides with his wife and five children in Plymouth, Michigan.

At the invitation of Bishop Valentine Gryk and Fr. Adam Samsel of the Goroka Diocese, Tom Hornacek and I had the privilege of leading two separate conferences for the people of the eastern highlands of Papua New Guinea. Participants joined us at the Kefamo Pastoral Center in Goroka from several dioceses, enabling us to impact the entire region with the Word of God.

We covered a range of topics, including the work of the Holy Spirit, healing prayer for freedom, Theology of the Body, the universal call to holiness, proclamation and demonstration of the Gospel, apologetics, and the call to mission. Our teachings culminated in taking the participants to the local market to evangelize in downtown Goroka.

PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL

On the vigil of Pentecost, I spoke about the spirit of mission and told stories about proclaiming the Gospel to the lost, encouraging the believers with the words of St Paul,

"I am under obligation both to Greeks and Barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish: so I am eager to preach the gospel . . . For I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith."
(Rom 1:14-16)

We invited those serious about obeying the great commission and ready to say "yes" to the missionary vocation to come forward for prayer. Almost everyone came forward with eyes fixed on Jesus! As we gathered around the altar, the Spirit filled our hearts. This led into a time of prolonged, intense prayer. The presence of the Holy Spirit was doing a very deep work.

There was a particular grace and missionary anointing over the young people. We called the youth forward, prayed over them for an infilling of the Holy Spirit, and encouraged them in the Lord not to despise their youth but to step into God's plan for their lives. Strong intercessory prayer and loud cries of praise filled the altar area as young and old worshipped their King, and He baptized them "with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Mt 3:11). It felt as

though we were in a modern-day upper room, experiencing what St. Peter proclaimed on the day of Pentecost two-thousand years ago:

"And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy and your young men will see visions."

(Acts 2:17-18)

Songs of celebration and rejoicing continued as we were all filled with joy and the Holy Spirit!

CALL TO HOLINESS

We also taught on Theology of the Body and the universal call to holiness. This led into a time of Eucharistic Adoration and confessions. A beautiful spirit of conviction and repentance came over the hearts of those present. The six priests hearing confessions had a constant stream of penitents. Fr. Adam said many came to confession who had not visited this sacrament in years.

The final session was dedicated to the Sacrament of Marriage. This spoke into a huge need in Papua New Guinea, where there are many broken relationships and broken marriages. The Holy Spirit directed us to pray over the married couples present for the grace of God to fill their marriages. Many came forward to receive prayer. We asked the Lord to manifest his glory in their lives as He did at Cana. Pray that God would renew the Sacrament of Marriage in this country!

EVANGELIZATION

We took the participants to the market to evangelize. Hundreds gathered to see what was going on. We shared music and a few testimonies. I then read Jeremiah 29:11 in the local language and clearly proclaimed the Gospel.

Many raised their hands to respond to the Gospel! After leading them to Jesus in prayer, we sang songs of praise, and the local Catholic community gave out crucifixes, holy cards, and miraculous medals. It was beautiful to see the Catholics boldly witness for the Lord!

The Gospel contains God's power for salvation for those who believe. Simple, loving, clear preaching of Jesus has innate power to change lives!

FROM TOM HORNACEK

Arriving in Papua New Guinea is like stepping back in time. The people are poor, grow much of their own food, and rarely have electricity or cars. They use rainwater collected off roofs for drinking, cooking, and washing.

They live life at a slower, loving pace and are filled with zeal for our Lord. They sang praise songs into the night and again with morning prayer. The women danced with hands in the air, thanking the Lord for their faith.

The bishop and his priests and sisters from around the world were inspiring, tending to the souls entrusted to them regardless of the challenges. When the roads end, the priests walk up to ninety minutes to reach their outparishes.

I have much to learn from the simpler way of life and love of my brothers and sisters in Papua New Guinea. They changed me more than I changed them.

WORDS OF GRATITUDE

From Fr. Adam Samsel:

Thank you for these precious days of your ministry, when we experienced heaven on earth. We felt God's presence among us. This was a life-changing experience. Our people are willing to go evangelize and share their faith. With grateful hearts, we send our greetings and prayers to all who helped these events happen.

From Bishop Valentine Gryk:

Thank you for your ministry among us, for your fire and for being who you are. The fire you have lighted in Goroka is still burning. Thank you for your zeal in spreading the Good News.

Tom Hornacek and Anthony Feola (bottom right) were inspired by the zeal for Christ they saw during their time with the people of Papua New Guinea.



Conversations That Bear Fruit

Wisdom from the Genesis Mission Founders on Putting Evangelization into Practice
BY HEATHER SCHULTZ, RENEWAL MINISTRIES EDITOR



Interviewing Fr. Jon Bielawski and Michele Thompson was like being handed a gift that I couldn't wait to pass on to our readers. During my time with the pair, who traveled from England to attend Ralph Martin's class at Sacred Heart Major Seminary and visit the Renewal Ministries' staff and other Catholic organizations, I discovered that we shared similar hearts for Christ.

