



# RENEWAL MINISTRIES

## CATHOLIC RENEWAL & EVANGELIZATION

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AUGUST 2025



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### Dear Partners,

I have been busy lately getting ready for the next class of priests from all over the world who come to Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit, Michigan, each summer to work on a Licentiate in Sacred Theology Degree (STL). Teaching them is one of my favorite things to do at the seminary.\*

My wife, Anne, and I also have been blessed to attend various family events over the past few months. Some of them are grade school, high school, and college graduations for various grandchildren—happy occasions. We've also had a few confirmations and other special events. One granddaughter, Sophia Von Stauffenberg, graduated from a Catholic high school in Maryland where she lives with my daughter Rachel, her father, Diego, and her six younger brothers! The school asked me to give the commencement address, which was indeed a special honor. You can read a shortened version of it on the next page. One point that really stood out for me as I looked at these beautiful young women ready to take their next steps was the fact that, in this life, they will never be all together again. Reunions are planned by the school every five years, but many of the girls are returning to the other countries

from which they came while their parents were in the Washington, DC, area for their jobs. Others are moving to distant states. While talking about the privilege of a Catholic education, I felt led to remind them that the only way for them ever to be all together again would be in a heavenly reunion, and for that to happen, each of them needs to persevere in their Catholic faith to the end. If someone strays from the path, they need to reach out and encourage them to return to the Way. That is true for all of us.

I also was asked to give a four-day retreat for Marmion Abbey, a Benedictine monastery near Chicago whose major apostolate is running a big Catholic boys school. Like many Catholic institutions, they are dealing with significant cultural and demographic changes. There are fewer vocations, fewer Catholic families, fewer children, and fewer Catholic grade schools sending their graduates on to fewer Catholic high schools. All in all, even in the face of apparent challenges, I was very much impressed by this "band of brothers" that is persevering through difficult times and continuing on in faithful service to the Lord.

All of us: Persevere!

*Ralph Martin*

Ralph

\* This letter was written before my recent firing from Sacred Heart Major Seminary. You can read my statement on that event at [bit.ly/RMstatement](http://bit.ly/RMstatement).



Ralph recently gave a four-day retreat at a Benedictine monastery.

# 'That's When My Life Will Start!'

BY RALPH MARTIN



Ralph Martin recently gave the commencement address at Brookewood School in Kensington, Maryland. A condensed version of his message is shared below.

It's easy to look to a future event like college, marriage, entering religious life, or starting a career, and think, "That's when my life will start!" However, we have been living life since conception. Life is now. What are the secrets to living a meaningful life filled with purpose—and not just seeing those things as only attainable in the future?

Our Catholic faith holds many of these secrets. It's important to open our hearts and minds to the keys to happiness that our Catholic faith contains.

What are these keys? First, only one thing really matters: "What does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?" (Mk 8:36). Life is short, and we must live in a way that's pleasing to God so that we can end our lives in his friendship and thereby enter eternal life. We must be in the world but not of it!

The alternative—never reaching the fulfillment of our life's purpose and never entering eternal life—is horrific.

Second, the angel said to Mary, "Do not be afraid" (Lk 1:30). This is important! And it is only possible through having faith in Christ—who defeated death—and the love of God poured into our hearts.

There is so much to possibly fear in life: death; illness; failing; rejection; humiliation; being too short, tall, fat, thin, non-athletic, or not being beautiful or handsome enough; not having enough; not being loved; failing; etc. First John 4:17-19 tells us,

*In this is love brought to perfection among us, that we have confidence on the day of judgment because as he is, so are we in this world.*

*There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear because fear has to do with punishment, and so one who fears is not yet perfect in love. We love because he first loved us.*

Growing in faith and love is a lifelong journey. May we find peace in the angel's exhortation to Mary to not be afraid. May we welcome God's touch, his call, and the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. He only takes from us those things that block the happiness we were created for, and in return, He gives us eternal life and love.

