

# CHARISMATIC RENEWAL OFFICE NEWSLETTER

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## Mission Statement:



*Our mission is to help people respond to the call to conversion to the lordship of Jesus Christ, to facilitate transformation through Baptism in the Holy Spirit, and to assist in the spiritual renewal of people and parishes.*

## An Interview With Ralph Martin

by Larry Nawrocki

*Editor's note: Ralph Martin has been a leader in Catholic Charismatic Renewal since the late 1960s. He was the founding editor of **New Covenant Magazine**, and he served as the first director of the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Office which is currently located in Rome. Currently, he is President of **RENEWAL MINISTRIES**, an organization devoted to Catholic Renewal and evangelization. Ralph will be the featured speaker at the annual retreat of the St. Peter Prayer Group in North St. Paul on October 25-26.*

**CRO:** Can you tell me about what you've been doing through **RENEWAL MINISTRIES** and what that ministry offers?

**RALPH:** **RENEWAL MINISTRIES** has many things which it offers. It produces a Catholic television program called The Choices We Face which is pretty widely distributed throughout the world. We offer a daily radio program called Food for the Journey; Sister Ann Shields is the host. That show is on most of the new Catholic radio stations. We put on many conferences, retreats, missions and seminars all over the world. We're working quite a bit in eastern Europe and Africa. We're working on going into about 20 different countries in Africa.

**CRO:** Are you translating programming into other languages?

**RALPH:** Yes, and we're setting up Catholic evangelization centers, and we're helping support and train priests and lay people in those countries to carry out the work of renewal and evangelization. We bring people here for a year or two for training. We also send people over there to do training. Sister Ann Shields just got back from doing a retreat for 150 nuns in Uganda. We just had a team come back from Croatia and one from Romania.

**CRO:** How do you find the Spirit working in places like that, and particularly relative to how the Spirit is working in the United States?

**RALPH:** I would say that the places where people most know they are needy are the places where the Lord is working very strongly. In the former communist countries people are really wounded, and they really know they need God. The same is true in Africa. We do see the Lord working very strongly in these countries. In the United States there seems to be a little bit more of a spirit of complacency, and so it's a little bit tougher going.

**CRO:** Do you have any books that you are currently writing?

**RALPH:** Yes. I am just starting work on a new one. For the last several years, my main focus has been teaching about the doctors of the church in the area of spirituality. I am teaching at a seminary in Detroit. I am also teaching Catholic spirituality at a new Catholic college that just started here in Ann Arbor, Ave Maria College, and I am teaching this summer in the graduate theology program. I'm teaching about Catherine of Siena, Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, St. Francis de Sales, etc. I've done a tape series on a bunch of these people.

**CRO:** Could you tell me a little bit about the origins of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal?

**RALPH:** When I was a senior at the University of Notre Dame I made a Cursillo, and it really had a big impact on my life. I went off to graduate school for a while, and I received an invitation to work at the national office of the Cursillo movement which had just been established in Lansing, Michigan. I worked for about five years with the national office of the Cursillo movement doing training and developing materials. Somewhere along the way the Charismatic Renewal broke out in the Pittsburgh area. Some friends told us about it, and we got involved. Ann Arbor became one of the centers of the Renewal, and we started doing New Covenant Magazine there. The International Center for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal started here, and then it was moved to Belgium.

**CRO:** How do you feel about the loss of New Covenant? They just recently stopped publishing.

**RALPH:** In January, yes. Well, doing a magazine is tough, and the Catholic Charismatic Renewal isn't, as you know, growing as it used to be here in the states, so it is understandable.

**CRO:** Back again on Cursillo...do you have any active involvement in Cursillo on an ongoing basis?

**RALPH:** I don't, although last year I gave a retreat to the leaders of the Cursillo movement in the Detroit area. They just asked me to do it again this year.

**CRO:** Charismatic Renewal...where do you see it going?

**RALPH:** Cardinal Suenens used to say that the mission of the Charismatic Renewal was to be a witness of what belongs to the whole Church. The Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit aren't the property of a particular movement. They belong to every Catholic in the whole Church, and, once the Church awakens to what it has, there's no need for a particular movement. I certainly don't think we've reached that point, but a lot of progress has been made.

**CRO:** In what areas?

**RALPH:** Well, I think the whole Church is much more aware of the Holy Spirit, much more open to the Spirit than would be true without the Charismatic Renewal. I think there's been a lot of influence in music and singing, spontaneous prayer, and all kinds of things like that. An awful lot of people who are serving in parishes have been awakened as active Catholics through the Charismatic Renewal.