Renewal Ministries' supporters are hungry to tell others about Christ. They find creative ways to share the Gospel with those who cross their paths. So much of what Renewal Ministries does is speak the full truth of God's Word and call people to repentance when necessary. To be effective, all of this must be infused with the Holy Spirit and fueled by prayer. I also see that intentionality in Fr. Jon and Michele. Below are some key aspects of their method of evangelization that anyone can put into practice.

FORMING EVANGELIZERS

Their outreach, called Genesis Mission, offers free small-group training on how to become evangelizers. They have taught it to clergy, bishops, both seminaries in England, the Diocese of Syracuse, and more. Note, it's not "training in evangelization." **According to Michele, "Evangelization as such does not exist. There are only evangelizers. Until people start speaking, it's just a concept."**

In other words, evangelization is not primarily something we do; it is something we are. It starts with prayer, with asking the Lord throughout each day to bring someone to share Him with. Then, we've got to slow down enough to be aware of the people around us and to listen for a prompting of the Holy Spirit in case there is a conversation He would like us to have.

"ONE SOUL AT A TIME"

Genesis Mission doesn't teach participants to share their own stories unless doing so specifically speaks into another person's life experience. Instead, it focuses on the person you are speaking to. What is their story? What is their value system? What crosses do they carry? Who is Jesus to them?

How does someone begin having these conversations? According to Michele,

Just step into it. Start by saying, "God bless you," instead of, "Thank you." Then He'll bring you more opportunities. Make the Sign of the Cross in a cafe, and then engage the waitress. Be childlike in your questioning. Childlike inquisitiveness, curiosity, is lovely, because you're just reaching into a person's life in the moment.

BEYOND SMALL TALK

Another aspect of these conversations is not being afraid to go deep. Instead of asking about the weather, ask about the person's favorite kind of weather and where they go to experience it. Who joins them there? That opens discussions about relationships and helps you get to know the person's heart.

To build rapport, it's also important to share something about yourself that builds the conversation. Michele explained,

I might say, "I live near Plymouth. Where do you live?" Or, "I've got three dogs, my dogs are like this . . . Do you like pets?" Share things that can take the conversation to a more personal level without being intrusive.

Through it all, be observant. Fr. Jon and Michele call it *soul listening*—paying attention not just to the words, but to body language, the look in their eyes, the expression on their face. Ask yourself, "What's going on behind the words? What are they symbolic of?" These clues, with guidance from the Holy Spirit, can take a conversation in a direction that bears real fruit in a person's life.

HAVING HARD CONVERSATIONS

Then, the Genesis model moves into life-giving words. Michele explained,

You want to build people up. You want to make them feel their worth—that they have value. But it's important you don't just fall into making them feel good. If there's a need for the call to repentance, it's still life-giving words. If you are talking about an area of wounding or an attitude of unforgiveness, that needs to come out.

If the conversation allows, the Genesis model then moves into a sharing of the kerygma—what Jesus has done for us—and praying with people for healing and transformation.

"Wait for that moment to be guided by the Holy Spirit," said Michele. "People

are far more likely to listen when you've listened to them. We find it far more fruitful for someone to receive when they know: "This person's interested in me. This person cares."

Michele shared an encounter from when she and Fr. Jon were sitting outside a church near the city center, offering bacon, rolls, coffee, and tea to passersby in hope of starting conversations—although the method can be used in all kinds of conversations, not just ones specifically orchestrated with the goal of evangelization. This story exemplifies how the Genesis method encourages speaking the whole truth of the Gospel into people's lives, with guidance from the Holy Spirit. Michele said that while they can't change people lives or fix things for them, they can introduce them to Someone who can.

When this man accepted his tea, Michele asked how he was doing and could tell from his response that he was distressed. She asked him what was going on, and he said he had been struggling in his relationship and was homeless. When Michele inquired further, he said his partner wouldn't let him see his son, and it was very difficult.

Michele sympathized with him but could tell there was more going on. He shared that his first son, whose mother had liver problems, had been born sick and died after a couple of years. When Michele asked, the man admitted that the woman's problems were related to an addiction.

Michele expressed sympathy. Later, she asked why the man couldn't see his other son now. He sidestepped giving a reason but finally answered, "I got drunk. I got into a fight, and I got locked up."

Michele, who had built up trust with the man, responded,

I'm sincerely concerned about what you've told me. You say you haven't got a drinking problem, but you were locked up when you were due to see your son. You got into a fight. That's a problem. Drinking is a problem.

From the mother's point of view, her little boy was so excited to see Daddy.