When Peter asked to walk on water, Jesus said, "Come" (Mt 14:29). When Peter kept his eyes on Jesus, he was able to walk on the water; when he looked fearfully at the strong wind, he began to sink. Peter cried out, and Jesus immediately saved him. He asked Peter, "O man of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Mt 14:31).

That brings us to the third point, which Teresa of Avila used to sum up all her writings: "I am asking only one thing of you, keep your eyes on Jesus. He is both the Way and the Destination."

The two most important decisions in my life were to give the Lord unconditional surrender and to pray and reflect on his Word daily. These decisions helped me keep my eyes on the Lord. Those two simple decisions can help each of us to live out the fulfillment of our life's purpose now. Let's help each other make it, not just to our five-year reunion, but to that eternal, heavenly reunion, where we may hear: "Well done good and faithful servant . . . enter into the joy of your master!" (Mt 25:25).



# 'A Strong Foundation'

## Bishop-Elect Has Roots in Renewal Ministries

By Heather Schultz, Renewal Ministries Editor

Pope Leo XIV recently named Fr. Simon Peter Engurait bishop-elect of the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux, Louisiana—an appointment that may never have taken place without a Renewal Ministries' mission trip to Uganda.

In 2003, a team composed of Ralph Martin; Peter Herbeck; and Bishop Sam Jacobs, the first chairman of Renewal Ministries' Board of Directors, spoke at the first International Priests' Retreat at Ggaba National Major Seminary in Uganda.

Bishop Jacobs said,

*One of the priests on retreat told me I needed to talk to Simon Peter, who was discerning priesthood and needed help in the process of discernment. We met at a cafe and had a good conversation. It was clear to me that there were grounds for good discernment, because he had a strong foundation.*

Simon Peter later reached out to ask about additional discernment. The bishop invited Simon Peter to visit the States, where he would “walk with (him) and discern.” The bishop told Simon Peter he did not need to decide anything; it was simply a chance to better discern if this was God's call.

Simon Peter visited Bishop Jacobs in the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux. “He spent about a month here, and we had some good discussions,” said Bishop Jacobs. “I said, ‘Go back and pray about it. If you think God is calling you to this diocese, come back.’ And he did. I walked with him and eventually ordained him.”

In addition to ordaining Fr. Simon Peter in 2013, Bishop Jacobs—who retired in September 2013—likely will be a co-consecrator when he is ordained as a bishop.

Bishop Jacobs saw in Fr. Simon Peter genuine humility, as well zeal for and hunger to do God's work.

**Fr. Simon Peter's faith journey as a young man in Uganda was substantially influenced by the Emmaus Centre Katikamu, which Renewal Ministries has supported for almost twenty-five years.**

According to Joseph Auno Okiror, the centre's co-founder and director, a 1992 outreach “was decisive in helping (Fr. Simon Peter) surrender his life to Jesus wholeheartedly.” From that point forward, he “devoted most of his spare time sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with all those he came across.”

The Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux's website explains that Fr. Simon Peter's background includes “a career in public service, including (senior management) roles in Uganda's government and a Master of Business Administration from the Netherlands.” It adds that in college, “he had a profound encounter with the Catholic Charismatic Renewal that shaped his spiritual path and ultimately led him back to discern a priestly vocation.”

According to Okiror, Fr. Simon Peter participated in university programs at the Emmaus Centre Katikamu sponsored by Renewal Ministries.

Okiror said Fr. Simon Peter “experienced God's love through the Holy Spirit (and) is gifted with many charisms to help him serve.”

Bishop Jacobs explained the bishop-elect's spirituality is

*very obvious, but he doesn't force it on anyone. He just lives it himself. He's a very prayerful man who discerns what God's will is before he acts. The renewal has brought him a deeper experience of Jesus as Lord and the opening to gifts of the Spirit.*

When asked what advice he has for the bishop-elect, Bishop Jacobs said to be a shepherd, be himself, and make his decisions after prayer.

