



NOVEMBER 2024



📍 The seminary of the Greek Catholic Eparchy of Lviv, Ukraine.



A LETTER FROM RALPH MARTIN

Dear Coworkers in the Gospel,

Once a year, we gather with our Country Coordinators, who are noble brothers and sisters who work with us around the world. At last year's meeting, Andrzej Lewek, from Poland, asked if I would come to the Ukraine to help strengthen the hard-pressed brothers and sisters there, with a special focus on priests. I believe that I'm particularly called to do whatever I can to help support priests in their front-line ministry, so I said yes.

As the time to leave for the Ukraine got closer, various people expressed concern about the danger of going to a country at war. I checked with the State Department's list of threat levels in various countries, and Ukraine was listed at Level Four—the highest threat level, with the recommendation:

"Americans should not go to the Ukraine."

When I asked Andrzej to check with our contacts there, they indicated that the western part of Ukraine, particularly Lviv, where we would be going, was seldom targeted by the Russians and was relatively safe. While recognizing that there was a basis for people's concern, I felt peace about going, and so I went. Peter Herbeck suggested that I invite both Andrzej and Slovakian Country Coordinator Bohus Zivcak to join me. That turned out to be an excellent suggestion!

I flew from Detroit to Amsterdam and then connected with a flight to Krakow, Poland, where Andrzej, his wife, and one of his daughters met me in the airport. The airport has a very nice Catholic chapel, with the Blessed Sacrament present and images of St. John Paul II, the Divine Mercy, and Our Lady of Czestochowa. We stopped in the chapel to pray before leaving the airport. Andrzej said goodbye to his wife and daughter, and we took the train from the airport to the main train station in Krakow. From there, we took a train to Przemysl, the last city in Poland before the border with Ukraine. We met up with Bohus, who had driven from Slovakia, and we all stood for two hours in a very long line of perhaps a thousand people, waiting to be cleared by Polish customs to get on the train, which left almost at

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➤ After the Divine Liturgy, Ralph, Andrzej (second from right) and Bohus (third from right) visited with Archbishop Ihor Vozniak and other lay leaders.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

midnight—an hour late. The Ukrainian customs officials were on the train and kept checking people’s identification and walking by with dogs to make sure nobody was bringing drugs into the country. We arrived in Lviv at about 3 a.m., and since there is a curfew between midnight and 5 a.m.—when nobody can be out or driving—we had to find a driver with special permission to break the curfew and take us to the retreat center where we were going. Fortunately, our Ukrainian hosts were able to find such a driver for us. Only a little way into our journey—which was very dark since most of the city’s

streetlights are turned off at night to save electricity—we were still pulled over by a police car with flashing lights. The officer wanted to make sure that the driver really had a permit to break curfew. Fortunately, he did, and we continued on our way. I asked why there was a curfew and got various answers, the most common of which was to disguise troop movements.

The retreat was intended for leaders of various communities and prayer groups, many associated with the Charismatic Renewal. Most were from the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church—which, since the late sixteenth century,

has been the largest of the Eastern Rite Churches united with Rome. There were only about twelve priests and twelve religious sisters present, which was considerably fewer than we expected. However, this gave me the opportunity to get to know these priests rather well. In fact, Bohus and I spent two whole afternoon sessions with them in addition to all we did when they were part of the larger group. I gave eight talks and led three workshops during the week, and Bohus and Andrzej each gave two general session talks and helped in two workshops.

One interesting aspect of this encounter with the priests is that almost all of them are married with children. Ukrainian Catholic priests cannot be married after they are ordained, but they can get married before ordination. One of the priests told me that he is the son and grandson of priests and served in the same parish as his father! It was a new and wonderful experience.

