



RENEWAL MINISTRIES

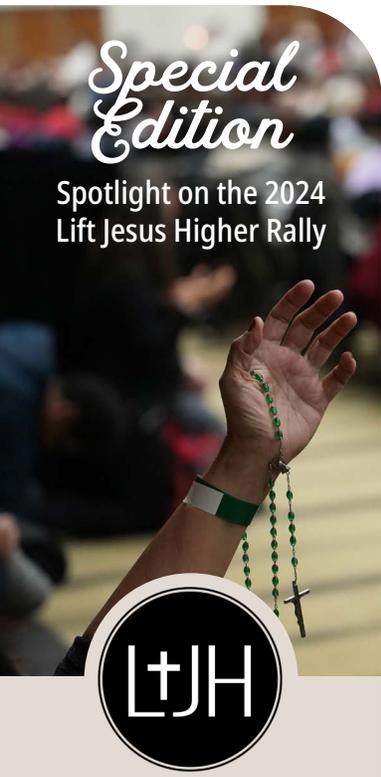
CATHOLIC RENEWAL & EVANGELIZATION

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

MAY 2024



A LETTER ▶
FROM PETE BURAK



Special
Edition

Spotlight on the 2024
Lift Jesus Higher Rally

Dear Fellow Disciples,

We recently gathered in Toronto with a nearly sold-out crowd of over 2600 adults and nine-hundred youth for the Lift Jesus Higher Rally. The theme was *Take Heart!* from the story of the blind man Bartimaeus in Mark 10. We've included in this newsletter condensed versions of talks from the adult and youth rallies. As they become available, you will be able to find videos of the talks at www.renewalministries.net/ljhr-talks.

The attendees were grateful for the opportunity to gather with fellow people of faith. One person said, "It's heartwarming and hopeful to see that faith is still around." Another commented, "It's very encouraging to see all the people here, reaching out to the Lord."

A woman from Stratford, Ontario, who organized a bus with twenty-nine people, added,

"It's so powerful. You go home feeling like, 'We have work to do,' but it gives you things to work with. I find it very important to come."

Another woman appreciated the message of being open to God's grace and of being strong, joyful Catholics as best we can.

Adult rally attendees experienced profound moments of Jesus' intimate, powerful, and healing presence. Throughout the day, the participants were challenged to stand on the truth, encounter the Lord anew, believe in his awesome power, and respond in faith.

I was struck with how sincerely people believed the Gospel, the teachings of the Church, and the promises of God. Prayers were said with conviction, responses of "Amen!" echoed through the room during talks, and people responded as Fr. Mathias Thelen invited them to ask for healing, signs, and wonders. During the afternoon prayer time, people eagerly testified to God's work in their bodies and hearts. The worship was energetic and loud as people sang, clapped, and even danced their praise to the Lord.

I'm always struck by the wonderful ethnic diversity in the rally's gathering hall. Dozens of countries are represented yet we're all focused on the King of every tribe, nation, and tongue. As a Renewal Ministries' team, we enjoy the trust and friendship of our long-serving and sacrificial Steering Committee and Suresh Dominic and his faithful and generous team from Gethsemane Ministries. Over the years, we've also been deeply blessed by the support and companionship of Thomas Cardinal Collins, and so meeting and welcoming new Archbishop Francis Leo for the closing Mass was exciting and encouraging! Let's all pray for him while he shepherds the Archdiocese of Toronto!

As I moved through the convention hall, many people stopped to thank me for the work of Ralph Martin, Peter Herbeck, and Sister Ann Shields; our YouTube channel; various inspirational emails; and all other aspects of Renewal Ministries' outreach. Our team is extremely grateful for these interactions because they help us know the impact of the work the Lord has asked us to do. Putting faces with names is also a wonderful experience! In a world so divided and contentious, it's a remarkable reminder of the power of the Gospel to see all the attendees "Take Heart!" and worship, grow, and receive as one!

In Christ,

Pete Burak
Vice President of Renewal Ministries

TALK HIGHLIGHTS FROM:

- Peter Herbeck.....2
- Fr. Mathias Thelen.....3
- Debbie Herbeck.....4
- Fr. Alex Coullatti, CC.....6
- Katey Norman.....7

STAND & TAKE HEART

// BY PETER HERBECK



The world is waiting for us to stand on the Word of God and live it with all our hearts, and with great confidence be the light we were meant to be.



