

# World RENEW

Send forth your spirit and renew the face of the earth

## Why Catholic? *small group faith-sharing experience*

by Mary Jane Paoella

Last spring, I was the innkeeper and owner of Main Street Manor, a bed-and-breakfast inn in Flemington, New Jersey. Our inn receives many business travelers, and some are returning guests. One particular guest, Larry Kettner, had not been back to Main Street for several years, but decided to stay again on a recent trip. Larry is from McHenry, Illinois, but business brings him occasionally to this area.

I always keep my guests aware of what's happening in the house, especially during the evening hours when the guests return from work and are expecting to relax or head out to dinner. On this Wednesday, I was expecting our *Why Catholic?* group of twelve to come for our weekly gathering.

That morning, I mentioned to Larry that our *Why Catholic?* Faith sharing would be held in the living room at 7:30 p.m. I didn't know Larry's religious or

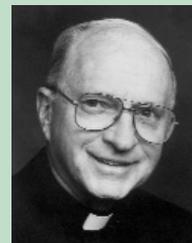
personal background—I just asked him if he were interested and said he was welcome to join us. His response was, "Oh good for you... and I haven't been to church in a long time." Not in a very nice tone, I might add.

However, by the time breakfast was through, he apologized for his curt remark and shared with me the death of Edie, his wife of many years, who died from breast cancer five years ago. Her suffering and death were reasons for his drifting away from the Catholic Church. I persisted gently and invited him again. Perhaps his journey to Flemington was led by God. Larry left saying he would think about it.

Larry was home earlier than expected. He appeared at the top of the staircase as our facilitator arrived and joined our group. As the evening progressed, he shared his situation,

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## President's WORLD



Msgr. Tom Kleissler

### Celebrate God's Love

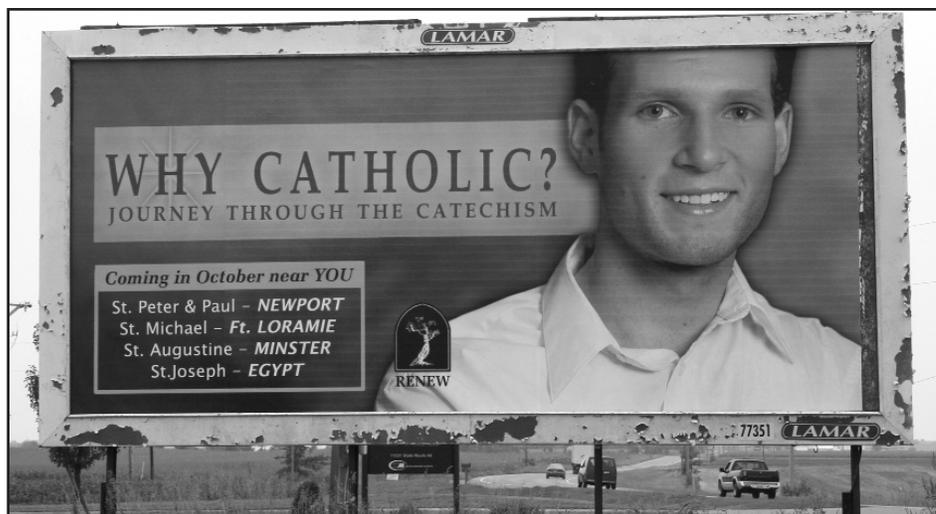
"Peace on earth and good will to all." Beautiful and reassuring words, but not always easily attained. Christmas is a time to celebrate God's incredible love in coming to be one with us. While it should be a time for great peace, it is, unfortunately for many, a time of great anxiety.

Many causes for Christmastime anxieties are well-known to us. Finding the right gift for family and friends, hectic preparations, heavy traffic, and holiday depression underscore our lack of peace.

A certain amount of anxiety in life is part of human nature. However, excessive anxiety is something the Lord wants to help us deal with.