“It is the feeling a father has when his son or grandson is born—the relationship of father and a son,” Bishop Jacobs said of walking so closely with Bishop-elect Simon Peter. “Now that he will be elevated to a bishop, it gives even greater joy in a spiritual father's heart.”

This 1992 photo was taken while Bishop-elect Simon Peter Engurait was studying philosophy and doing outreach with the Emmaus Centre. He is standing in the back, on the far right. Photo provided by Joseph Auno Okiror.



# THE SEARCH FOR MEANING

BY STEVE NORMAN  
Director of Forged

This article has been condensed from Steve Norman's recent interview on *The Choices We Face*, where he discusses his faith journey and Forged, an outreach of Renewal Ministries that ministers to middle school and high school boys, young men, and dads.



## UPBRINGING

I grew up in Canada just outside of Toronto, Ontario, in a Catholic family. We attended church on Sundays and prayed before meals. I attended Catholic schools and played a lot of sports, especially soccer, basketball, and volleyball.

We went to church picnics and my dad sang in the choir—but nothing else in our home clearly reflected the faith. When I turned sixteen, my parents said I didn't have to go to church if I didn't want to—so I stopped going.

In college, I became a staunch atheist. I moved to western Canada to explore. I was searching and considering what my next adventure would be. I ended up saving money to go to Europe. I bought a one-way ticket and a rail pass.

I was looking for something—some truth, some answer. I was hoping to go to Asia; I thought some Eastern practices might help me. After three months of travelling by myself, however, homesickness set in, and I came home.

## HOMECOMING

One of my three sisters was a faithful Christian. We often debated over coffee, me as an atheist and her as a believer. When I lived out west, we had long-distance debates. We were friends but enjoyed getting into it.

When I came back from Europe, my sister asked me to go on a Cursillo retreat. I hadn't found what I was looking for and was more open to something like that. It was late October of 2011.

**The retreat provided a tangible experience of community and love. I was surrounded by guys much older than me. I wondered, "What am I doing here?" But by the end of the weekend, the Lord radically changed everything.**

I don't want to spoil the Cursillo experience, but at the end of it—after you've been wrapped in this tangible experience of God's love—the doors open, and everyone who has been praying for you over the weekend comes in. My sister was there; I just started weeping.

It's wonderful how the Lord uses other people's love—and their prayers, conversations, and patience—to open us up to the God who is love.



*It's wonderful how the Lord uses other people's love—and their prayers, conversations, and patience—to open us up to the God who is love.*

## FINDING DIRECTION

After that, I did a variety of jobs and didn't know what direction to take.

Thankfully, I got coffee with Fr. Kenneth LeBlanc, a Legionary of Christ priest I debated with in college. I still didn't necessarily believe in Christ, let alone the Catholic faith, but I said, "I'm on your side in the sense that I believe in God. Can you help me understand this?"

He helped me figure out things like my prayer life and took me to the Holy Land. Eventually, I became a missionary for a year with the Legion. I worked on college campuses, living with priests and doing ministry. This all helped me better understand the Church and who Jesus is.

I realized God was always after me. Christianity now made sense because it reflected my experience with God, the great Hound of Heaven, who was always after me.

The friends, people, and rhythms of life I established during my missionary year were radically different than

my earlier way of life. When I came home, I found myself trying to find my way and discern what the Lord had in store for me.

### HIGH SCHOOL MINISTRY

For a while, I worked in marketing, but I quickly realized that I loved spending time in the church, with priest friends, and organizing young adults and youth groups in my volunteer time. Then, I came across an opportunity to work as a campus minister at a Catholic high school in Ontario.

I had zero education in theology but loved the Lord—so I applied and got the job. I worked in high school ministry for seven years before moving to Michigan to work with Renewal Ministries as the director of Forged.