You are the light of the world, a light in the darkness. If we're not standing on the Word of God and living confidently as his children, our light can go dim. Doesn't it seem like the light of the Church is going dim at an intense hour of combat?

We are called to be filled with the Holy Spirit and be his light in the world—not to run and hide, not to live in paranoia, not to be anxious and fearful.

We live in the context of spiritual battle, but the Lord—just before his Passion—said,

“Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me . . . in me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (Jn 14:1, 16:33).

A lukewarm Church has nothing to say to a dark world. We don't need a big Church; we need a Church that's alive, believing, has the light of Christ, and is willing to stand for Christ and die for Him. Jesus is shaking the tree to help us not just drift along, worldly and indifferent. Because He loves us, He is allowing us to experience what we're choosing. God needs a purified Church in love with Him and courageous in loving our neighbor.

With lukewarm faith, the devil can deceive us to believe we can't overcome him. It's a lie. The King dwells in you, and the devil is scared to death of Jesus Christ.

The flesh is a fallen dimension of our lives that says, “My will be done—not God's will.” Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus subdues those drives. The Spirit puts them to death slowly as we keep saying yes to Jesus, reading Scripture, receiving the sacraments, and walking in faith and service. He's purifying us. The saints show how much purification we can experience in this life. They don't go straight to heaven because they are born superstars, but

because they are forgiven sinners who understand how radically they've been forgiven and how big God's love is, and they have sold out for it. Jesus is going to present all of us to the Father purified. Let's get it all done here if we can, rather than in Purgatory.

The world is waiting for us to stand on the Word of God and live it with all our hearts, and with great confidence be the light we were meant to be. The resistance that's growing is going to make it harder to live in the days ahead. It's going to require us to be clear about being faithful witnesses to Jesus so that we can take up the promises and call of God. Here are beatitudes people don't discuss much:

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven” (Mt 5:10-12).

COURAGE...
the
willingness
to sustain a
wound in
the defense
of what is
true, good,
and
beautiful.

When we're persecuted or falsely mistreated, we should jump for joy (Lk 6:22-23). This requires an eternal perspective, with our hope in the hands of the living God. We must love even our enemies because the love of God—not fear—flows through us. The Lord has an assignment for us and wants us to live in great courage, which is the willingness to sustain a wound in the defense of what is true, good, and beautiful.

“He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world” (1 Jn 4:4)—that's the reason we'll be able to do it.

BY HIS WOUNDS WE ARE HEALED

// BY FR. MATHIAS THELEN, President of Encounter Ministries and Pastor of St. Patrick Church, Brighton, Michigan



If we aren't healed spiritually, physical healing doesn't matter. The point of healing is to be a sign of the kingdom of God—a sign that God is present.



In seminary, we started evangelizing in downtown Detroit. I'll never forget meeting one man asking for money. I said,

"Jesus Christ loves you."

He responded incredulously,

"Are you serious? I need some money."

And I repeated,

"We came here to tell you that Jesus Christ loves you."

And he started weeping. He explained,

"I live in an alley near here. I'm addicted to heroin. I woke up this morning and said, 'I can't do this. God, if You are real, send people to tell me that You love me today.'"

It was clear that God had sent us. We led him to surrender his life to the Lord. We were jumping up and down with our arms across each other. All the people coming out of the nearby casinos were wondering, "What is happening?" They may have won money, but the kingdom of God really won that night.

Our faith grew tremendously that night. God sent us on mission, and we knew He was with us. The more you are confident that God is with you, the more He will do in and through you.

Later, we met a woman who was legally blind. We took her out to dinner, but she couldn't see the menu well. We stopped at a church in downtown Detroit and knelt before the sanctuary to pray. I asked if I could put my hand on the back of her head and pray for her. I felt moved by compassion and said,

"Lord, please heal her."

I made the Sign of the Cross on the back of her head. She grabbed my hands and yelled,

"What did you just do? I felt electricity from your fingers to my eyes."

She rubbed her eyes and started screaming,

"I can see!"

Later, as we took her to get something to drink, she was able to read the menu.