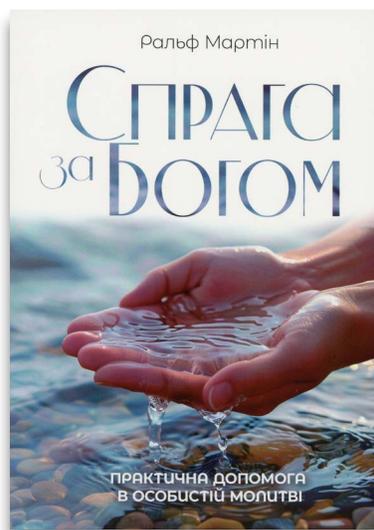


➤ Ralph and Bohus spent two afternoons with small groups of priests in the Ukraine. Ralph said, "Seeing the change that happened in some of these priests made the whole trip worthwhile."

Seeing the change that happened in some of these priests made the whole trip worthwhile. One young priest told me that he had been going through a crisis of faith ever since the confusion started in Rome concerning what he thought was settled doctrine and morality. He mentioned that the last two months before the retreat was a time of great darkness. Thankfully, he said the deep faith and conviction that characterized our talks, as well as our bold and clear affirmations of basic truths that are under attack today, dispelled the darkness. He said he was leaving the retreat full of light, joy, and confidence in the inspiration and inerrancy of Sacred Scripture and the truths of our faith. I was incredibly grateful to God to hear this.

Several other priests said that our clear exposition of Scripture concerning the need to balance God's mercy and justice dispelled some deception they were under that hindered their confident proclamation of the Gospel.

They also expressed that the emphasis in Greek Catholic and Orthodox Churches on the need to make the Divine Liturgy the center of Christian life sometimes leads to an emphasis on getting the intricacies of the form



right while neglecting real spiritual participation in the sacrifice and the need for evangelization and spiritual growth of the laity. The retreat opened their eyes to this.

The chaplain at the Catholic University of Lviv also told me his amazing testimony. He was away from the Lord when he listened to a radio program featuring a Pentecostal preacher. During that program, he was convicted of sin, repented, and turned his life over to the Lord. He thought at first that a dynamic Christian life open to the Spirit wasn't possible in the Greek

Catholic Church, but then someone gave him a copy of my book *Hungry for God*. He read it and was amazed to find that such a life was possible in the Catholic Church. He not only renewed his life as a Catholic but is now a very dynamic priest. Praise the Lord!

A Ukrainian publishing house published a new edition of *Hungry for God* a few months ago, retitling it *Thirsty for God*. When I told our newsletter editor this, she remarked that this year is the fiftieth anniversary of the original publication of *Hungry for God*. Amazingly, it has never been out of print during that time!

The liturgies were truly beautiful, with amazing singing and glorious vestments. One day, we attended a liturgy celebrated for the conference attendees at the seminary of the Greek Catholic Archdiocese of Lviv by the archbishop himself, whose vestments were particularly heavenly. We visited with him after the liturgy. I asked about the biggest challenge facing the Greek Catholic Church in Ukraine, and he said that it is the great influx of refugees from the fighting in eastern Ukraine. (Five-million Ukrainians have left the country, and two million are displaced

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within the country.) Besides the need for housing and food, he said there is a great need for therapy, as many have been traumatized by the war. I hope people can also bring spiritual healing to them. Our mission teams often do this by utilizing a simple approach to inner healing and deliverance developed by Neal Lozano, called the Five Keys of Unbound.

The archbishop added that while most Ukrainians have been baptized, hardly any of them really know what that means, and it is hard to get them to come to church. About 180 men are in the seminary, but there used to be 260. One of the priests later told me that in the 1990s, in the decade after communism collapsed and the Greek Catholic Church was no longer outlawed, there was a great wave of renewal in the Church. The churches were full, and there were four or five applicants for the seminary for every place available.

