

Perspective

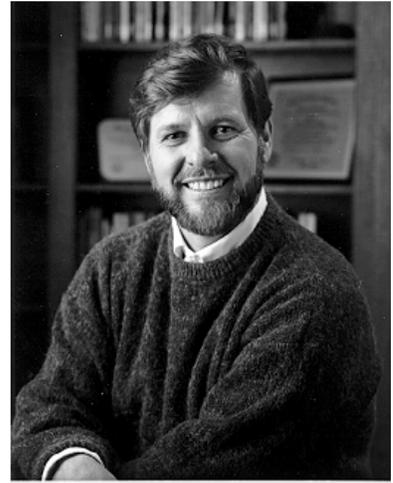
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Growing Edges

Holy Living and Holy Dying

May I tell you of the death of my Mother, Marie Temperance Foster. I was a teenager and she at mid-life, or so we thought. Her death, however, was far from sudden or dramatic. At first no one knew what was wrong-- Mom just had difficulty walking. In time her condition was diagnosed as Multiple Sclerosis, though no one seemed really certain. She grew slowly worse. I sometimes discovered her up at 5:00 a.m. trying to vacuum the floor. She would struggle to clean a small patch of carpet and then slump into the sofa exhausted. After a bit she was up and working on another patch.

As her condition worsened, my Father and we three brothers took over the duties of daily life. She was bedfast by now and we set up a hospital bed in the living room. I had become a Christian by this time and one of my earliest prayers was for her healing. It was not to be.



Untheatrical Regularity of the Uneventful

Soon I was off to college a thousand miles away. Mom was now in the hospital. Three times in that first year I rushed home because we thought the end was near. But each time she would rally a bit and the dark tragedy of death would be replaced by the untheatrical regularity of the uneventful.

As it turned out, I was home on summer break when Mom passed away. Did she know somehow? I was the last one to visit her. For months all speech and physical response was mute, but on that last visit she squeezed my hand. I'm glad for that.

But I wasn't with her when she slipped into eternity. It was 2:00 a.m. and she was completely alone . . . except possibly for the angels of God. She simply stopped breathing. That's what the medical staff said. Actually her leaving was so quiet, so uneventful, that they didn't discover it until later.

The Sanctity of the Ordinary

Perhaps that is as it should be. So much about my Mother was uneventful and ordinary. There was no spectacular drama, no newspaper headlines, no high adventure. She lived an ordinary life and died an ordinary death.

But she did both well. She loved my Father well and she loved us kids well. She lived through the gray terrain of the ordinary with grace and gentleness. She accepted her slowly deteriorating condition with a noble faith. She received death as she had life and disability, with patience and courage. My mother understood the sanctity of the ordinary.

Few of us will be famous or major players in momentous events, but, like my Mother, we can all do the tasks of daily life with grace. It was Teilhard de Chardin who said, "the value and interest of life is not so much to do conspicuous things . . . as to do ordinary things with the perception of their enormous value."

Peace and joy,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Richard J. Foster". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and "J".

Richard J. Foster

Going Deeper

It is hot off the press! I am speaking of the RENOVARÉ Spiritual Formation Group Workbook. I am very pleased with the results--I believe you will be too.

User Friendly

We are trying to make our mutual accountability group experience as **user friendly** as possible. As I and the others on our team have gone around the country speaking about renewal, many RENOVARÉ Spiritual Formation Groups have sprung up. Our goal has been, like Sampson, to "light the tails of the foxes" and let them go. This has been happening everywhere. When I was in San Jose, Costa Rica, I discovered that several RSF Groups formed and had their first meeting before I even left town.

We have been giving these groups material as fast as we can. And they report wonderful experiences. But many of them are not sure how to proceed. They are using the "Opening Words," the "Self-Examination Questions," etc. as best they can, but they need more help.

They need background on the five traditions. They need a clear, concise order for their meetings. They need weekly worksheets. They need specific ideas and exercises for practicing each of the five traditions. They need ideas on how to start a group. They need a periodic evaluation process for their group. It is these needs we are trying to answer in this Workbook. It makes the RENOVARÉ Spiritual Formation Group process **user friendly**.

Creative Content

The Workbook is a professionally designed notebook with six sections.