Afterward, I kept running over those events in my head. I knew I was unworthy. I knew my sin. And I thought you had to be a saint for things like that to happen. Then I realized that God didn't do this because of me but because of his love of her. He was simply looking for someone to be available. It's stepping out in faith when you see people suffering.

That began a journey in my life. God radically showed up in that woman's life because He wanted to show her that He was real. When I talked about God's love, it wasn't empty words. He backed it up to show that what He did for her eyes, He can do for her soul. If we aren't healed spiritually, physical healing doesn't matter. The point of healing is to be a sign of the kingdom of God—a sign that God is present.

In Jesus, God gives us the definitive declaration that it is his will for us to be fully restored and healed in our humanity so we can be with Him forever in heaven where there is no more wailing, death, or pain. God calls us to step out in faith to pursue Him now. It's not our responsibility to determine who's healed. It's our responsibility to obey our Master, who tells us to heal the sick, raise the dead, drive out demons, and cleanse lepers. It's our job to step out and pray. God's not planning to heal everyone in this life. In fact, each of us is going to die. The sooner we realize that we're in God's hands, the more we can be at peace with his plan for our lives.

Will we step forward to pray that the kingdom of God comes—so that people know God is real and that He loves us? That's what this is all about.

I MET THE MESSIAH

// BY DEBBIE HERBECK, Founder and Director of Be Love Revolution



If I chose to believe that Jesus was the Messiah, my family might alienate me, and the course of my life would change.

I grew up in a Jewish family with Jewish friends. I went to a Jewish school and lived in a Jewish neighborhood. I didn't know anything about Christianity. I thought everyone was Jewish.

I learned about God through the Old Testament, but I didn't know Him personally. As I became a teenager, God was not relevant to me.

In December of my sophomore year of high school, my older brother Mark was in a car accident. While we waited for more news, I did something I had never truly done before. I prayed.

“God, I don't know who You are. I don't know if You're real. I don't know if You care about us, but if You're there, save his life.”

A few moments later, we learned that Mark had been driving home on a snowy highway and was hit by a semi-

truck. He was not wearing a seatbelt, and he died in the hospital before my parents could be with him.

I angrily said to God,

“Where were You? If You really cared, if You were really powerful, You could have saved his life.”

The grief in our home was stifling, and big, deep questions haunted me. “Where is God? Where do we go when we die? Why do bad things happen to good people?” I studied hard to get into a good university, but on the weekends, I distracted myself from the pain in my heart and the questions no one could answer.

I attended the University of Michigan and met a Catholic girl named Sarah who lived down the hall. We had nothing in common except we were both athletes. We started going to the gym, and we developed a friendship.

One day in class, an English professor assigned us an essay on the Book of Romans. The New Testament was off limits to me, but Sarah loaned me her Bible for the assignment. I didn't know who Jesus or Paul were, but what caught my eye was this Bible that Sarah obviously read often. She underlined and highlighted so many passages; she wrote her prayers, thoughts, and questions on the margins. I thought,

“This is a conversation. She's talking to this Word that she believes is alive, that she believes is God, and this Word is talking back to her.”

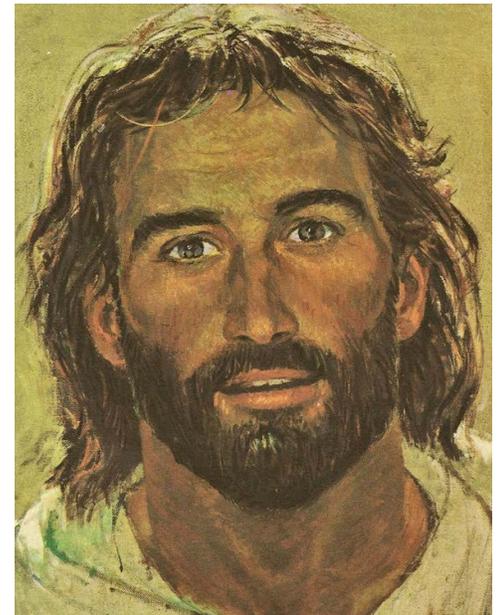
A few months later, Sarah invited me to watch *Jesus of Nazareth*. As I watched, I exclaimed, “He's Jewish!” My whole life, I had not known anything about this man Jesus, who was not only a good Jew but was one of the best men I had ever seen.