This, unfortunately, is the story of most of Eastern Europe's Catholic countries. Western materialism has gripped the



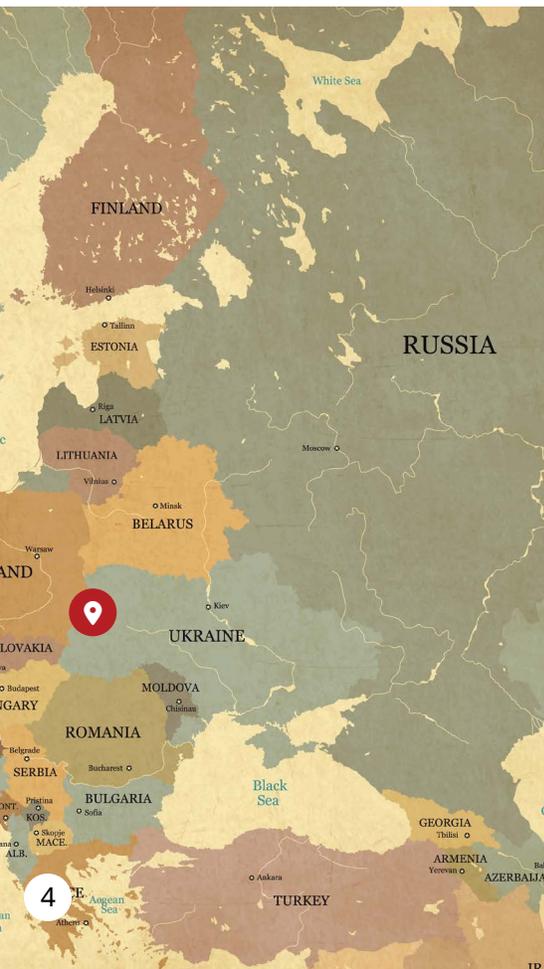
souls of many, and there has been a radical fall-off of church attendance and vocations. Peter Herbeck was recently in Lithuania, where Renewal Ministries has been serving for over thirty years. We witnessed the wonderful flowering of the Church there after years of persecution, but now we see its sorrowful decline. In one diocese where there were over one-hundred seminarians not many years ago, there are now less than twenty. In Ireland, there is only one seminarian for the Archdiocese of Dublin, and only seventeen for the whole country in the multiyear process of formation.

🕒 Ralph Martin speaks to the weeklong "school for leaders" during the mission in Ukraine, assisted by his interpreter. Ralph gave eight talks and led three workshops for the larger group throughout the week.

During the evening session, we prayed individually for almost every person there; people received this prayer with great joy. Many "rested in the Spirit" but some seemed eager to fall over, which made me uncomfortable.

One concern I had from the beginning of our trip regarded the complexities of making my return flight from Krakow. As soon as reservations open up—only nineteen days before departures—they almost immediately become fully booked. Andrzej got up early on the designated day, but all reasonable trains were already booked. He said he should have gotten up at midnight, but he didn't know. The reservations he did get only gave us a half hour to make our connecting train in Przemysl, which did not seem likely, given the lengthy delays at the border.

So, Bohus came up with a plan. On Sunday morning, our last day there, someone would drive us to the border. We would cross on foot and then try to find a taxi to take us to Przemysl, where Bohus had left his car. He then would drive us to Krakow. Once we realized the train was an unrealistic option, we also had to acknowledge that with other ways of getting across the border, we risked having waits as long as six hours or longer due to backed-up border stations.



📍 At left, Ralph spoke in Lviv, Ukraine.

Pictured above is a diagram of Russia's missile and drone attacks against Ukraine that began on the morning of Aug. 26. The Ukrainian Air Force intercepted most of the missiles and drones, but people were killed and injured in the attack. Ralph had just left Ukraine the day prior.

The plan worked, although not without some interesting happenings. We got across the Ukrainian side of the border in about a half hour, although there were a few tense moments when the border guard entered my passport into his computer and frowned. He called another guard to look at the computer and look at me. Then they called their superior. Eventually, they accepted my passport and let me go though. Then, unexpectedly, there was a huge wait to enter Poland. We stood in the hot sun for about an hour, with the line initially not moving at all and then moving very slowly. There were two lines, one for European Union (EU) citizens—meaning both Bohus and Andrzej—and another one that consisted primarily of Ukrainians trying to leave their country that also included me, very near the end of the line. We later learned that Ukraine closed the border shortly after we got through. We do not know why or for how long.