**CRO:** And covenant communities, I think, are an offshoot of Charismatic Renewal.

**RALPH:** Yes.

**CRO:** Does **RENEWAL MINISTRIES** foster Charismatic Renewal?

**RALPH:** The focus of **RENEWAL MINISTRIES** isn't to promote Charismatic Renewal. It's really trying to communicate the vision of dynamic Catholic life to which John Paul II is pointing the whole Church, that total vision in his document *Novo Millennio Ineunte* where he talks about attitudes deepening, the call to holiness, the call to community and the call to new evangelization. These are the areas upon which we feel we're supposed to be focusing. John Paul II says that the Church needs to reconnect with its mystical tradition, and he mentions four of the saints about whom I have been teaching for the last several years. It was kind of exciting when that happened. I feel like part of my personal mission right now is to try to make the teachings of the saints and doctors of the church understandable and accessible to people.

**CRO:** A word that's been coming to mind to me a lot lately is "busyness". I have a friend who says that, if Satan can't make you bad, he'll make you busy.

**RALPH:** That's interesting.

**CRO:** How do you see "busyness"? When you start talking about the things that you do and things in which you are involved, "busyness" is certainly a word that comes to mind. How do you manage what you do and fit in prayer time?

**RALPH:** Right after I made the Cursillo I felt that the Lord made clear to me that I needed to take some time each day for personal prayer and that such time was really important for being able to sustain the journey. So I have been taking time each day for personal prayer. Some days it seems impossible, but, for the most part, I've been doing it. It's been really important to me to stay in that kind of personal contact with the Lord. Another thing that's been really helpful too is being in a men's group. I've been in a men's group for more than 30 years now, and being with other people who want to continue on the journey and who cherish the support of each other has strengthened me.

**CRO:** What impact do you think "busyness" has had upon people's involvement in communities and prayer groups?

**RALPH:** Well, I think it's so easy to get caught up in all different kinds of activities. Our culture certainly is very geared toward 24-hour-a-day distraction and entertainment. And I think that, unless you do break with that to a certain extent and establish some priorities in your life for the Lord and for listening to Him and following Him and trying to bring your life in line with His Will, it's pretty tough.

**CRO:** Do you have any comments that you would like to add?

**RALPH:** Well, I think it's really important that people take time out from their busy lives for a weekend like that being planned at St. Peter's, and come aside and take some time to listen to God's word and reflect and pray and interact. I think it is an important time in the Church and in the world, and we really need to be connected with the Lord and be in touch with Him. We all need periodic times of renewal and review, and I'm hoping that this weekend can be a real blessing for people.

**CRO:** Well, we're looking forward to your being here, and we look forward to being blessed.

## Webmaster?

We are looking for someone who knows how to create and maintain websites, and would be willing to help CCRO come into the 21st century.

Are you that person? If you can help us, please contact the office.

## People are Talking!

...about the Conference, "*Holy and Empowered: God's Vision for You.*" Time is drawing near and we are all looking forward to an exciting and anointed time together.

Although **Mother Nadine Brown** is new to many, she is a wonderful speaker, with a wealth of experience and knowledge. Archbishop Flynn highly recommends her. And for those of you who already know **Sister Francis Clare**, you know her joy and love of the Lord—and her excitement in doing His will. Plan to be there for the healing service Friday night!

Many of your friends and neighbors will be sharing their experiences and stories about how the Holy Spirit has moved in their lives, directed and inspired them, and through them, touched the lives and hearts of many of God's people.

**This year, there's a chance we might fill the auditorium. You are encouraged to preregister in order to be assured of a space. We will take registrations at the door as we are able to accommodate. If you have not received a brochure, or if you need more, contact the Renewal Office.**

## Teaching Weekend

Are you interested in youth ministry or long-term work with youth? Or maybe you would like to share the Gospel message with others more effectively. How important is ongoing discipleship, and what does that involve? Fr. Dimitri Sala will address all of these and much more in an in-depth training weekend September 21-22 at Epiphany Church.

Fr. Dimitri is a Franciscan priest from the Archdiocese of Chicago in full-time ministry of evangelization preaching. Watch for more information, or call the Renewal Office for details.

## Going forward

Please remember the Renewal Office when it's time to mail your monthly bills. We rely on you for your continued prayer and financial support.