**Those seven years were very formative. I had a great zeal and a desire to communicate to the students that, “I’ve been where you’re at. You just want to play sports, or you don’t care. But God’s real, and He loves you.” It was challenging to realize that you can’t force people to realize that—just like no one could force me to come to believe. It was humbling and a great learning experience.**

### DISCOVERING A CHARISMATIC FAITH

My wife, Katey, and I were introduced through a mutual friend and met for the first time at the Lift Jesus Higher Rally in Toronto. Katey had studied theology at the Franciscan University of Steubenville. Her faith was charismatic, but I liked discipline and order, even in my faith life. When we came to Ann Arbor for a charismatic young adult retreat, I remember saying, “Katey, I’m doing this for you. You can raise your hands, but I’m not going to.”

But at adoration on Saturday night, I had an experience similar to that one at the Cursillo retreat. The Lord just did something. I was sobbing with my hands up, declaring,

**“Okay, Lord, whatever You want!”**

**Steve Norman and his wife, Katey, emceeding the youth track of Renewal Ministries' Lift Jesus Higher Rally in Toronto, Ontario.**



### JOINING FORGED

When Katey and I had our kids, we asked ourselves, “Where do we want to raise them? What kind of a greenhouse and soil do we want to provide?” When the opportunity arose to move to Ann Arbor to work with Renewal Ministries as the director of Forged, the culture and community here was a big consideration. It was hard to leave our family and to sell a house that we loved, but once we went all-in, the Lord quickly opened doors to make everything possible.

Forged has grown from what’s being done at Renewal Ministries’ long-running Pine Hills Boys Camp. Over the summer, we build off camp’s momentum by doing a Scripture-based leadership cohort, workouts, competitions, and Bible studies. During the school year, we do discipleship in a number of middle schools. We also go to the high schools and play dodgeball or pickleball, to start deeper conversations with the students. I’m also the assistant soccer coach at a local Catholic high school, which gives me an chance to get to know some of the boys better.

### CHALLENGES FACING TODAY’S YOUNG MEN

Between school, friends, academics, clubs, and plays, today’s boys are busy. Those are all good things, but they compete for their bandwidth and energy. It’s important to challenge boys to recognize that there’s so much more in them. We want to bring that out and to purify them. Whether it’s a workout or something spiritual, we want to call them on, because we love them. We try to do this with peers and mentors in a way that lets them know we are going to help them. That is what I experienced at Pine Hills Camp as well. The middle school boys who attend come out standing up a little straighter.

**When it comes to the faith, I think boys are missing a way to channel their masculinity and winning drive in their relationship with the Lord—a way to seek the King and see what He has to say about them.**

To people with sons, grandchildren, or nephews who have faith but are facing challenges in today’s culture, I recommend finding ways to surround them with support. Also, the prayers of my sister and certain friends were a big part of my conversion—so there’s always something you can do there. You also can try to get them to attend a retreat or provide content that might resonate with them, like things by Fr. Mike Schmitz. There’s also nothing like being around other guys, peers who are running after the Lord together. It raises your game.

Forged also encourages dads to be that guy their sons see running after the Lord. Bring them to your workplace if possible, bring them to workouts. Let them see you struggle and suffer—go through your own crucible—and get through it. They need to see that as a man, the struggle’s good, and failure’s okay. Mistakes are good, because you can grow from them. They need to see you struggling but then turning to the Lord and persevering. This is an essential part of bring our boys into the realm of men.



Learn more about Forged at [www.forgedministry.com](http://www.forgedministry.com).



# ‘God, This is Your Land’ PRAYERS FOR HEALING IN CENTRAL EUROPE

by Heather Schultz // Renewal Ministries' Editor

Two-hundred leaders of Central European countries recently united in prayer to seek the Lord’s forgiveness and mercy. They each prayed,

*“We ask your forgiveness, and we surrender our pride, our bitterness, and our past and our future to You. We forgive those who have harmed us, and we release them from their debt. Break every chain of offense and every bond of hatred and renew our country.”*

These leaders, many of whom are members of the European Parliament, hail from twenty-five countries. They joined together at the first Central European Parliamentary Prayer Gathering, where Renewal Ministries Country Coordinator Dr. Bohumir (Bohus) Zivcak, from Slovakia, served as a worship leader. The event was organized by Gudrun Kugler, a member of the Austrian Parliament, and Eduard Heger, the former prime minister of Slovakia. It consisted of a six-hour boat ride from Bratislava, Slovakia, to Vienna, Austria, on the Danube River.