Finally, Andrzej asked the border guard if his American friend could go with him through the EU line, which was very short. The guard said that the American government had negotiated permission with the EU for this! It was great to hear! We went through without a hitch, and the Polish computers did not have any trouble with my passport. Meanwhile, Bohus had found a taxi, and we were on our way to Pryzemsyl. I spent that night in a hotel near the airport, visited the holy chapel again, made my flights, and was glad to be back while also being very thankful

I was able to support my brothers and sisters in Ukraine. Many said that the most important part of our ministry was simply that we were not afraid to come and encourage them. They experienced our presence with them in this stressful time as a big support.

As I checked my phone in Amsterdam, I received messages from Bohus and others, saying that the day after we left, the Russians launched the largest missile and drone strike since the war began. The attack even targeted power stations in the far West, in the Lviv area. We need to ask God to have mercy on all those profoundly affected by the war and to bring peace. I could not help thinking of what Mary said to St. Jacinta as she was dying in the hospital in Lisbon: Wars are a punishment for sin. And what a punishment they are!

At the same time, we know that God has a plan to bring good out of all this horror. A little indicator of this to us was that we left Ukraine and arrived in Poland on the vigil of the feast of Our Lady of Czestochowa. I left for the US on her feast day.

Thank you for your prayers and financial support, which enables us to help brothers and sisters like these all over the world.

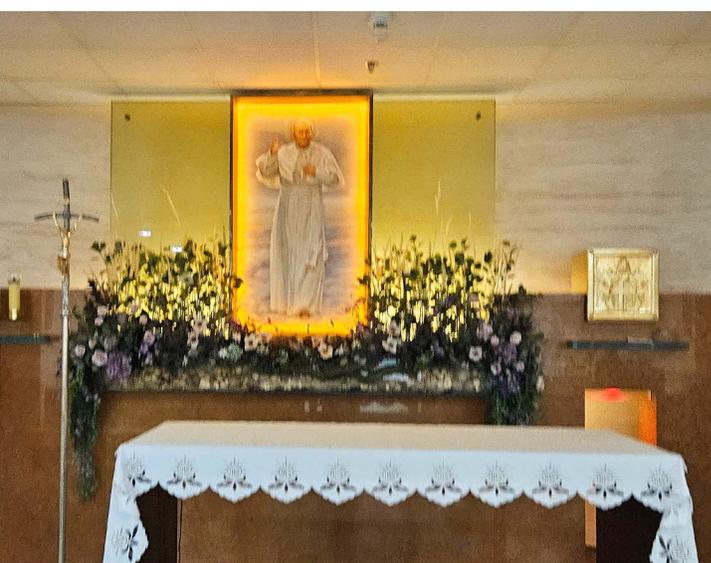
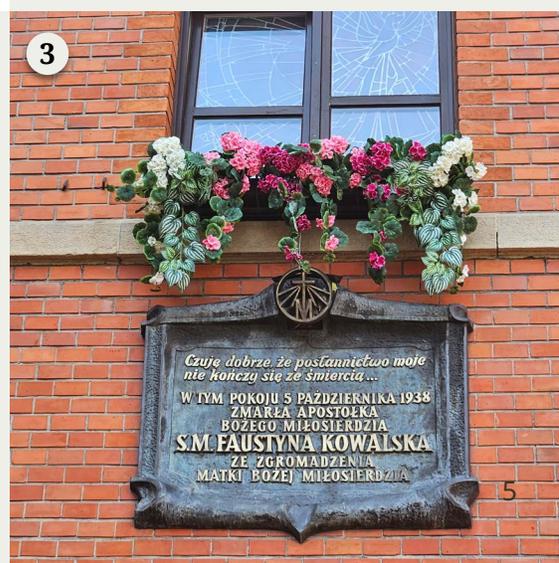
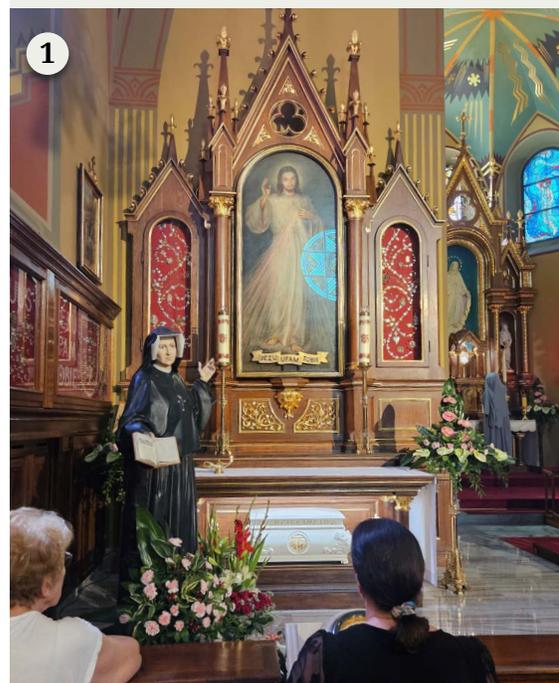
Your partner in the Gospel,

