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HEART TO HEART

Dear Friend,

As I sit down to write you, I am looking out my study window at great thunder clouds, rumbling across the sky and displaying powerful lightening flashes. It is the tail end of one of those majestic thunder storms that sometimes roll across the great plains in the spring time. Throughout the night we have listened to the tremendous thunder claps that always sound louder in the dark and seen the dazzling electric displays that literally light up the night sky. I rather like these storms (Carolynn definitely does not!) for they speak to me of tremendous power, action, and activity.

Action and Activity

We have certainly had plenty of action and activity since I last wrote to you. We have had some splendid RENOVARÉ Local Conferences around the country. A woman from Oxnard, California, writes, "I recently had the pleasure of attending a Local Spiritual Renewal Conference led by Richard Foster and Jim Smith. I thank you from my heart for your ministry and efforts on behalf of Christ's Church. The work of RENOVARÉ offers cups of cold water to a parched people. So many of our barriers, self-constructed and maintained, evaporate under the gentle eye of small group accountability and encouragement."

Last March over 600 gathered at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan for a Local Conference. One who attended writes, "Many hearts were touched at last weekend's RENOVARÉ Conference. My heart was touched by the Spirit reminding me that God's love and grace enables me to love the joy-filled life in the power of the resurrected Christ."

Loving, Nurturing Accountability

Our hope is that many Spiritual Formation groups will spring up as a result of these meetings, and we are receiving good reports of this occurring. These groups bring loving, nurturing, ongoing accountability and our best guesstimation is that around 300 of these groups are now established.

One lady from Meadow Vista, California, writes, "This is our first experience with a RENOVARÉ group and it has proven to be even more than I anticipated. My husband is just starting another group with the husbands of my ladies." One Presbyterian church in Boulder, Colorado, now has 27 Spiritual Formation Groups established.

Gareth Icenogle, who teaches in the D. Min. program at Fuller Theological Seminary, says, "In the five traditions we see the head, heart, relationships, character, and outward action—the whole person. RENOVARÉ is where the small group movement is going."

Devotional Classics

Another wonderful result of these efforts is the number of people discovering the great devotional treasures that God has given for our nurture and encouragement. A woman from Stromsburg, Nebraska, writes, "The Devotional Readings are a spring board into other readings. Pennington (leads me) to Barclay's Apology and Douglas Steere's Quaker Spirituality, Jeanne Guyon to Fénelon, C.S. Lewis to Screwtape and Narnia. We look forward to more adventures."

A man in Fort Dix, New Jersey, writes, "My spirit has danced and soared in reading Richard Foster's Celebration of Discipline and PRAYER: Finding the Heart's True Home. One of my greatest blessings, besides the obvious meat of Scripture and other writings that are included, has been my introduction to some of the great devotional masters. Their writings have touched me deeply but surprisingly, for I have found little evidence of their works in my path of 'mainstream' Christianity."

Most of all we are encouraged by the new life springing up in the hearts of people. A Lutheran pastor from Bloomington, Illinois, writes, "I had been struggling with my spiritual growth, living in the desert, yet still proclaiming the Gospel in my sermons. When I saw your PRAYER: Finding the Heart's True Home, I thought maybe this would provide the direction I needed. After reading the first two chapters, I called my wife and told her, "you won't believe what I have discovered." The wisdom and spiritual maturity of your words are not forced. It is as though the Holy Spirit is pulling you, carrying you as you write rather than your pulling and carrying God's message. What an uncanny experience." All we can do is thank God for such encouraging words.

Thanksgiving

And thanksgiving characterizes most everything we do these days. Ten months ago when I left my teaching post at Friends University "with God and a laser printer," I could not have imagined we would have come this far this soon. Thanks to your generous support, vigorous product sales, and careful management we have paid our bills on time every month. We now have furnished offices with good equipment. We have even built up a three month operating expense reserve fund—which is what our consultant urged us to do—and we have not had to touch it for nine months.

We have received our permanent 501(C)(3) non-profit status from the Internal Revenue Service for which we give thanks. (Non-profits begin with a five year provisional status and only if they consistently meet strict IRS guidelines regarding giving percentages and money management are they granted permanent status.)