Zivcak said the inspiration for the gathering stemmed from prayer breakfasts held in various countries. The event’s location was significant because the Danube River connects many people in Central Europe, and organizers also wanted to pray against the sins of Communism in the location where the Iron Curtain had been located.

“The event gathered those who are used to praying so that they could pray for something bigger than their own country,” said Bohus. “There are forces operating on a bigger scale.”

This prayer gathering had additional significance because it was held eighty

years since the end of World War II and seventy-five years since the Schuman Declaration, which began laying the groundwork for the formation of the European Union. Most of the people in the group were Catholic, but not all.

Bohus explained,

The idea was to bring out the wounds, curses, and bondage since World War II—which is mentioned almost every day, regarding the war between Russia and the Ukraine. These wounds have not been healed; they have not even been spoken about. They were quickly replaced by totalitarian regimes. . . . Working in these countries, you hit walls that were built by these wounds or in reaction to these wounds.

**In addition to confessing their country’s wrongs, asking for forgiveness, and renouncing curses, participants also offered blessings for each other. Additionally, some shared testimonies of things that had happened throughout their countries’ histories, like persecution and the imprisonment or death of loved ones.**

Participants said they felt Holy Spirit’s presence throughout the day.



*“The event gathered those who are used to praying so that they could pray for something bigger than their own country. There are forces operating on a bigger scale.”*

Bohus said,

Christians' voices need to be heard. I admire people who can sustain these political environments and also say what we have been discussing with Renewal Ministries for years—that key things need to be done to unlock the renewal, the Spirit, and mercy. St. John Paul II did this before the fall of Communism. This is a call on Christians in Parliament. On their own, they may not have a voice strong enough to change the country, the laws, or corruption, but these few Christians in Parliament bring a light to these places. If they are faithful to their calling in inviting God into these situations, miracles can happen. There is opposition, because we live in a world that is the enemy of God. But at the same time, the miracle of those few people of God being there as torches, bringing God's light into these situations, is very nice to see.

Bohus saw a real depth of faith in the participants. "People were praying for each other individually," he said. "It was good to see them comfortable with praying like that in fellowship. This was a sign to me that this has not happened overnight. They knew how to pray and why they were doing these things."

Bohus said that amid growing feelings of divisiveness in the world, the day of prayer will have a powerful impact:

Seeing those leaders talking, laughing, and eating together made the idea of the European Union as a fellowship of countries in friendship, peace, and cooperation seem possible. The enemy always tries to divide, both countries and families. There has been so much division because of Covid, politics, and now war in Ukraine and Gaza. People are taking sides—and this is creating an atmosphere of suspicion, fear, sorrow, depression, and anger. You have these feelings when you read the newspaper or look at politics. The immediate fruit of these countries coming together

in unity and praying for common intentions was that it fulfilled the prophecy of the Bible,

*"For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them."* (Mt 18:20)

The event reminded us that biblical promises are important.

**God is touching things in us and in our world that need his healing and mercy. There will be untold fruit from this. Bands were loosened and doors were opened for Christ and the Holy Spirit to work in the people of those countries.**

People from across the ocean prayed for the for the fall of Communism. They didn't see immediate fruit. But without those prayers, Communism couldn't have ended in the way it did—without bloodshed and killing. And now a similar threat is happening in Ukraine. These leaders came together to say, "God, this is your land. We release your power in these things." God likes to work in small things.