Ralph Martin

Ralph

Visit to the Shrine of St. Faustina

1. St. Faustina's tomb.
2. Replica of St. Faustina's room with her actual bed and penitential objects.
3. Outside of St. Faustina's actual room, which cannot be visited as it is now within the cloister.



🕒 The airport in Krakow, Poland, has a beautiful chapel with the Blessed Sacrament present and images of St. John Paul II, the Divine Mercy, and Our Lady of Czestochowa. Ralph stopped to pray in the chapel both at the beginning and end of his travels to minister to priests, religious sisters, and lay leaders in Ukraine.

NOT ALONE

A testimony
from Andrzej Lewek

➤ Andrzej Lewek, Ralph Martin, and Bohus Zivcak stood in line for two hours before boarding the train that took them to Ukraine.



I was born into a Catholic family with strong religious traditions. I experienced my First Communion with a surprising level of spiritual maturity. I grew up in an environment deeply rooted in faith but struggled to handle peer conflicts. I desired to prove my worth. Unfortunately, I frequently failed in these attempts, leading me to pretend to be better than I was and hiding the truth about my own sins.

In high school, I drifted away from God, searching for my own path to faith. In college, some friends invited me to go on a trip to the mountains. When I realized that no one intended to go hiking, I decided to go alone. I underestimated the winter conditions and rapidly falling darkness. I found myself alone in the mountains, surrounded by snowy, untracked paths and engulfed in darkness. Amid fear and uncertainty, I began to pray. I experienced an extraordinary sense that God was guiding me through this difficult journey. I found my way out to where I needed to be. This was a powerful, mystical experience for me, confirming that I was not alone. God was walking with me, comforting my disheartened soul.

Moved by this experience, I attended evangelization retreats the following week, where I dedicated my life to Jesus. A few weeks later, I enrolled in a faith renewal seminar. As I prepared for the baptism in the Holy Spirit, I expected external signs and manifestations of the Spirit's work, but nothing

of the sort happened. I returned home disappointed but realized the next day that something had changed. God took away my belief that I knew everything about Him. He began speaking to me in a new, deeper way, revealing to me who He truly is.

Over the next eight years, I was involved in building the Academic School of Evangelization. After completing my studies, I met Renewal Ministries' Country Coordinator Don Turbitt. Together, we started building Men of St. Joseph International.

Another important aspect of my life is my connection to Ukraine. During the communist era, while hiking with friends, we often trekked toward the Uzhok Pass, which borders Ukraine. I would gaze across the border, into the then-inaccessible Soviet Union, wondering what life was like there. A few years later, in 1995, after the Soviet Union had collapsed, I had the opportunity to travel to Ukraine as part of the School of Evangelization. It left me with a deep sensitivity and affection for the people of Ukraine.

