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HEART-TO-HEART

November 2005 A Pastoral Letter from Richard Foster



Dear Friends,

My concern in this pastoral letter is to write to you about the **vision** and **mission** of RENOVARÉ. In one sense I am talking out loud with you, for our entire RENOVARÉ Team is right now working together on this subject with the hope of hammering out a substantive position paper on the matter. We would love to hear your thoughts.

CLARIFYING THE VISION

The RENOVARÉ **vision** is simple and straightforward: a life of flaming love for God with all our “heart, soul, mind, and strength” (Deut. 6:4; Mark 12:30).

- It is a vision of genuine, solid, substantive life in the kingdom of God, available to you and to me. Here. Now.
- It is a vision of the continuing, experiential reality of “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17).
- It is a vision of Jesus high and lifted up drawing all peoples to himself (John 3:14).
- It is a vision of us constantly returning to our first love, Jesus . . . and falling in love with him over and over and over again (Rev. 2:4-5).
- It is a vision of an ongoing forming, conforming, transforming life in and through Jesus—a transformative character development into Christlikeness.
- It is a vision of radical community life; an all-inclusive community of loving persons gathered in the power and fellowship of the Trinitarian presence.

This is a vision of LIFE. For you. For me. And I urge you: never leave off pursuing this life. Though it be difficult, seek hard after it. My friend, you *can* learn to love God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength. You *can* learn to love your neighbor as yourself. You *can* learn to love your enemies. You *can* learn to overcome evil and to do what is right. Believe me, you *can* learn these things. We here at RENOVARÉ are committed to helping you find just such a LIFE.

To be sure, this life is not automatic . . . though God bestows innumerable graces upon the earnest seeker. Still, developing and sustaining a life of loving abandonment to God involves an overall plan of living, incorporating special practices that care for the inner person. These are the familiar disciplines of the spiritual life. These we put into regular practice: prayer and solitude and study and service and worship and confession and celebration and more.

Through all of life’s vicissitudes we must never allow anything to replace this vision of white-hot love for God. It is our first and last order of business. Nothing is more important than this. Nothing. Not good deeds. Not faithful service in the church. Not even missional labor in the name of Christ. Nothing. Love God alone. Adore God alone. Worship God alone. Be blinded to all other loyalties.

UNDERSTANDING THE MISSION

If our vision is simple and straightforward, the **RENOVARÉ mission** is complex and multifaceted. It is a mission deeply rooted in Jesus' commissioning words to his disciples: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:18-20). This threefold task of "discipling" and "baptizing" and "teaching" is essential, and essential in that order.

The "discipling" task brings us to the point of decision . . . decision to live under the kingdom rule of Christ. This is an act of will, a choosing to become Jesus' student, his apprentice. It is also the action that turns us from being creatures dead in our trespasses and sins and makes us alive to God (Eph. 2:1; Rom. 6:11). As his student we are now enrolled in the School of Christ 24/7. As his apprentice we follow the Master Journeyman; listening to what he says, watching what he does, and seeking to live our lives as he would live our lives if he were we. All authority is given to Jesus and as his disciple (student or apprentice) we are yielding to this authority.

While physical baptism is a right and good initiating action, "baptizing" involves a whole lot more than just getting people wet. It involves our being immersed into the community life of the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We are being baptized into the reality of the Trinitarian presence. As Jesus is in the Father and the Father is in Jesus, so we are in Jesus and Jesus is in us (John 17:21). We are baptized into the life described in Chapter 14 of John: participation with Jesus as the way to the Father and the truth about the Father and the life of the Father, and participation with the promised Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of Truth and who abides with us and in us.

It is only after experiencing the realities of "discipling" and "baptizing" that we are ready for "teaching." This involves learning to come into the conforming reality of obeying everything Jesus commanded. No small task, to be sure, but a task in which Jesus promises to be with us right up to the end of the age. This is the work of spiritual formation which is so inextricably tied to the work of evangelism. Frankly, it is often "the great omission" from "the great commission." But the good news of the evangel is that a formed life really is possible, that we truly can learn to obey him in all things. Not perfectly and not automatically, but purely and fully as we learn to walk in the Way of Christ day by day. Accomplishing this demands Spirit-inspired, Spirit-driven teaching. **RENOVARÉ** seeks to provide just such teaching.

