

RENEWAL MINISTRIES

CATHOLIC RENEWAL & EVANGELIZATION

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

FEBRUARY 2025



Dear Supporters,

Sr. Ann Shields has been a key part of our team and ministry for many, many years. She grew up in a Catholic family in somewhat rural Pennsylvania, entered the Sisters of Mercy, and taught school for many years.

As the Sisters of Mercy drifted further and further away from their original calling, Sr. Ann felt that she needed to find another way of living a committed religious life.

The Catholic Charismatic Renewal was in its full initial force in the early 1970s when Fr. Mike Scanlan was chosen as the new president of what was then the College of Steubenville. Sr. Ann, having been deeply touched by this renewal herself, was invited by Fr. Mike to move to Steubenville and assist him in bringing renewal to the college, which was in severe decline, both financially and in terms of its Catholic identity.

After contributing greatly to the amazing turnaround that happened at what would later develop into the world-renowned Franciscan University of Steubenville, Sr. Ann discerned a move to Ann Arbor, Michigan, where she initially lived with a family in the

ecumenical Word of God Community. Later, she discovered the Servants of God's Love, a religious community within the Diocese of Lansing, and she asked to live with them. In time, she made her final profession with the sisters. She was elected superior in 1985 and served as such for many years.

During her time in Ann Arbor, Sr. Ann also became a key part of the spiritual discernment team for Renewal Ministries, along with Peter Herbeck and me. In the foreword to my memoir, *A Life in the Spirit*, Peter shares how our international missions took a great leap forward as he, Sr. Ann, Gary Seromik, and I met together regularly to pray and seek the Lord.

Sr. Ann's radio program, *Food for the Journey*, began as an inspiration from the Lord. She describes it in the complete version of our video *Renewal Ministries: Our Story*.

This thought came into my head, **"I want you on Catholic radio."** Catholic radio didn't exist, except for some work at EWTN. So, I went to Ralph—this is what you do when you get some thought, and you wonder if it's indigestion or a word from the Lord. I said, *"Ralph, I don't even know if Catholic radio exists."* He said, *"Let's just pray."* Six months later, I got a call from EWTN asking if I would be willing to do a radio program on their station, and I said yes. They asked, *"Don't you need to talk to anyone about this? Don't you need to pray about this?"* I said, *"No, I think the Lord prepared me."* Ralph had said, *"Just pray, and if something happens, we'll know this is from the Lord."* My religious community had prayed about it and knew about it, so when the invitation came, all the groundwork had been laid.

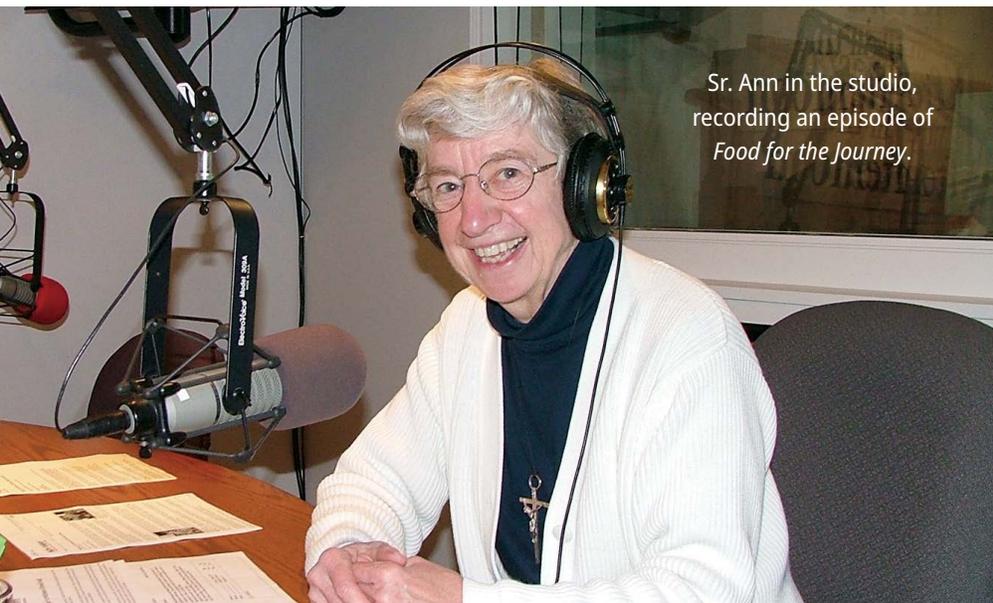
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Sr. Ann in the studio,
recording an episode of
Food for the Journey.