In 2010, I returned to Ukraine with my wife, for a more tourist-oriented visit. I established contacts that I later utilized in missions with Donald Turbitt for

Renewal Ministries. I assisted Don as a translator and driver, witnessing how God was opening new doors for me.

When Don retired, he asked me to continue the missionary work in Ukraine and Belarus. I gladly said yes, even though war loomed on the horizon. In 2020 and 2021, I traveled there twice, once with my wife, to build and deepen relationships with the people living there. Through collaboration with a network of communities, we established truly strong connections. God's grace allowed these relationships to flourish.

When war broke out, I organized a trip to Lviv with leaders from Poland and Hungary to pray for peace with Ukrainian leaders. This led to invitations to leadership schools. Seeing the hunger for faith in Ukraine, I believe that the time will come when missionaries from Ukraine preach Jesus in the West. Today, however, our primary task is to support Ukrainians during this difficult time of war and help satisfy their hunger for faith and knowledge of God. A significant step in this direction was the retreats I led with Ralph Martin and Bohus Zivcak. This was a crucial experience—not only in terms of sharing faith and the Catholic charismatic experience but also, perhaps most importantly, in being present with people during the difficult times of war, despite potential danger and the need to take risks. Our presence there spoke much more than words could ever convey. May God bless and open new paths for sharing the Gospel in the territory of the former Soviet Union. ✝



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BESIDE ME THROUGH EVERYTHING

A testimony from Dr. Bohus Zivcak

Dr. Bohus Zivcak, who recently served on mission with Ralph Martin in Ukraine, came to know Jesus in Communist Slovakia. According to Peter Herbeck, Bohus leads “one of the most dynamic, cross-generational clergy and laity combined works of Catholic evangelization anywhere in the world.”

I was born in 1968, when my part of the world was behind the Iron Curtain. We were very isolated. Everything was forbidden.

I didn't know there was a different world. I grew up in a believing family, but we had to practice our faith in secret. My mom was a teacher and couldn't attend church officially, so she had to attend church in a very small village where nobody knew her. As a teenager, I began thinking this was too difficult. Everyone said,

“You have no future as a believer. You will have a great future if you join the Communist party.”

I was on the way out of the Church. But then a man called out to me while I was on my bike and asked if I would like to join a small group. I only knew him as a factory engineer who worked with youth; I now know him as Fr. Michael Zamkovsky.

I joined the small group of six to ten people. In very difficult circumstances, this was the only way to share our faith. We met secretly in houses, forests, or the mountains. We read Scripture, shared the faith, and did retreats. I didn't know Fr. Michael was a priest. If it was known, he would have been put in prison. Communism intended to destroy the Church; instead, it created a bond that would not have been otherwise possible.

Fr. Michael and I became friends, and he stayed with me and led me through



God sends us friends to be our firm support in the whirlpool of struggle. In the company of friends, we will find strength to attain our sublime ideal.

// St. Maximilian Kolbe

my crazy teenage years. Over thirty-five years, we've been together almost every day.

When the revolution came in 1989, and our small group learned the truth, I couldn't recall one situation that discredited Fr. Michael as a priest. For me, this was the biggest testimony of life with Christ. This was the older man holding the faith even in difficult circumstances. He was faithful to the Lord and us. Communism had seemed unshakeable; we never thought it was going to change. But in a moment, the whole country changed, and doors were opened. Fr. Michael went back to the monastery, which had been destroyed. We wondered, “What's next?”

I was newly married to a girl from the small group. I am thankful to be married to someone wiser and more holy, who was beside me through

everything. God has given us a gift of marriage and a calling to be missionaries—and we decided to start in that monastery.