A MOVEMENT AFOOT

A movement is afoot today. It extends far beyond **RENOVARÉ** and can be seen in seminaries and colleges and churches and hosts of seeker groups everywhere. In more recent years it has coalesced around the concept of "spiritual formation," and it expresses the deep yearnings of people for a life of spiritual substance. All of this could go in many different directions, but in its Christian expressions there is genuine hope for individuals and churches to find a sure footing in character formation in Christlikeness. **RENOVARÉ** has been the pioneer in the modern spiritual formation movement, and I see our future role here in three ways.

First, we need **to fuel** the growing spiritual formation movement. Speaking and writing, conferences and retreats, seminars and training sessions, all aimed at continuing to fuel the movement.

Second, we need **to resource** the growing spiritual formation movement. Churches need coaching and consulting; individuals need teaching and spiritual director training; emerging church expressions need historical perspective and wise counsel. And more.

Third, we need **to model** a unique community life for the growing spiritual formation movement. In our recent venture into East Africa Glandion Carney was asked how our **RENOVARÉ**

Team could possibly function together with its immense diversity of denominations. His answer, “When we gather together it is like heaven!” And it is, it truly is! Oh how we need models of reconciliation and unity, compassion and caring, vigorous social ministry and loving, respectful evangelism.

OUR GEOGRAPHIC STRATEGY OF PENETRATION

RENOVARÉ has always sought to “light the tails of the foxes and let them go” (see Judges 15:1-8), and so we fully expect the ideas and vision for life that we encourage will go far beyond our actual organizational structures. This has already occurred and we desire its increase.

In addition, we have targeted five major geographic areas for penetration. Since we began in the States we established RENOVARÉ USA as a model for the penetration of all of **North America**. While we have been at this for a while there is still much for us to do, especially when we consider Canada and Greenland and Oceania and the many island countries in and around the Caribbean Sea.

Next, we established RENOVARÉ Britain and Ireland to function as a model for the penetration of all of **Europe**. They are now a registered charity in the UK with full independence and with an entirely British/Irish board. I continue to go across the pond as I can, but the bringing of the RENOVARÉ message to Europe is really in their hands. And, believe me, they have their hands full.

RENOVARÉ Korea has been in formation as a model for the penetration of all of **Asia**. I have just returned from being with a combined gathering of Korean leaders from the U.S. and from Korea. The meetings were exhausting . . . and glorious. In their Board gathering (thrilling to participate in) they made the decision to begin the process of being fully independent of the U.S. Board. They even want a RENOVARÉ International Conference to be held in Korea and we are looking into the feasibility of this. I will be going to Korea with a team in the fall of ‘06 and again in ‘07. We even have some contacts and possibilities for forays into North Korea. These leaders are highly visionary and energetic. Do pray for their efforts.

Our 2004 trip to Africa was most encouraging. In June we brought Anastase Rugirango of Rwanda to the States to meet with us. I was deeply moved by his pastoral skill, his deep commitment to Christ, and his ability in articulating the RENOVARÉ message. In November I will meet with Peter Mutisya of Kenya from whom I expect to learn much. Could these be the future leaders

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.

who could spearhead a RENOVARÉ East Africa effort that might be the model for the penetration of all of **Africa**?

A fifth continent is in our sights though nothing firm has developed as yet. I am referring to a RENOVARÉ effort in **Central** and **South America**. I made several forays early on in Costa Rica but nothing lasting developed. We still await God's timing here, but we are very much wanting to move in this direction. (Note to the purist: I'm fully aware that Central America is categorized as part of North America, however, it seems best for our practical strategy to think of it in conjunction with our efforts toward South America.)

You can see that our mission strategy is a large one indeed. But we must not get carried away here. We cannot allow the mission to squeeze out the vision. First things must remain first. Mission must always flow out of a deeper vision and experience of love for God. But, as you see, we sense God calling us to large areas of our world as he gives us strength and resources.