For all these things . . . and much, much more we thank God. And we thank you.

Thank you for your warm letters that encourage us so very much.

Thank you for sharing with us your joys and your struggles.

Thank you for your generous gifts which sustain and strengthen our efforts.

Thank you for loving us and praying for us.

Possible Relocation

When we first stepped out from under the umbrella of the University, we seriously considered relocation. We decided against it at that point because we wanted to get out on our own and let things shake down a bit. We wanted to see if this thing would really fly before we upset the housing and living patterns of several families.

Then when a wonderful couple here in Wichita, Reg and Nancy Boothe, offered us fifteen hundred square feet of brand new office space rent free for two years, we felt this was the Lord's direction for us. (When they made the offer I fasted and prayed for about ten seconds and said, "Yes!") They did this to help us launch RENOVARÉ, and nothing could have been better than two years free from the need to lease office space in order to get this effort off the ground.

While this arrangement may continue, we do not want to presume upon Reg and Nancy's graciousness. Therefore we have been actively considering options for a possible relocation in the summer of 1994. We are hoping for a place that is accessible and near a good airport. Also, if possible, we would love to link up in some way with a good retreat center that truly understands the ministry of solitude—without needing to manage, direct, or finance it!

At this point we are considering possibilities in California, Oregon, Arizona, Colorado, and North Carolina. At this juncture we really do not know where the Lord will lead us, but we are hoping for clearness by fall. We do know that in order to take such a step we will need to substantially increase our financial base, and so your faithful and generous support helps us discern what God wants us to do. Do pray with us and for us as we process this significant decision.

Radio Possibilities

Over the years I have had the privilege of being on various radio and TV programs. I have always been glad for these opportunities . . . and even more glad that I did not have to carry on the burden of those operations week in and week out. More than once different individuals have come to me with various media proposals which I have always turned down. I know something of the relentless demands and constant financial burden of these things, and I have never felt drawn to them. Recently, however, a proposal has been made to us that we feel we should look at seriously and not just turn down automatically. It involves good outreach at small expense and limited time involvement from me. It would place me on 47 radio stations around the country which would have a combined potential listening audience of 23 million. (These are second and third level stations rather than major market stations—whose cost is prohibitive.) It would involve brief, two minute spots aired from one to four times per day, seven days a week. It provides a format in which I could share a word of encouragement and help to many precious people. In addition, it could provide a means of communicating widely the vision of RENOVARÉ. There would be no on-air financial appeals but product sales would be offered, and it is hoped that in six months time the income from these sales would be covering all expenses.

The cost for such an effort is roughly \$1,500.00 per month—\$500.00 for radio time; \$500.00 for studio time; \$500.00 for script writing. If we do it, we would probably start July 1 and make a beginning commitment of six months. This means an initial outlay of \$9,000.00.

Again, we covet your prayers for wisdom and discernment. And again, your financial support helps to guide our discernment process. Having said this, I do want to underscore the importance of giving first to

your local church (or wherever you are being nurtured spiritually) and to the poor. This helps to keep the fires of renewal burning within us.

To All Who Are Bowed Low

I began this letter by describing the power and action of a recent thunderstorm. It is now six hours later and the excitement of thunder and lightning have turned into a dull gray sky with a steady downpour. And so it is for many of you who read these words. You are bowed low by the sorrows of your days and all of life feels gray to you. I know because I am out among you in my travels and I see it in your eyes and in the slump of your shoulders. I also read it in your heart-rending letters. And I want to say to you who feel broken and bruised by the pressures of life: "God is with you and God hurts with you in your hurt. God suffers with you in your suffering. See, if you can, the suffering heart of the suffering God so that you may be comforted and encouraged."

"And Lord Jesus, Son of the living God, hear the heart cry of your children. Be with those who weep, and be with those who rejoice, so that both our weeping and our rejoicing may be wrapped up into your great love. —Amen."

Peace and joy,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard J. Foster". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Richard J. Foster

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