

HEART-TO-HEART

June 2001

A Pastoral Letter From Richard J. Foster



Dear Friends,

As we step into the new century/millennium, and as we are looking toward a significant expansion of RENOVARÉ beyond the borders of the United States, it is good for us to reaffirm our call and sharpen our vision.

THE QERA YAHWEH

RENOVARÉ came into being in response to what we understood to be the *qera Yahweh*, the call of God, growing out of the crying need to discover new ways to do and to be church. We needed fresh paradigms for singing the Lord's song in a strange land. We needed new ways to be church-without-walls, kingdom-life-in-the-streets, salt-and-light-at-home-and-work. Above all, we needed to cast a clear vision of life in the kingdom of God that ordinary people could grasp and translate into everyday living. And so RENOVARÉ was born.

We joke that RENOVARÉ was started "with God and a laser printer!" Our organizational chart is, like Sampson, to light the tails of the foxes and let them go! (Judges 15:4-5). An early prophetic image given us was of a seed being placed into the ground in such a way that the plant which comes from it:

- is beyond our control,
- will look very different from the seed that was first put into the ground, and,
- will transcend all our present conceptions of what we think RENOVARÉ might become.

Another prophetic vision that guided us in those early days was of many streams flowing out from under the Throne of God, then merging and becoming a great river of life and light. And many similar early experiences, discussions, and prayers.

This ethos has guided our thinking and our living. The six great Traditions (or streams or dimensions of life) delineate a balanced vision for our life together; the RENOVARÉ Covenant frames our unifying commitment; the Common Disciplines comprise our minimal means for living out the life of the Covenant; and the Questions of Examen set forth our strategy for evaluating our spiritual growth week-to-week. Let me articulate for you three of the more crucial implications growing out of this ethos.

No ABIDING CITY

First, we are people always on pilgrimage. In this world we have "no abiding city" for we seek the city which is to come, the city of God (Rev. 21). We have, in a sense, a passionate devotion to impermanence. Nothing about RENOVARÉ gives you a sense of permanence: we own no buildings, our staff is as simple and lean as possible, our whole structure (to the extent we even have a structure) is entirely relational rather than hierarchical.

Not that we despise permanence and structure. Many institutions with vast holdings and substantial "empires" have made (and do make) enormous contributions. Think of the immense

monastery of Cluny (France) over which the great St. Odo presided in the tenth century. For generations it was a powerful center of renewal and spiritual revival. In the thirteenth century it was the largest church in Europe. And modern parallels exist, I am sure, though we will need to wait a century or two to be sure of who and where they are.

But as wonderful and helpful as those institutional models are, RENOVARÉ is *not* called to be one of them. That is not our vocation. We do not want people to come to us but to go out into the world. RENOVARÉ is like a finger pointing away from itself. Our task is to give glory to God by saying as simply and as profoundly as possible, “He is not here, he is risen. Seek him above. Seek him in his people. Seek him in the poor and the dispossessed. Go from us and you will still find Jesus with you. He is your ever-living Savior, Teacher, Lord, and Friend. Follow him.”

THE CENTRALITY OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Second, the Sermon on the Mount must ever stand at the center of our understanding of how we live out our discipleship to Jesus. In one of the more important books of the twentieth-century, *The Cost of Discipleship*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes, “The renewal of the Church

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will come from a new type of monasticism which only has in common with the old an uncompromising allegiance to the Sermon on the Mount.” RENOVARÉ is a bold attempt at just such “a new type of monasticism” which is firmly committed to living on the basis of Jesus’ revolutionary teaching in the Sermon on the Mount.

This is why Dallas Willard’s *The Divine Conspiracy* is so central to what we are attempting, and why we so urgently want you to soak in the message of this book. It does some of the finest exegetical work on the Sermon on the Mount you will find anywhere. And it makes this famous teaching of Jesus so practical, so clear, so . . . not “easy” exactly . . . but so clearly doable—howbeit only through the conquering of the many self-sins that plague us all: self-sufficiency, self-importance, self-pity, self-obsession, self-righteousness, self-seeking, self-willing, and a host of other hyphenated sins of the human spirit.

So we keep the great “Sermon” always before us; helping one another to learn in daily life how to “seek first the kingdom of God”, how to “judge not”, how to “love our enemies”, how to give and pray and fast “in secret”, how to “love perfectly, even as our heavenly Father loves perfectly.”

PROFOUNDLY RELATIONAL

Third, all kingdom life and all kingdom work must be profoundly relational. This reflects who God is in his Trinitarian nature—deeply, utterly, eternally, relational as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And anytime God decides to do something, he always works relationally. So must we.

RENOVARÉ is a community of God’s people, howbeit a geographically dispersed community. We gather whenever and wherever we can in little clusters of twos and threes (maybe even in fours or fives) to provide a loving, nurturing, accountability for one another. We care for one another across great distances, both geographical and cultural. We are from every conceivable denomination and church, even no denomination and church. But still we come together to follow Jesus Christ and him alone, seeking continual renewal through spiritual exercises, spiritual gifts, and acts of service. We are with each other and for each other in all our pain and all our hope. We weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice (Rom 12:15).