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If you were to die today, what would others say about you? What was in you that was beautiful, that was Christlike, that helped others to pray better? Face yourself, with Jesus at your side, and do not be satisfied with just any answer.

// St. Mother Theresa

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Sr. Ann has hosted her popular weekday Catholic radio program for thirty years. She is now beginning a well-deserved time of retirement. She experienced a stroke several years ago, and while that has weakened her, she still zealously contributes to the kingdom. My wife, Anne, and I visited her a few weeks ago, and she told us how much she wished she could do more. I told her not to underestimate the good she can do by offering her suffering and prayer for the salvation of souls.

To both Sr. Ann and Senior Vice President of Administration Gary Seromik, who is also retiring, we are happy to say with great confidence: **"Well done, good and faithful servants!"** (See the January 2025 newsletter for more information about Gary's retirement.)

And well done to all of you who helped make Sr. Ann's radio ministry possible

over a span of three decades through your support.

I urge you to tune in to the new program that Rachel Herbeck, Peter and Debbie Herbeck's daughter, recently launched, called *Burning Hearts*. I am very impressed with Rachel's grasp of the Gospel and her passion in proclaiming it. I think you will be too!

Throughout this newsletter, you will find lots of information about Sr. Ann, Rachel's new program, and the "ordinary" work of missions that go on all the time, thanks to you.

In Christ,

Ralph Martin

Ralph

I'm so grateful!

Renewal Ministries Vice President Pete Burak gives thanks for Sr. Ann Shields



Early in my time working for Renewal Ministries, I learned the value of randomly popping into Sr. Ann's office for a chat. Inevitably, I'd leave wiser, inspired, challenged, and eager to love the Lord more fully. On one such occasion, I felt inspired to ask her a simple question, "Sister Ann, what's your favorite bible verse?" The revered and beloved host of *Food for the Journey* thought quietly for a second and responded, "Isaiah 66, the second half of verse two." Then, with her characteristic twinkle in her eye, she added, "I'll let you look it up."

Here's what it says,

"But this is the man to whom I will look, he that is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word."

For decades, Sr. Ann faithfully and humbly trembled at the Word of God. She believed what she was reading, and she believed we should too! Sr. Ann knows Jesus, in large part because she knows his Word. While there will be no new episodes of *Food For the Journey* moving forward, Sr. Ann will forever encourage us to be nourished by the living sustenance that is the Sacred Scriptures . . . and I'm so grateful.

New Program Launched!



As Sr. Ann Shield's weekday radio program and podcast, *Food for the Journey*, comes to a close after thirty years, Renewal Ministries and Ave Maria Radio are teaming up once again to provide another weekday program that is both faithfully and passionately Catholic.

In *Burning Hearts*, which launched in mid-January, host Rachel Herbeck uses the Scriptures to draw us into a deeply intimate conversation with the Lord. She asks us to consider two questions:

What is God saying to us?

— & —

What are we doing about it?

Rachel helps listeners discover how to make their own roadmap through the Word of God so that He can set their hearts on fire with zeal for his Word. Rachel shares here the impetus behind her new program.

I was sixteen when I decided to take my faith in Jesus seriously. After experiencing the emptiness of my own sin and receiving God's mercy through a powerful confession, I was baptized in the Holy Spirit while working as a summer camp counselor. In that moment, while I prayed for the Holy Spirit to stir up the gifts of my baptism and confirmation, I didn't experience anything. But the next day, God's love began to overtake me like a fire.

That summer, I developed a tangible hunger for both God and the things of God. For the first time in my life, I began reading the Bible every day, understanding it in a way I never had before. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, I began desiring God's Word, and reading that Word changed me. Growing up, I had favorite readings and verses, but I hadn't opened my Bible every day in prayer. Following that encounter with the Holy Spirit, I began reading the Scriptures every day, and I started seeing the person of Jesus on every page.



My heart began burning within me through the power of God's Word, just like the apostles on the road to Emmaus (see Lk 24:32). Since then, I do not have a powerful, fire-burning experience every time I open the Bible, but I have experienced the Holy Spirit continuing to set my heart on fire with love for God

as I encounter Him daily through the Scriptures. This is why I am so excited to host *Burning Hearts*.