1. Seven Beginning Sessions - Step-by-step you are taken through the five traditions by studying the life of Christ. Anyone can lead these meetings because we give specific instructions for the leader and helps for each person in the group. Scripture passages, spiritual exercises, and more help lead you through a discovery of each tradition.

2. Order of Meeting - This section leads a group step-by-step through a RSF Group meeting.

It covers the Opening Words, The Covenant, The Common Disciplines, The Footprints of God, Looking Ahead, Ending and Beginning, and the Closing Words.

3. Weekly Worksheets - These are sheets you can use week-by-week as you meet in your groups. They guide you in mutual loving accountability.

4. Ideas and Exercises - This section provides dozens and dozens of specific ways to practice each of the five traditions.

5. Starting a Group - This section gives practical counsel on how to get a RSF Group started, including answers to the most frequently asked questions about RSF Groups.

6. Periodic Evaluation - This section provides the process for ongoing evaluation of the health of your group.

Opening Sessions Worth the Whole Notebook

The Seven Beginning Sessions are worth the entire Notebook. Author Jim Smith has gone through each of the five traditions--Contemplative, Holiness, Charismatic, Social Justice, Evangelical--in a study of the Gospels. For example in Session #5 he looks at "Christ and the Life of Justice and Compassion." He provides an easy to read commentary on the Gospel passage: Matthew 25:31-46. He does a reflection on "God and the Social Justice Tradition," and then explains the tradition in both the Bible and history. He concludes with useful exercises for practicing the Social Justice Tradition. Throughout he provides numerous opportunities for reflection and response.

I am very pleased with the work he has done and highly recommend you secure this Workbook whether you are in a RSF Group or only want to study it by yourself.

Cost

Each person in your group will want to own a personal copy of the Workbook. The cost is \$25.00 for a single copy and \$22.50 for more than one. It is well worth the price. I urge you to order your copy today. Checks must be made payable to RENOVARÉ. We're sorry but we are not able to handle billings or credit cards--payment must accompany your order.

Richard J. Foster

Growing Pains

To Move or not to Move; that is the Question--

We have been giving an immense amount of time, energy, and prayer in recent months about the future of RENOVARÉ. I have been on the campuses of three colleges and two seminaries--as has several of the team--to visit about relocating the entire RENOVARÉ team to these places. We have received some extremely favorable offers. We do not lack for choices. We have even received unsolicited offers of places we have not visited.

Through it all, however, we have continually been asking if God doesn't want RENOVARÉ to stand on its own so that we can give our full energies to spreading the message of renewal. Several business people who believe in what we are doing helped us hire a professional consultant to evaluate us and give us a recommendation for the future. This is a wise and godly individual who specializes in non-profits and works extensively with Christian organizations throughout the country.

He has scrutinized us from top to bottom and recommends that we "go for it!" We are continuing to study his recommendations prayerfully.

Up to this point my guidance has been to "see only what the Father sees, hear only what the Father hears, do only what the Father does," and so far that has meant for me to listen and wait. However the way is becoming more and more plain and I hope soon to have clearness. Our

board meets directly after the National Conference in Pasadena, California, and we will likely be making a decision at that time. Do pray with us and for us that we will know the mind of Christ. I will let you know as soon as we have something definite.

Richard J. Foster

RENOVARÉ National Conference on Personal Spiritual Renewal--When you get this issue of the Perspective we will be in the midst of our second National Conference (October 23-26) at Lake Avenue Congregational Church. We anticipate a total attendance of over one thousand precious people and thirty leaders. **PRAY FOR US!**

Congratulations to I. Douglas Estella and Doug VanNiel who entered the winning name for our book service. They each received a copy of *Sacrament of the Present Moment* for their suggestion: RENOVARÉ Resources. Douglas is from Prairie View, Kansas, and Doug is from Oakdale, Pennsylvania.

The last two sets of the Devotional Readings were mailed the last of July. **If you have not received them, please contact us at (316) 261-5870.** We want everyone to have the complete set they purchased.

In the middle of all of our busy, busy lives we pray that you will have time during the coming holiday season to seek a quiet place where you can reflect upon God's goodness and love. We also bless you for your continued support, encouragement, and prayers for RENOVARÉ.