We value relationships above efficiency, family above work, children above all. In the economy

of God a high premium must be put on all human relationships. Our RENOVARÉ team gives substantial amounts of time to developing our varied relationships with each other. Soon after writing this letter to you I will be gathering with the ministry team for our annual retreat. It is always the highlight of the year for me. Most of our time will be devoted to laughing with one another, praying for one another, learning from one another, listening to one another, sitting quietly with one another. You see, among us our first priority together is relational. This reality must precede any ministry or work we might do. And, in fact, it is the living, vital relationships we have built that helps to define and clarify the ministry or work we are led into.

Well, these three implications of the RENOVARÉ ethos. We all need to be reminded often of their importance.

RENOVARÉ UNITED KINGDOM

We have been engaged in a year-long discernment process over whether there needs to be some form of a British expression of RENOVARÉ. Four key British leaders have been with me in this process:

- *James Catford* - (Anglican). James has worked for many years in British publishing and has broad contacts.
- *Joyce Huggett* - (Anglican). Joyce is a well-known author of many books who also has missionary contacts and experience throughout the world.
- *Roy Searle* - (The Northumbria Community). Roy is a key leader in the Northumbria Community, a creative, contemporary expression of a “new monasticism” drawing from the Celtic Christian conviction.
- *Rob Warner* - (Baptist). Rob has written several books and is right now in the midst of a creative church plant in the Wimbledon area of London called “Kairos, Church from scratch”.

OUR FINANCIAL GUIDELINES

- We urge everyone to give first to their local church (or wherever they are being nurtured spiritually) and to the poor before ever giving to RENOVARÉ.
- An accountant oversees our financial records in accord with accepted accounting procedures and the highest professionalism.
- We will live within our means. One thing we refuse to do is overextend and overspend ourselves and then beg for God's people to bail us out. We believe that God will give us the money to do what we are being called to do. We feel it involves just as much faith to trust God for the money before a purchase as after a purchase. In fact, one way we discern God's will for the ministry of RENOVARÉ is through the financial support of his people.
- We believe in full disclosure at all times. Our financial reports are available to anyone upon request.
- We will receipt all donations.
- If we offer books, tapes, or other materials for a suggested contribution, we will receipt the amount given above the retail price of the product plus shipping and handling costs.
- When we make a purchase, we will pay the bill within thirty days. We refuse to subsidize this ministry on the backs of vendors.
- We will never sell or rent our mailing list.
- We are primarily a voluntary organization and as such we depend in large measure upon the sacrificial labors of many. If, however, we employ paid staff, they will receive equal pay for equal work.
- We will communicate our financial needs to our constituency as clearly and as truthfully as possible. We will not inflate or overstate our situation, nor create a crisis to boost income.
- We believe RENOVARÉ was initiated and continues to be sustained by God. While we are eager to follow the Divine whisper at every turn and work with all our might, it is God's business and not ours to prosper or end the work of RENOVARÉ. We rejoice either way.

In April I went across “the pond” to spend several days with each one of these dear servants of Christ. They kindly welcomed me into their homes, introduced me to family members, and let me be alongside them through their daily activities. After my being with each one individually, we all gathered together in the English midlands for two days of prayer and retreat. An almost breathless anticipation pervaded our discussing and dreaming. We knew we were onto something of genuine significance. Emerging out of our time together was the firm conviction that the time is right for us to link arms in ministry, stepping out and watching for what God will do through our combined efforts. The image given to us was of a butterfly chrysalis, for we too are in a formative and preparatory stage. And so we wait and prepare, looking for the metamorphosis which will come in God’s good time.

Pray for us during this transitional stage. We begin with nothing . . . not even a laser printer! If you want to help turn this exciting venture into a reality, send gifts to this address for now and designate them for “RENOVARÉ United Kingdom.”

AND THE FINANCIALS . . .

And since I am on the topic of giving, permit me to ask boldly for your financial help. We need monies for day-to-day expenses, especially as we enter the financially slow summer months. Beyond this, the opportunities for future development loom large. We believe God has given us a mandate to move forward boldly. At the very same time we work hard to remain a lean operation, carefully monitoring every dollar spent. Your gifts are sacrificial monies and we want to be the very best stewards possible.

The loyalty of RENOVARÉ’S covenant members and friends is truly extraordinary. We could not continue without your loving and generous support. We are grateful for all you have done in the past. Will you help us again now? Thank you.

Peace and joy,



Richard J. Foster

Permission is granted to duplicate this letter for free distribution. Any quotations or references to it should give proper credit to RENOVARÉ, 8 Inverness Drive East, Suite 102, Englewood, CO 80112-5624 USA.

**Keep this portion as a reminder.
All gifts are tax deductible.**

- Financial Support:
- Single Gift \$ _____
- Monthly \$ _____
- Quarterly \$ _____
- Regular Prayer Support.

Signature

**Send this section to RENOVARÉ in the enclosed
self-addressed envelope.**

- Enclosed is my gift.
- I would like to pray regularly for RENOVARÉ.
- Please send me a RENOVARÉ Covenant Card so I can prayerfully read, consider, and sign it.
- Please remove my name from your mailing list.

Name (Please print clearly)

Address

05/01

Make checks out to RENOVARÉ and mail to RENOVARÉ, 8 Inverness Drive East, Suite 102, Englewood, CO 80112-5624 USA.