**Bohus added that the work accomplished at the prayer gathering doesn't have to end there. During this Jubilee Year, he said great graces can be poured out if dioceses, parishes, and families repent and seek forgiveness for what they have done in the past or haven't done and should be doing. He explained, "This is the condition for the mercy and grace of Jubilee Year to be released."**

*To see an inspiring video recap of the event, visit [bit.ly/CEprayergathering](http://bit.ly/CEprayergathering).*

#### Footnote

1. "Central European Prayer Breakfast," Psalm 133, YouTube video, May 21, 2025, 3:04-7:54, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=hprvJ7Sfn9M](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hprvJ7Sfn9M).



*Title Image Credit: Team Kugler*



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[RenewalMinistries.net/plannedgiving](http://RenewalMinistries.net/plannedgiving)

## Wisdom from the Saints

*"There is no evil to be faced that Christ does not face with us. There is no enemy that Christ has not already conquered. There is no cross to bear that Christ has not already borne for us and does not now bear with us."*

// St. John Paul II

# EVENTS

AUGUST 2025 View complete event list at [renewalministries.net/events](http://renewalministries.net/events).

\* Not open to the public.

## Jackson, MI Pine Hills Girls Camp\*

August 3-9

Debbie Herbeck, Rachel Herbeck, and Team

## Gary, IN Emmaus Conference

August 9

Dr. Mary Healy

Details: [dgary.org/emmaus](http://dgary.org/emmaus)

## Pasadena, CA Encounter Transformation Night

August 15

Ralph Martin

Details: [encounterschool.org/losangeles](http://encounterschool.org/losangeles)

## Anaheim, CA A New Hope: Southern California Charismatic Renewal Convention

August 16-17

Ralph Martin

Details: <https://events.scrs.org/a-new-hope-2025>

## Centerburg, OH Damascus Retreat\*

August 17-19

Peter & Debbie Herbeck

## Vancouver, BC Vancouver Catholic School Teachers Retreat\*

August 27

Pete Burak



► For those hurt by the atrocities of war to find healing, and for peace in areas of conflict and unrest.

► That the Lord continues to provide holy men and women for the priesthood and religious life, and that those who have said yes to Him in this way would be filled with his strength and courage to persevere in all He asks of them.

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

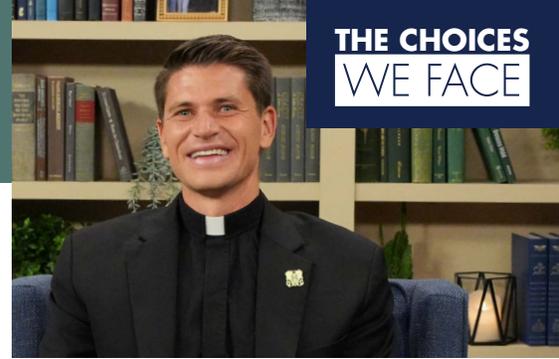
## MISSION



### Cameroon

July 26-August 3

Ralph Martin, Bishop Scott McCaig, and Peter Newburn



THE CHOICES  
WE FACE

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[www.renewalministries.net/the-choices-we-face](http://www.renewalministries.net/the-choices-we-face)

## AUGUST GUESTS & TOPICS:

### To Die Well

(08/03/25) // Deacon Steve Doran, MD  
Neurosurgeon Deacon Steve Doran discusses the importance of acknowledging death's certainty and preparing well for death.

### Eternal Consequences

(08/10/25)

Ralph and Peter talk about God's commandments and the consequences of not believing and acting on God's Word.

### Answering the Call

(08/17/25) // Fr. Seamus Kettner

Fr. Seamus Kettner shares his testimony of meeting Jesus personally and being called to the priesthood through Our Lady of Knock.

### Meeting the Messiah

(08/24/25) // Debbie Herbeck

Debbie Herbeck speaks at the 2024 Lift Jesus Higher Rally about her Jewish upbringing, the death of her brother, and finding Jesus.



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.

Scripture references in the newsletter are from the *Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition* of the Bible unless otherwise noted.

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