Recently I was overwhelmed and extremely anxious about RENEW's finances. A sharing at our noontime RENEW Mass helped me greatly. One of the women on our team shared how very concerned she was with her changing work role. She then explained how the responsorial psalm at Mass had given her great and consoling insight and helped her to achieve peace of heart. The line from the psalm (137) was, "Let my

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CAPTION about billboard

## Director's D E S K



*RENEW's Next 25 Years*

*Michael Brough*

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## *Who's NEW at RENEW?*

We are proud and pleased to introduce you to the four most recent additions to the RENEW International team!

**Fr. Claudio Burgaleta, S.J.** is a Jesuit of the New York Province. Born in Cuba, his family settled in Belleville, N.J. in 1969. His Jesuit studies have taken him to Madrid, Berkeley, CA and finally Boston College for his doctorate in theology. Claudio has extensive university-level teaching experience and has worked with Latinos in parishes both here and abroad. Before coming to RENEW International as Assistant to the Director, Claudio was director of the NY Jesuits' mobile pastoral institute and Ignatian spirituality program, EPNE.

**Sr. Kathleen (Kass) Collins** is a Sister for Christian Community and is the newest member of RENEW's Why Catholic? Team. A native of Baltimore, MD, Sister Kathleen has master's degrees in theology and business administration. She has served as a pastoral associate in the Diocese of Richmond, VA and a school administrator in Pennsylvania and Maryland. From 1988 until 2003 she worked for the National Catholic Educational Association as a workshop

presenter in the United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico.

**Simeon Messan Adagba** was born in Togo, a tiny and beautiful country in West Africa. He came to Chicago to continue his studies and earned two master's degrees from the Catholic Theological Union. Before joining RENEW, he served as chaplain at St. Mary's Medical Center in San Francisco, and with the Chicago Interfaith Justice for Workers as an advocate for African immigrant workers. Simeon joins RENEW as an international presenter with particular focus on the Burundi Peace-Building Project.

**Greg Welch** comes to RENEW International from Indiana where he has served as a Campus Minister, a Coordinator of Youth and Young Adult Ministries, and in other direct-service ministries. He holds a master's degree in Catholic Thought and Life and is a candidate for a Master of Theological Studies degree, both from St. Meinrad School of Theology. Greg is now a part of RENEW's Young Adult Initiative, namely, *Campus RENEW* and *Theology on Tap*. He is the youngest of thirteen children and enjoys cooking, reading, music, and nature.

# RENEW Updates

## Theology on Tap

Great things are happening with RENEW International's *Theology on Tap (ToT)*. Three dioceses have extended an invitation to the *ToT* team to work with them in their efforts to reach out to and collaborate with young adult Catholics in pursuit of spiritual growth. Advancing our previous efforts in the Archdiocese of Newark, *ToT* will expand across four counties in New Jersey with a new series of events in January. *ToT* will act as a springboard into *Why Catholic?* small faith sharing groups that will be popping up around the archdiocese in March. The Archdiocese of Newark is so excited about the prospect of *ToT* they have dedicated the whole month of January to young adults.

The Dioceses of Dallas, Texas, Davenport and, Iowa have also invited RENEW to pilot our diocesan model of *ToT* in their locales. If you are in one of these three dioceses, keep an eye out for advertisements at your local parishes and please extend a heart-felt welcome to your young adult friends and family. It may be your personal invitation that starts a faith-chain reaction with RENEW and *Theology on Tap*.

## Campus Update

During a leadership session with leaders at a Midwestern university, we asked students who had been involved in Campus RENEW over the past year to give new students a sense of "what this Campus RENEW thing was all about." What followed was heartfelt sharing—some spoke of the opportunity they had to "step back from the daily cares of life and focus on what really mattered" or to "take time to talk about faith in a safe environment." Perhaps the most inspiring sharing came from a student who had, in his own words, "been with RENEW from the beginning." "Campus RENEW got me through my year

last year," he said softly. "I always knew no matter what was going on, I had a group of people to support me, and help me find God in it all. I'm not sure what I ever did without it."



CAPTION - about 20 words goes here

This year witnessed the unprecedented growth of Campus RENEW, which is now serving fifteen campuses in seven states. The feedback has been tremendous, with students, faculty and staff offering gratuitous praise for the process. Campus RENEW has also generated tremendous results on campus, with the number of participants increasing by an average of 250% in the first semester alone.

