

Extended Biographical Information --- Deacon Ralph Poyo



New Evangelization Ministries

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Ralph was born to his Colombian mother, Connie, and his Cuban father, Jose, in Cali, Colombia. They came to the United States in 1965 and spent a few years in Atlanta, Georgia before settling in Miami, Florida. It was during high school in Miami that Ralph met his future wife, Susan, and after five years of dating, they married in 1984. They now have five beautiful daughters: Sarah Marie, Rachel Joy Louise, Leah Christine, Rebekah Faith, and Hannah Grace. He testifies that he has come to understand the true meaning of patience in living with his “Six Pack” of women. Still, second only to the Lord, they are the loves of his life, and he counts it his greatest accomplishment to have introduced his girls to the Lord.

After graduating from Taylor University with a B.A. in Scripture, Ralph first set out to work in the Lord’s vineyard by serving in Miami Youth for Christ as a trained evangelist. His personal mission was to reach out to “un-churched” high school students, to lead them into a relationship with Jesus Christ and disciple them into their local Church communities. Ralph received seventy-two credit hours of intensive evangelization training in his intern year at YFC, before going on to serve as the full-time Youth Minister for St. Louis Catholic Church in Miami.

In this midst of this journey, Ralph was captivated and bound for many years by an addiction to pornography. Having been exposed to this material at a young age, before his own encounter with Christ, Ralph began to experience the direct conflict between this material and his desire to live in the Spirit. During his first few years in ministry, he continued to battle this sin in secret, but it wasn’t until he truly opened his heart to God and allowed the light of Truth to penetrate this darkness, that he began gaining ground and experiencing genuine conversion.

Today, Ralph testifies that he has not struggled with that addiction since that time, thanks to the radical transformation he experienced after allowing Christ free reign in his heart. The Lord continues to bring greater purity to his mind and his desires, and has made of him a new man. He now shares his story for the glory of God at conferences and retreats across the country. His web site at

<http://www.newevangelizationministries.org> has a podcast of his testimony at a men's purity conference, should you want to hear his story in full.

After eight years within the St. Louis community, the Lord moved Ralph and his young family to Raleigh, North Carolina where he took on the youth ministry position at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church. Seven years later, he became the Director of Faith Formation at St. Luke the Evangelist Parish in North Raleigh, the position he held until his recent move to Steubenville, Ohio. At St. Luke's, Ralph was responsible for all catechetical programs within the parish, including RCIA, sacramental prep, and private pastoral counseling. In his six years there, Ralph led the building of two youth ministry programs that were each an average of fifty-five students strong. In addition, Ralph eliminated the CCD religious education program and established an "all generations" catechetical program, manned by a 200-person crew of volunteers from the parish. With this new format, he was able to continue ministering to the same number of children and youth, and expand his outreach to about 240 adults – the heads of all of the participating households – each month.

The program was so successful after its first year that Ralph needed to establish five additional adult education classes to respond to the hunger generated by the parish-wide awakening of faith.

Also during this time, Ralph was ordained to the permanent diaconate for the Diocese of Raleigh in November of 2005. With his engaging and passionate style of preaching, the Lord continues to use him to reach people even beyond the parish setting, as he challenges listeners of all ages to get outside of their comfort zones in their day-to-day practice of the faith. He is passionate about helping others to make Catholicism more a way of life than just a religious identity. Having committed his life to the pursuit of Truth and to the service of the Church, he is faithful to her teaching Magisterium and always seeks to be in union with Rome.

Called in a New Direction

In August 2007, Ralph and Susan heard a very strong call from the Lord, that He would be leading them in a new direction over the coming year. At the time, all they could discern was that they were going to leave Raleigh the following summer, and that they had to alert their family and friends immediately, even though they weren't sure where they were going or what He had in store for them! But in the months following their announcement, the Lord began to slowly reveal His will for them: Ralph was to be His unique instrument, to visit parishes across the country and find pastors who desire to re-evangelize and radically transform their parishes.

Ralph began to see that his experiences working with three different parish staffs have given him a valuable understanding of the inner workings and difficulties of

pastoral teams and parish programming. He had seen firsthand how current methods of catechesis are failing because many baptized Catholics cannot lay claim to a personal, life-changing relationship with Jesus in the first place. He had come to realize that before teaching people to comprehend the Gospel and the tenants of our faith, he needed to teach them to first open their hearts to God and allow the Holy Spirit to move in power in their lives.

Ralph's parish experience has also given him a tremendous heart for the Priesthood. Over-worked and ill trained for the work of evangelization, pastors are struggling to keep parishes afloat amidst the tremendous demands placed on their limited time. They have become so concerned with managing pastoral teams and "putting out fires," that they have forgotten their first duty: Doing everything possible to lead their flock to Jesus. Ralph wants to support his brother clergy by equipping them with the tools they need to minister to their pastoral teams and to their parishioners.

With New Evangelization Ministries, Ralph seeks to help parishes become agents of self-evangelization, so that the first fruits of their catechetical programs is that of putting their parishioners "not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ..." (Pope John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae* para.5).

His methods of evangelization model the personal, one-on-one style of Our Lord; Jesus preached to the multitude, but focused even more time and energy on "the Twelve," preparing them to spearhead the ministry of evangelization after His passing. Ralph has experienced how God seeks to transform us at the very core of our being, which transformation becomes "the reason for the hope that (we) have" (1 Peter 3:15). Armed with this knowledge and over twenty years of experience, he is being sent to teach others how to become evangelists – how to bring others to Jesus and then get out of the way!

Website <http://www.newevangelizationministries.org>