The idea for the program was born out of my own experience of God drawing me into deeper love of Him through his Word. The *Catechism* beautifully describes the power of the Scriptures:

In Sacred Scripture, the Church constantly finds her nourishment and her strength, for she welcomes it not as a human word, "but as what it really is, the word of God." "In the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet his children, and talks with them." (104)

I have found my nourishment and strength for life through Jesus in the Eucharist and the Word. As I remain committed to read the Bible each day, the Holy Spirit more deeply reveals to me both the riches of Christ and my own identity. What God has for us in Jesus is incredible, and we discover its fullness through reading the Bible.

I invite you to join me on *Burning Hearts* every weekday, as together we open God's Word and learn to hear his voice. Just like the apostles on the road to Emmaus, I believe that Jesus wants to open the Scriptures to us each day, wherever we are at on our journey with Him. And when He does, we will respond,

"Did not our hearts burn within us while he . . . opened to us the scriptures?"

(Lk 24:32)

Burning Hearts is available at:
www.renewalministries.net/burninghearts

Fruit from the Journey



Jess Maciborski, director of media and marketing for Encounter Ministries, shared the following reflection at a reception Ave Maria Radio hosted in honor of the recording of Sr. Ann Shield's final episode of *Food for the Journey*. The following text has been edited for length.

In 2010, my family had fallen apart. I had been away from the Church for ten years, since I was a little kid. I was struggling with depression and addiction. I didn't know the Lord at all. And I was really, really at rock bottom. As I was flipping through the radio stations, and Sr. Ann's voice came on, she started speaking directly into all my struggles and pains. I wondered,

"Who is this and how does she know my life?"

I started listening to her program every day for six months, because I was curious. She talked about the Lord like she knew Him, and I'd never experienced that before. She had joy, and I was curious. I wanted to know what she knew.

After about six months of listening to the program, I was getting ready for work in the morning, and Sr. Ann said,

"Maybe you've been listening to this program for a while, but you haven't changed your life yet. If that's you, I want to invite you to pray right now."

I got on my knees—because I knew she was talking to me—and she said,

"Lord, maybe I don't even want to know You. But can You give me a desire to search for You?"

Within one year, my addictions were gone. My entire life had changed. I gave my entire life to Jesus. I wanted to be consecrated to Him, and I've never looked back. Jesus is everything.

Sr. Ann was there on some of the most difficult days in my journey. It seemed like sometimes the Lord allowed me to experience struggles in my life based on what she was going to talk about that day. What struck me the most was that if I was struggling with something, or I need a grace, she would say,

*"Just ask Him,
brothers and sisters,
just ask Him.
Our Father is good.
He will give it to you."*

I didn't know you could pray like that. Sister Ann Shields taught me how to pray. She taught me that the Father is good. She taught me that He has a plan for our lives and his mercy is endless.

I am grateful to her for that moment of turning to Jesus and giving my life to Him. Every time I kneel before the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, I thank Him for Sr. Ann's eyes and for coming after me. †

Below is a small sample of the many letters written to Sr. Ann over the years in gratitude for *Food for the Journey*.



I've been listening to your program for several months and wanted to let you know what a difference you have made! I heard you say time and time again, "Go to confession." Well, after a lapse of thirty-six years, I went to confession, and I can't tell you how wonderful it was! I plan to go regularly from now on.

I also heard you say, "Don't swear or take the Lord's name in vain." I realized I was letting that slip into my speech and thought, "Yes, He does hear everything I say!" I told that to my two grown children, and they have also taken it to heart. My son recently said, "My language is a lot less colorful, but I definitely feel better about it."

Thank you for your wonderful words! I feel like you are talking directly to me! You've made such a difference in my life!



Your food for my journey has been most fulfilling and I cannot describe to you how much you mean to me. Your instructions do work. Daily meditation and time alone with the Lord over time rewire the mind, strengthen faith, and increase love and joy. Life's challenges don't go away, but there is a larger capacity to endure and move forward with confidence knowing He is with you always. I find your teaching inspirational, instructional, and practical. I think about what you say throughout my day. I look up and read the bible verses you suggest and often refer others to your website.

I have been listening to you for so many years and many of those years were before my conversion and baptism. At one point, I changed my work schedule so I could listen to your explanation of the daily reading on my way to work. Later, I found out I could listen to you online, so you were with me on many deployments to the Middle East and Afghanistan.

You have been a spiritual mother to me, and I can say you have saved my life—indeed, my soul. Your words and teachings led to my conversion and baptism.