I had a lot of shame in my life, and watching the loving way He related to women amazed me. I watched the

scene unfold as Martha and Mary greeted Jesus, who was too late to save Lazarus from death. “Lord, if you had been here, our brother would not have died.” I thought, “This is like the script from my own life. I need to leave. I cannot watch death triumph again.”

But I felt an invisible force holding me there. I watched as Jesus went to the tomb where Lazarus had been dead for four days, and He called forth his friend from the dead. I was stunned.

“Who is this man? Could He be the Messiah?”



I couldn't sleep that night. I went to Sarah's room and knocked on her door. She opened it and handed me her Bible. Back in my room, I read the Gospels for the first time. I got to that place where Jesus says, “I am the resurrection and the life, the one who believes in me will never die, the one who believes in me will live forever” (Jn 11:25-26). I didn't really understand it, but I knew it contained a promise, and a seed of hope sprang up in me. For the second time in my life, I prayed.

“God, I don't know who You are, but if Jesus is the Messiah, show me and give me the faith to believe.”

A month later, I went home for the summer, and like Nicodemus, began reading the Scriptures at night with a flashlight. I studied the messianic prophecies in the Old Testament, and I read what Jesus said about who He was and the cost of following Him.

When I returned to school in the fall, I continued to pray and read the Scriptures daily. I was seeking the truth. At Thanksgiving, I asked my parents,

“Did you ever think Jesus could be the Messiah?”

That weekend was a difficult sneak preview of the cost. If I chose to believe that Jesus was the Messiah, my family might alienate me, and the course of my life would change.

I went back to school, and a few nights later, I had a vivid dream. I was standing in a long, dark hallway. A voice called out:

“Who do you say that I am?”

I couldn't see anything. Then, a second time:

“Who do you say that I am?”

and I saw the shape of a person. And then a third time:

“Who do you say that I am?”

In my dream, Jesus stood in front of me. I said,

“You're Jesus, You're Jesus, You're Jesus.”

The next morning, I confided to Sarah my dream and my doubts.

“I've done my homework. I've studied the Scriptures and I have an intellectual assent to the faith, but I don't have the conviction and strength to stand firm.”

Sarah wisely responded, “Continue to pray, to seek, to ask, and to knock.”

A few nights later, I was in my dorm room speaking that now familiar prayer:

“God, I don't know who You are, but if Jesus is the Messiah, show me and give me the faith to believe.”

The room filled with an incredible presence and light, and I knew God was there. I didn't know what He wanted, but I knew He was there, and I was afraid. I said,

“God, I don't know who You are, but I've messed up my life. I've broken many of your commandments. If you give me another chance, I want to live differently. I want to live my life for You.”

As I prayed, Jesus was with me in the room holding his hand out toward me as if offering me something.

He spoke, not in an audible voice but to my heart:

“This is for you. This is the faith you sought for. You did nothing to deserve it or to earn it, but this is the gift of faith.”

In that moment, I knew Jesus was the Messiah. I knew He loved me, had a plan for my life, and was guiding me.

I knew that no matter what trials and sacrifices came with my family that He would be with me. And I knew He was worth it. He was the pearl of great price, and I wanted to give all for Him.

My story is dramatic, but that same God wants to meet each one of us every day. He wants to meet our children, neighbors, co-workers, and everyone we pray for.

I want to leave you with two challenges.

1 » Be a Sarah—a courageous man or woman not afraid to show Jesus' love to those least likely to receive Him.

2 » Don't stop praying for others. Even after the estrangement I experienced with my family, God brought tremendous healing to our relationships. I was able to be with and pray for both my parents in the moment of their deaths.

Let my story inspire you with hope; no one is too far away for God to reach in his love and mercy.

Thank You

— TO THE —

Lift Jesus Higher Rally Steering Committee

We are grateful to the Lift Jesus Higher Rally Steering Committee, whose decades of commitment make the event a success!

- Suresh & Annie Dominic
- Desiree & Kenny Casmiro
- Falon & Dominic Dominic
- Agnello & Veni D'sa
- Deacon Tom & Rosie Welsh
- Monte & Angela Hensen
- Camille Shaw
- Glenys Figueiredo
- Bob & Anne Shiley
- Max and Felcy Pinto
- Merwyn & Regina Xavier
- Ivan & Venny D'Lima
- Dominic & Sherley Nutanapati
- Marguerite Fonseca
- Sadie Johnson
- Lalit & Jasmine Lobo



PLEASE PRAY

- ▶ That we may all be so attuned to the Lord's voice that we leap at his call and count not the cost.
- ▶ That seeds of faith planted during the Lift Jesus Higher Rally and through the lives of those present may bear much fruit for the kingdom of God.
- ▶ For the prayer intentions of all our supporters and their family members, especially as they face the challenges of illness and economic uncertainty.