RENEW has also become the first organization to offer faith-sharing resources written exclusively for the college population. *The Word on Campus*, a lectionary-based campus series written and published by RENEW International, made its debut this year, as did *As I Have Loved You*, a service-based faith-sharing manual, and *Preparing the Way*, an introduction to faith sharing. Finally, Campus RENEW has continued to gain prowess among the campus population as the resource for small Christian communities on campus. During this past year, many campuses contacted RENEW, having heard from friends or colleagues about the "great new process for college campuses."

Looking toward the future, we anticipate the continued explosion of Campus RENEW, as it serves its present campuses and welcomes new campuses through an expanded diocesan sales approach. Most importantly, however, Campus RENEW will be at the service of its many students, encouraging them to reflect on the movement of God in their lives and to be attentive to God's call to reach out to the world.

## President's World – Celebrate God's Love

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tongue be silenced if I ever forget you." What came to her was how she had not sufficiently allowed God to come into her stressful situation. The word *silence* helped her realize *she* must be silent and allow God to put things into perspective for her.

As I listened to her, I began to think of various people in my life to whom this message would surely apply—those deeply concerned about health, family, and the like. Then the point of it all struck me—the message was intended for me! God wanted me to slow down, to be silent, and to be reassured that God is the Lord of all things. I left Mass with great peace of mind and soul. The causes for my anxieties remained, but my focus was on Christ—the source of our peace. That shift in focus made all

the difference for me, and it continues to ground me.

Interestingly enough a reading from St. Paul's Letter to the Philippians on the next Sunday started with this message.

Brothers and sisters: Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (4:6-7).

My prayer for you is that you may find time for enough silence and reflection this Christmastime to keep the focus on Christ. If so, yours will truly be a peaceful and joyful Christmas.

# Why Catholic? small group

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and said he hoped to be able to join us again on his next business trip. We even joked about having a teleconference with him.

The next morning he presented me with a beautiful card, thanking me for inviting him. He promised to return to church and attend Mass. Easter was merely two weeks away. I held him accountable by telling him I wanted to hear from him and have him share the gospel with me the next time we spoke.

Larry did return to his parish, and was welcomed with open arms. He had been missed, and his pastor was very happy to see him again. What's more, Larry's return to his parish with his new inspiration opened up a new opportunity to serve God. His parish was introducing the Stephen Ministries, which trains laypersons to counsel those seeking help with grief, divorce, loss of employment, etc. Larry was naturally drawn to this ministry. He made application and trained for the ministry.

Since then, as Larry shares his story of his return to his faith and about the inspiration he received in Flemington, he mentions me to others. But I know as a group we all inspired Larry during our weekly *Why Catholic?* session. I simply invited him and then supported him afterwards. Larry said yes to God! In return, I was invited to McHenry, Illinois, for Larry's commissioning as a Stephen Minister. I am so proud of him.

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# WC? small group OVERRUN

*Why Catholic?* certainly came into my life at the most opportune time. Like Larry, I was also experiencing a challenging situation with an approaching divorce. Some people think divorce can pull you away from the Church, but not I God was there, in our priests and sisters, in the friends I made in *Why Catholic?*, and at daily Mass. And I, too, was drawn to say yes to God in a ministry. *Why Catholic?* renewed my faith, and my inspiration drew me to become an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion for the homebound. Even during a very difficult time in my life, God called to me and I answered. I am very grateful for the experience of *Why Catholic?* in my life and I pray it will work in the lives of others.

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# Others are blessed by RENEW

On a warm August day in Carrizo Springs, Texas, two of our RENEW Service Team met two young men who had recently arrived from Mexico. These undocumented men had found temporary shelter in a nearby church and were seeking employment. When the RENEW Team spoke with them, the young men became curious and asked about the workshop. The team invited them to "Come and See"! So they did and one of them became so enthusiastic that he volunteered to take an active part in the workshop!

Truly, people from all over the globe appreciate the blessings of the RENEW process!

**World RENEW: Newsletter of RENEW International / FALL 2005**

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Please pray for my intentions, which are listed at the right.  
(Your intentions will be remembered in all Masses and prayers we offer at RENEW International.)

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My intentions

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