And then Daddy didn't show up. That little boy would have been so disappointed, and any mother would want to protect her son from that. You must take accountability for your part in that if you want a relationship with your son. You've lost one son. You want to be in this other son's life. To do that, you need to surrender that anger against your partner, because, from her point of view, she's protecting her son.

Then, Michele asked if he had any faith. He responded that he was unsure if God exists.

She proclaimed that God is real:

He wants to come into your life and help you out of your mess. He came to us in Jesus Christ, who went to the cross for everything you're experiencing. All the anger and resentment that you're carrying, He took it onto Himself, and He died. Then, He rose again and opened the gates of heaven so that your little son and you, through Him, can be in heaven together one day. But that's only going to happen when you invite Him into your life, and you have to really want that.

Fr. Jon and Michele prayed with the man for that to happen. They explained, "You've invited Jesus in. There must be a firm resolve now, and you need to try to heal that relationship and do the right thing instead of what you want to do." They told him about the Church and how to take those first steps into the Church.

A DEEPER DIMENSION

According to Fr. Jon and Michele, all ministry work should take on the deeper dimension of proclaiming Christ.



Even though telling people about Jesus and speaking life-giving words won't always yield fruit we can see, that shouldn't prevent us from stepping out in faith and love.

Michele said, "You're only doing half a job if you're not sharing Jesus alongside your ministry work, because you're not sharing opportunities for lives to be redeemed and healed. Even in church, the person next to us may not have a relationship with Jesus—so engage with them."

Fr. Jon added,

Many people's lives are in chaos. Someone who is hungry may need to be given food every day. Often, they've got chaotic factors in their lives that won't change with food. If we discerningly give them food and share Jesus with them, we put them in contact with a solution to the bigger problems. Do good deeds and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal opportunities for conversations about deeper needs.

There are many missed opportunities in the Church. We do good deeds out of love for Jesus but don't say the reason because we think it's obvious. It isn't obvious. People don't make the connection. The word and deed need to go together.

Even though telling people about Jesus and speaking life-giving words won't always yield fruit we can see, that shouldn't prevent us from stepping out in faith and love. Michele explained,

By proclaiming the Gospel, we've released the divine power that can help them along the way. Even if they don't do something immediately, when they reach rock bottom, hopefully they will remember that (person) who said they could turn to Jesus and say sorry, repent their sins, and be resurrected. At the crucifixion, the thief on the cross turned to Jesus, and Jesus said, "Today you will be with me in paradise."

Visit <https://genesismission.co.uk> for more information or to contact Fr. Jon and Michele.

Learn more about how to bring Genesis Mission to your parish or diocese by scrolling to the end of our blog post at www.renewalministries.net/conversations-that-bear-fruit.

EVENTS

JANUARY 2025

Salt Lake City, UT

FOCUS SEEK

January 3-5

Pete Burak

Details: seek.focus.org/salt-lake-city

Fort Lauderdale & the Caribbean Good News Cruise

January 5-11

Peter & Debbie Herbeck

Details: goodnewscruise.com/2025-good-news-cruise-catholic-couples

Tulsa, OK

Legatus*

January 9

Rachel Herbeck

Memphis, TN

Memphis Men's Conference

January 10-12

Pete Burak

Details: reaching-higher.org

Milwaukee, WI

St. Francis de Sales Seminary

Winter Retreat*

January 12-17

Ralph Martin

Indianapolis, IN

Legatus*

January 16

Pete Burak

Kansas City, MO

Encounter Regional Conference

January 16-18

Dr. Mary Healy

Details: encounterministries.us/kc

Ann Arbor, MI

Upper Room at Christ the King

January 19

Ralph Martin

Details: ctkcc.net

Shelby Township, MI

Ascend Praise & Worship at St. Kieran

January 30

Dr. Mary Healy

Details: stkieran.org/upcoming-events

* *Not open to the public.*

View complete event list:

renewalministries.net/events



REGISTRATION NOW OPEN

**Register by February 1
to get early bird pricing!**

Details: www.ljhr.ca

MISSIONS



Ethiopia

January 1-13

Lloyd & Nancy Greenhaw

Mexico

January 2-12

Jim Murphy and Team



**PLEASE
PRAY**

- ▶ For families to grow in a sacrificial love of each other that reflects the Lord's own love for his children.
- ▶ For those struggling with any type of addiction, that the Lord would provide them with the necessary grace, support, and strength to break free and build their lives on Him.
- ▶ For the prayer intentions of all our supporters and their family members, especially as they face the challenges of illness and economic uncertainty.



Renewal Ministries is a Catholic ministry committed to renewal and evangelization in the Church. It seeks to proclaim Jesus Christ through its TV, radio, and social media outreaches, as well as through books, conferences, retreats, and other international evangelistic events.

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