Your gentle voice and wisdom are being heard loud and clear around the globe, and your mission has succeeded in bringing at least my soul to Christ. I am a convert from Islam.

“I have been away from the Church for over fifty years and by the grace of the Holy Spirit have returned. Thank you for your inspiration in my journey home to God.”

“Recently, a friend of mine found himself in dark times. A few weeks ago, we met to catch up on things. He asked if I listened to Catholic radio, and I said no. He then suggested that I do. His face lit up when he began to talk about you. He was so certain that every segment was for him and (said your words were always) exactly what he needed to hear.

“The next morning, I tuned in and felt exactly what he meant. What a wonderful feeling to know that God is just and so merciful that He will forgive us and then guide us. I have been listening to you ever since. I even found you on Spotify. I listen to and from work and every chance I get. It fills my soul with such joy.”

“Your show has inspired me to be a better child of God and encouraged me to depend on God more and have a closer relationship with Him.”

“Your voice is being used by God to really help awaken and inspire many of us to the truth and beauty of Scripture. Thank you for your efforts and willingness to come back after a stroke.”



Your program really is food for my journey. I have listened to you regularly for over five years. It is how I start every morning during my drive to work. You are like a spiritual director. You often mention a simple prayer or idea to focus on that really helps me. I am an engineer surrounded during work hours by baptized Catholics who have turned away from God. It is not a highly spiritualized environment. I am nowhere near being a saint, but your words encourage me and help me on my path to becoming closer to being a saint.



I started listening to your program by accident a few years ago during my drive to work. Many times throughout my day, I would try to recall something from the readings or some piece of wisdom that you shared. Finally, I decided to wake up early and listen with my Bible and a journal. Now I have many journals filled with wisdom from the readings and your commentary. I am filled with gratitude for your work. I recently heard someone say,

“When I die, Jesus will ask me two questions: Do I know you? And, who did you bring?”

You are helping me with both questions, and I am so thankful!

SPREADING THE GOSPEL IN SLOVAKIA



BY TOM & JEAN MARIE EDWARDS Country Coordinators for Slovakia

Tom Edwards is Renewal Ministries' country coordinator for Slovakia and Tanzania. He began full-time ministry in 1974; it soon evolved into an international outreach of lay Catholic evangelization and mission with an emphasis on preaching and teaching Scripture. Tom's wife, Jean Marie, is a retired teacher and lifelong missionary of the Gospel of Life who now serves with Tom, teaching the dignity of the human person and human sexuality all over the world with great effectiveness. They make their home in St. Augustine, Florida.

We began our time in Slovakia with the annual two-day FIRE Rally. FIRE Rallies have been taking place in Slovakia since 1995. FIRE stands for Faith, Intercession, Repentance, and Evangelization—themes that remain very much at the heart of the rallies.

The wave of renewal that began in Slovakia in the 1980s was birthed out of a small prayer group that met secretly while under Communist rule. It has produced hundreds of ministries and vocations, nationwide radio and TV outreaches, a huge social media presence, and countless international missionaries. One fruit of our early days in Slovakia is the Maranatha Community, which consists of about six-hundred people, mostly families. Community members are active in the leadership of many ministries in Slovakia and beyond while also remaining involved in their home parishes, bringing a healthy vibrancy to the whole Church.

SHARING THE KERYGMA AND THE PRO-LIFE MESSAGE

After the Fire Rally, we began a vigorous and demanding ten-day outreach. Our schedule included five schools, parish events, and prayer appointments with individuals and couples with serious needs.

We shared the kerygma and gave dynamic presentations emphasizing the value of life from conception on to nineteen classes, all of which were made up of believers and unbelievers. We discussed the baby's development: the amazing, tiny heart pumping blood to the growing cells and developing systems around five weeks; digestive juices working in the second month; and unique fingerprints being seen in the third month. We use models to show the baby's growth each week that always make the students smile!

Jean Marie shared the pro-life message with high school students, who were very moved by the presentation.



Then comes the heartbreaking part. There's no pretty way to kill the baby. And pain and heartache always come to the parents. We present this part in an age-appropriate manner and with permission from the school. It becomes clear by the look on students' faces that we all need to know God's heart and his forgiveness, mercy, healing love, grace, and strength.