TAKE HEART

// BY FR. ALEX COULATTI, CC, Vocations Director for the Companions of the Cross



God can use any problem in our lives for good. If it's not good yet, God's not done yet. He can turn our problems into opportunities to demonstrate his providence, power, glory, and faithfulness.

Have you ever run into a problem so great that you were just blinded by it? You couldn't see to the other side? Bartimaeus was literally blinded by his problem. His whole life was plunged into darkness. And his story is our story. There are people here today carrying a problem so big, they don't know what to do. They can't see beyond it, they don't see a way forward, and they feel powerless.

Bartimaeus had been reduced to begging for help. The question in our hearts at those times is, **"Why?"** Jesus' apostles had similar questions **"Whose fault it was that a man had been born blind? Was it the sins of his parents or his own sin?"** Sometimes we reap the consequences of our own or others' actions. But Jesus answered,

"Neither this man nor his parents sinned. He was born blind so that God's works might be revealed" (Jn 9:2).

God can use our problems to reveal his works. Romans 8:28 says, *"All things work together for good for those who love him and are called according to his purpose."* God can use any problem in our lives for good. If it's not good yet, God's not done yet. He can turn our problems into opportunities to demonstrate his providence, power, glory, and faithfulness.

Blind Bartimaeus was powerless. When he heard Jesus of Nazareth was near, he shouted, *"Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me"*—a cry from the depths of his desperation (Mk 10:47). Many ordered him to be quiet. Similarly, when we begin reaching out with faith, voices will tell us to be silent. Sometimes the worst voices are in our own heads, the lies we believe about ourselves and God. When we need something and we're desperate, we're tempted to cry out to the Lord, but sometimes those voices say, **"He doesn't care about you. He is too busy with other people's problems."** Bartimaeus responded to those voices by crying out even more loudly, *"Son of David, have mercy on me!"* (Mk 10:48)

Then, *"Jesus stopped and said, 'Call him'"* (Mk 10:49). The blind man sprang up, threw off his cloak, and ran to Jesus, because they told him, *"Take heart, get up, he is calling you"* (Mk 10:49-50). This next part gets to the heart of today's question. Bartimaeus comes to Jesus, who asks him, *"What do you want me to do for you?"* (Mk 10:51)

How would you answer that question? What problem has blinded you so that you can't see past it? Bartimaeus says, *"Let me see"* (Mk 10:51). Jesus says, *"Go, your faith has made you well,"* and he immediately regains his sight and follows Jesus on the way (Mk 10:52).

The point I want to make is that Bartimaeus' problem was not a problem for Jesus. This was the defining feature of Bartimaeus' life, but for Jesus, the blindness was not a problem but the opportunity He used to draw Bartimaeus to Himself. The same is true for your problem; it's his opportunity. May Jesus grant us the grace to not see his power through the lens of our problems but to see our problems through the lens of his power.





LIFT JESUS HIGHER YOUTH RALLY 2024

We spoke with many young people who were inspired by the talks, music, and Adoration at the Lift Jesus Higher Youth Rally. One youth explained, "I experienced overwhelming joy and peace. I felt Jesus' love so strongly." Perhaps the most powerful part of the day came during Adoration, when a young man cried out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me"—Bartimaeus' words before his miraculous healing. This opened the door for others to also cry out to Jesus with their needs. It was beautiful to experience God's mercy pouring out from the monstrance onto those present.

HE IS CALLING

// BY KATEY NORMAN



When I was nineteen, the Lord spoke to me:

"Come, and I will make you fishers of men."

I have always desired to do big things, but I realized—a little late in the game—that God doesn't call anyone to go out without first calling them in to follow Him.



I did that backwards. In high school, I was active and had great opportunities. Afterward, I sought affirmation from negative sources. I even moved to Australia, trying to change myself internally by changing my scenery. I came home a broken person.