Fr. Michael said, “I have a lot of work for you, but no money.” Alena, my wife, and I discussed this and prayed about it. We took a risk. I quit my job, and we continued working with youth like we did in the Communist times. We lived for two years without any salary there. Slowly, God began to open doors to other places and people.

Discipleship is important. It is a gift to have somebody next to you who is older and stronger. It was a big sacrifice for Fr. Michael to share his life with lay people—to let them come close and see his prayer life and behavior. But it gives life. I was blessed to experience this.

If not for Fr. Michael and his life, neither myself, my wife, nor the fellowship we've helped build would exist. We would have disappeared in the world. Because of his faithfulness and this relationship of discipleship, we have stayed together. Even with small children and all the difficulties that marriages go through, we still feel called to serve. It's not easy. It's difficult to manage the time and heaviness of being away from family and spouses, but it is a great blessing to see God present. God is paying us back richly. ✠



▲ A big hit of the conference was when Bohus joined Ukraine's famous nun band.

EVENTS

NOVEMBER 2024 View complete event list: renewalministries.net/events

Ypsilanti, MI
Holy Brews at St. John the Baptist
November 6
Ralph Martin
Details: ypsilanticatholic.org

Latrobe, PA
Spirited Conference
November 9
Dr. Mary Healy
Details: dioceseofgreensburg.org/mens-womens-ministry/spirited

Columbia, MO
Biblical Healing, Then & Now
November 10
Dr. Mary Healy
Details: comonewman.org

Wixom, MI
St. Catherine Academy Senior Retreat*
November 12-14
Debbie Herbeck & the BLR Team

Middletown, NJ
New Jersey Catholic Charismatic Conference
November 15-17
Dr. Mary Healy
Details: dotccr.org

Grand Rapids, MI
Grand Rapids Council of Catholic Women's Event
November 16
Debbie Herbeck
Details: facebook.com/GRDCCW

Raleigh, NC
Raleigh Diocesan Retreat*
November 18-22
Debbie Herbeck

Shelby Township, MI
Ascend at St. Kieran Church
November 21
Pete Burak
Details: stkieran.org/upcoming-events
* Not open to the public.



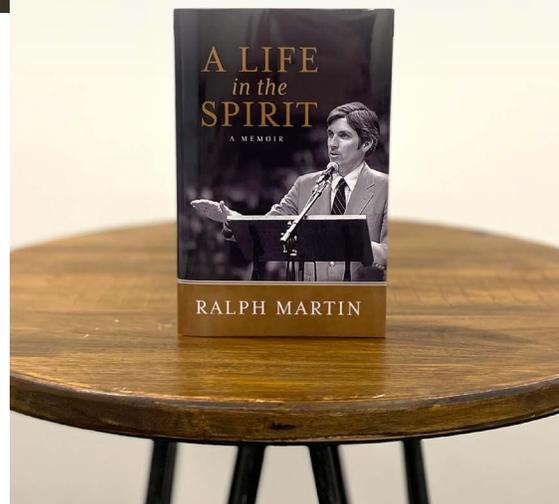
LIFT JESUS HIGHER RALLY
SAVE THE DATE
MARCH 29, 2025 // TORONTO, ON



PLEASE PRAY

- ▶ For the courage to pursue the Lord and answer his call amid difficult circumstances.
- ▶ For peace in the world, and for the Lord's abundant grace to be on those living in areas of conflict.
- ▶ For the prayer intentions of all our supporters and their family members, especially as they face the challenges of illness and economic uncertainty.

NEW BOOK FROM RALPH MARTIN



A Life in the Spirit chronicles Ralph Martin's journey from the early days of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal to becoming one of the most courageous voices defending the truth of the Gospel during an age of dissension and disbelief.

"Ralph Martin's teachings have had a profound impact on my life and my thought. It is a gift to read more about his life and ministry. (This book) provides an insight . . . into the way God can work in the life of someone so fully surrendered to the will of God."

//Fr. Mike Schmitz,
Host of *The Bible in a Year* podcast

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