BRINGING HOPE TO A HARD PLACE

We visited one small village that most young people leave to find better opportunities. Even secular circles know the village for its negativity and opposition to anything new. No prior evangelization efforts had ever been welcomed there. However, a parish leadership change resulted in a last-minute invitation. We had met the new pastor and a neighboring pastor on past visits to Slovakia, and they both welcomed us.

Prior to our visit, the priests had expressed concerns about how parishioners might accept this first presentation by outsiders. They were hoping for at least twenty attendees. Surprisingly, seventy-five people attended! Our message on hope resonated with them. There was a lot of pent-up pain in their hearts and minds. When invited to come forward for personal prayer, no one moved at first. However, when

one person dared to respond, a stream of others followed. Almost everyone burst into tears as they approached us to share their needs. The Holy Spirit was moving!

THE POWER OF PRAYER

We served for two full days in the northern region of Orava. Tom was asked again to share the message on hope. After a time of corporate prayer, the participants joined in Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. We stayed with a couple we have come to know well over the years. Lajzo and Jana's home is a true epicenter of evangelization. It is their custom to invite their neighbors in this small mountain village to come to their house by appointment to pray with visiting missionaries. The appointments began in the early morning and continued into the afternoon.

Most of those we prayed with were dealing with very serious issues that caused much suffering. One young husband carried in his wife. She was the local gym teacher, and they had a three-month old baby, when she was suddenly struck with multiple sclerosis and was almost totally paralyzed. Although we did not see any physical healing, they experienced an obvious spiritual healing and left with a desire to begin reading the Bible together.

One unchurched couple, fearful of the unknown, came with their forty-year-old son. We prayed with the son first. He was perplexed as we began to pray. Then, he tearfully shared that he had been in prison and worked for organized crime. His life had been a series of catastrophes. We asked if he would like to surrender his life to Jesus. He shook as we prayed, and the Holy Spirit filled him. His entire countenance transformed.

Next, we prayed with his father. The dark years of Communism and corresponding poverty had forced him to be away from home for most of his married life, earning money for his family by doing manual labor in foreign countries. Consequently, he felt like a failure as a husband and father. As we began praying, tears came to his eyes and his worn facial features softened. While sitting on the couch, his eyes closed, and he rested in the Spirit for twenty minutes. We left the room and allowed him to soak in the Spirit. The people who saw them later were amazed to see both the father's face and the son's face glowing. We later prayed with the mother, who was deeply touched. With no prompting, they said they were going to begin praying and reading the Bible as a family. This one demonstration of Jesus' love and power made the whole mission worthwhile.

The team shared the kerygma and gave dynamic presentations emphasizing the value of life to nineteen classes comprised of both believers and nonbelievers.



EVENTS

FEBRUARY 2025

** Not open to the public.*

Steubenville, OH
Behold All Campus Retreat*
January 31—February 2
Rachel Herbeck

Brighton, MI
Encounter School of Ministry*
February 3
Peter Herbeck

Grand Rapids, MI
Cherish Marriage
February 7
Peter & Debbie Herbeck
Details: cherishmarriage.net

Ypsilanti, MI
St. Joseph Parish How to Stay Married Event
February 8
Peter & Debbie Herbeck
Details: sjypsi.com

Novi, MI
Holy Family Parish Mission
February 14-15
Pete Burak
Details: holyfamilynovi.org

Sterling Heights, MI
World Marriage Sunday
February 16
Peter & Debbie Herbeck
Details: worldmarriageaday.org

São Paulo, Brazil
Events with Sobre a Rocha de Pedro
February 18-23
Peter Herbeck, Pete Burak, & Rachel Herbeck
Details: sobrearochadepedro.org



- ▶ That all who have fallen away from the Church respond to the Lord's invitation to return to their Father.
- ▶ That during this month dedicated to the Holy Family the Lord would grant great graces to families who are struggling in any way, provide for their needs, increase their love for each other, and help them become more like the Holy Family of Nazareth.
- ▶ For the prayer intentions of all our supporters and their family members, especially as they face the challenges of illness and economic uncertainty.

Ann Arbor, MI
Christ the King Upper Room Evening of Renewal
February 23
Ralph Martin
Details: ctkcc.net

Waynesville, NC
St. John the Evangelist Parish Mission
February 28-March 1
Dr. Mary Healy
Details: stjohrnccc.com

View complete event list:
renewalministries.net/events



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For more information, please contact Heather Schultz at 734-662-1730, ext. 130, or hshultz@renewalministries.net.

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RenewalMinistries.net/plannedgiving



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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