Our mission and opportunities to serve most certainly exceed our means. For this reason I ask for your help. In time I would like to call upon us together to raise a million dollars for each of the five continents I have described to you. For now I am asking you to give generously, even sacrificially at this year-end. Will you help us? Thank you.

Peace and joy,



Richard J. Foster

P.S. Enclosed with this pastoral letter is "A Service of Commitment" which is tied to our RENOVARÉ Covenant. I hope that during the Advent season or on New Year's Day you will affirm and re-affirm this commitment to follow Jesus Christ in all things and in all ways. May God bless you as you do so, whether individually or in a group setting. Remember, even when we are alone, we are together in our Covenant commitment and together always in the glorious fellowship of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. RJF

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

Cut the sections apart and keep this portion as a reminder. All gifts are tax deductible.

My commitment to RENOVARÉ:

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

Signature _____

Make checks out to RENOVARÉ and mail to RENOVARÉ, 8 Inverness Drive East, Suite 102, Englewood, CO 80112-5624 USA. To begin *Monthly Automatic* contributions by credit card call Marian at 303-792-0152.

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

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- Check**
- Credit Card: (Circle Type)** AmEx MC Visa
- Card #** _____ **Exp. Date** ____/____
- To begin Monthly Automatic contributions**
Please go to: www.renovare.org/ac.htm
- Please send me a RENOVARÉ Covenant Card so I can read, consider, and sign it.**

Name (Please print clearly) _____

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A SERVICE OF COMMITMENT

For Each New Year

OPENING (read aloud in unison)

In the name and in the glorious fellowship of the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—I this day;

- surround myself with the Light of Jesus Christ,
- cover myself with the blood of Jesus Christ, and
- seal myself with the cross of Jesus Christ.

READINGS (read aloud in turn)

Old Testament: Ezekiel 37:1-10

New Testament: Ephesians 4:1-16

Gospels: Matthew 5:1-16

CONFESSION OF FAITH (read aloud in unison)

I call all heaven to witness today
that I have put on Christ.
I choose no other Lord
than the Maker of Heaven and earth.
This day I walk with him
and he will walk with me.
I fasten close to me this day
that same Jesus
who came to us as flesh and blood
and was himself baptized in the Jordan River.
He died upon a cross to rescue me,
broke free from death, its conqueror.
He left us, to return the more certainly.

All these truths and their power
I fasten close to me this day.
Resisting my own selfishness and sin,
refusing to live as a slave to riches,
pleasure, or reputation,
rejecting Satan and all his lies,
I call on heaven to witness today
that I have put on Christ.

COVENANT COMMITMENT (read aloud responsively)

Leader: Do you this day believe that Jesus Christ has risen and is, through the Holy Spirit, alive and present among his people?

People: Yes, we so believe!

Leader: Do you this day confess that Christ is among us as

- Our Savior to forgive us,
- Our Teacher to instruct us,
- Our Lord to rule us, and
- Our Friend to come alongside us.

People: Yes, we so confess!

Leader: Do you this day commit yourself to seek continual renewal through

- Spiritual exercises,
- Spiritual gifts, and
- Acts of service.

People: Yes, we so commit!

Leader: Let us then make our commitment the more sure by speaking the words of the RENOVARÉ Covenant.

All: In utter dependence upon Jesus Christ as my ever-living Savior, Teacher, Lord, and Friend I will seek continual renewal through spiritual exercises, spiritual gifts, and acts of service.

COMMUNITY COMMITMENT (read aloud in unison)

We journey alone;
we journey together;
we say Yes to God;
we say Yes to each other.

Alone in God
we will find
ourselves together
and know the gift
of community.

Amen.

To sign the RENOVARÉ Covenant, log on to www.renovare.org (click on "Journey", click on "Covenant Form") and print, fill out, date, sign, and mail or fax the Covenant Form to RENOVARÉ, 8 Inverness Drive East, Suite 102, Englewood, CO 80112-5624 USA, Fax: 303-792-0146, or call 303-792-0152 and request a Covenant Card and Introductory Packet.