I loved my family, but I wasn't sharing my story with people. One night, my mom invited me to a communal penance service. I looked for a priest who did not know me and found one sitting in front of the tabernacle. I felt like Jesus was there. I held nothing back; I was bawling. When I finished, the priest was crying. I thought, "I broke him." But he said two things that changed my life forever: One, "I want you to know that I think you're very beautiful." I thought my sins had made me so ugly, especially to the Lord. And two, "I don't think any less of you."

I hadn't told him my fears. I had just cried out for mercy, and the Lord spoke to me through this priest. Something in my identity was cemented that day. I knew the Lord loved me, had mercy for me, and was good.

When Jesus calls us, our life doesn't have to be together for us to respond. The blind man Bartimaeus was called because he asked for mercy. Jesus makes up for our lacking. Christ died for us because we were sinners (Rom 5:8).

There's urgency in Bartimaeus' story—in how he calls out and in how he responds when Jesus says, "Call him." Bartimaeus throws off his cloak and

springs up (Mk 10:50). Bartimaeus' cloak represents the world. It would have been very comfortable in this exposed place where he probably begged. But he leaves the comfort for the call.

My husband and I are from Ontario but recently were called to move our family to serve with Renewal Ministries in Michigan. At first, we were very excited. But the longer we thought about it, the more we experienced an interior battle. We did not want to let go



It was one foot in and one foot out, but we wanted the security of this cloak.

of our house. We decided to rent it out. If things didn't work out, we could come back. It was one foot in and one foot out, but we wanted the security of this cloak. It was a battle, and our house wasn't getting rented.

Then, I was singing the song *Alabaster Heart* and expressing my frustration to the Lord when a line stood out to me: "All my heart, all my soul, all I own, You can have it all." Suddenly, I knew I needed to throw off my cloak. I told my husband, "We have to be all in." Praise the Lord, he agreed. We listed the house, and it sold in less than twenty-four hours for more than the asking price.

We had to respond. We had to spring up; He was calling us. We cannot cling to our own comfort and the call of being close to Christ.

EVENTS

MAY 2024 View complete event list at renewalministries.net/events.

Augusta, MI
Come & See Series at St. Ann Parish
May 1
Ralph Martin
Details: stannaugusta.org/comeandsee

Towson, MD
Christ the King Parish Mission
May 2
Lavinia Spirito
Details: ctktowson.org

Baltimore, MD
Catholic Evidence League*
May 3
Lavinia Spirito

Hialeah, FL
Talks at Redemptoris Mater Seminary
May 3-4
Ralph Martin
Details: seminary@rmmiami.org

Key Biscayne, FL
Redemptoris Mater Seminary Annual Gala
May 5
Ralph Martin
Details: rmmiami.org

Santo Amaro, Brazil
Conferência Sobre a Rocha de Pedro (Conference on Peter's Rock)
May 16-18
Ralph Martin
Details: sobrochadepedro.com.br

Burlington, Ontario
Ontario Catholic Charismatic Renewal Annual Conference
May 17-18
Peter Herbeck
Details: ccrso.net

Santo Amaro, Brazil
Cenáculo de Pentecostes (Cenacle of Pentecost)
May 18-19
Ralph Martin
Details: sobrochadepedro.com.br

Lafayette, Indiana
Genesis 2024: Created to be Divinized
May 18
Pete Burak
Details: bit.ly/43BWMrN

Harrisburg, PA
Legatus*
May 21
Pete Burak

* Not open to the public.

Save the Date

Lift Jesus Higher Rally
Saturday, March 29, 2025



TORONTO, ONTARIO

MISSIONS



Zambia & Malawi
April 23-May 6
Joseph & Serah Alumansi

Papua New Guinea
May 13-May 29
Anthony Feola & Tom Hornacek

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

MAY GUESTS & TOPICS:

Be Bold and Fearless
(05/05/24) // Kevin Wells

Faith Over Fear
(05/12/24) // Angèle Regnier

Passion for Mission
(05/19/24) // Albert Faraj

Jesus, I Trust in You
(05/26/24) // Dan & Sarah Mishler



*Father, I am seeking:
I am hesitant and uncertain,
but will you, O God, watch
over each step of mine
and guide me.*

// St. Augustine of Hippo



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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NEWSLETTER

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