

Perspective

Vol. 2, No. 2

Growing Edges

July 5, 1992

Dear Friend,

I write to you today out of considerable pain and sadness, not for myself or my immediate family, but because of the seeming unending tragedies that have befallen a dear family we are privileged to know. The latest occurred only yesterday—the sudden and tragic death of the mother, Paula Huerta. She was seated on a lawn chair watching a fourth of July fireworks display with her five-year-old son when a drunk driver careened off the road, broke through a fence, and struck Paula, killing her instantly. (Amazingly the child, Eric, sustained only minor injuries.)

Paula's death, however, is only the latest in a long and heartbreaking string of calamities that have befallen these good friends. I would recount them for you, but they are too many for the mind to comprehend and too sad for the heart to endure.

You, I know, were not privileged to know Paula . . . but you know persons like her—persons of noble character amid the most tragic of circumstances. I am immeasurably enriched by my acquaintance with Paula and her family. I honor her as a woman of great courage. Why she was taken so suddenly in this seemingly capricious way I do not know.

What can I say or do about this or any of the other sad events that have surrounded this dear family? What can anyone say or do?

What We Do Not Say

I will tell you what we do not say. We do not say that these horrible events are the will of God. We live in an evil world, a tragically fallen world, and sometimes we are crushed under the weight of it all. To be sure, God—whose power is over all—can take the horrible and the unspeakable and, in his time and in his way, work all these terrible things for good . . . but he never authorized the evil. In fact, he hurts with us over the awfulness of it all. His heart is an open wound of love.

May I tell you something else we do not say. We do not come forward with those God-awful platitudes about clouds with silver linings and painless victory in Jesus. That is an affront to the gospel of the suffering God, the God who stands with us in our agony and our perplexity and our confusion. It is an offense to the gospel of Jesus Christ who in his moment of greatest agony uttered the cry that you have cried and that you will cry; "My God, my God, Why? . . . Why? . . . Why?"

What We Do Not Do

Then, too, let me tell you what we do not do. We do not pretend that the evil and the tragedy did not happen. We do not act as if all is well when all is not well. In 1849 an eleven-year-old, Catherine



Elizabeth Havens, wrote in her diary, "I think spelling is funny. I spelt infancy `infantsy', and they said it was wrong, but I don't see why, because if my seven little cousins died when they were infants, they must have died in their `infantsy'; but infancy makes it seem as if they hadn't really died but we just made believe."

Shakespeare concludes his magnificent play King Lear with a haunting couplet that speaks, not just for the play, but for the life and experience of us all:

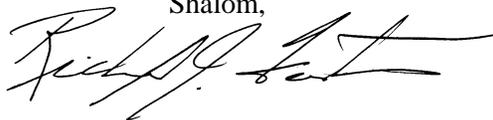
The weight of this sad time we must obey,
Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.

And whether we look at the tragedies of life through the macrocosm of human history or the microcosm of our own personal histories, we must see the sad time, we must listen to the sad time, we must obey the sad time: "Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say." Everyone tells us that we ought to say that God came to the rescue, that the tragedy was averted, and that everyone lived happily ever after. But we must be more honest than that. We must look the sad time straight in the face. We are able to do this because Jesus did it. When faced with the darkest of tragedies, he never flinched but stared it down. And as a result he stands with us in the darkness of our own tragedy.

What We Are to Say and Do

And standing with people is what we are to do. Often at such times words fail us, but that does not matter, for what people need is not our words but our presence. We are to be with them, hurt with them, cry with them, agonize with them. The most valuable thing we have to give people in times like these is our presence. And, thus knit together in our pain and our sorrow, we wait for that day when God will wipe away every tear and right every wrong.

Shalom,



Richard J. Foster

A CHALLENGE

We are so thankful for everyone who has donated equipment and monies in anticipation of our move to new offices around August 10. It has been a tremendous help. Even so we estimate it will cost \$10,000.00 over and above our day-to-day expenses to get us set up and going. (Most of the additional cost is for the purchase of basic telephone equipment and deposit for service, a central computer powerful enough to meet five-year projected needs, and miscellaneous items such as staplers, in/out trays, etc.)

To help soften the blow of the move on our budget, one couple has given us a \$5,000.00 gift. It would be wonderful if you could see a way clear to give \$10.00, \$25.00, even \$50.00 or more to help us out. We are hoping that by many people sharing the load, we can equal the original gift. Be as generous as you are able, giving first, of course, to your local church and to the poor. Make checks payable to RENOVARÉ and designate it "Moving Fund Challenge." Thank you, and bless you for your support and help.

Going Deeper

Our featured book this month—PRAYER: Finding the Heart's True Home—is special in several ways. First, it is written by our own Richard Foster. Second, it flows out of a lifetime of seeking God. Third, it is timely. And fourth, it brings together under one binding millennia of experiences and kinds of prayer.

Briefly, PRAYER: Finding the Heart's True Home is a primer on prayer. Richard helps us understand, experience, and practice prayer in its many forms—from the simple prayer of beginning again to unceasing prayer. He clarifies the prayer process, answers common misconceptions, and shows the way into prayers of contemplation, healing, blessing, forgiveness, rest, and more.

Coming to prayer is like coming home. He writes, "Nothing feels more right, more like what we are created to be and to do." Richard shows how prayer can move us inward into personal transformation, upward toward intimacy with God, and outward to ministry. He leads us to a deeper understanding and practice of prayer, bringing us closer to God, to ourselves, and to our community.

Because the book is so special, we want to make you a special offer. We have made arrangements with the publisher to drop ship PRAYER from the bindery straight to us. We will then mail it to you two weeks before it is available in bookstores. And each book will be personally autographed by Richard.

For this special handling we are asking that you give a suggested donation of \$25.00 to RENOVARÉ for each book, and we will receipt the difference between the regular retail price (\$17.00) and the gift. In addition, the first one hundred orders will receive free a professionally recorded and duplicated audio tape that is based on the book.

PRAYER is a significant work. Richard's publisher, HarperSanFrancisco, considers it a landmark in the field of books on prayer. Besides buying one for yourself, consider giving it as a gift to family and friends for birthdays, Christmas, baptisms, confirmations, anniversaries, etc. For the sake of your own spiritual life—and that of your most loved people—fill out the order blank now. Purchasing PRAYER through this special offer makes sense because we'll all win—you'll grow spiritually and we'll be able to meet our payroll!

Growing Pains

We are still in the process of making all the arrangements required whenever one moves. Our new offices will be done July 24, and we are hoping to get the telephone system (the most important component!) up and going by August 3. Of course, these target dates are subject to instant change if we run into any problems.

Publicity for the first RENOVARÉ Retreat (November 12-14, 1992) co-sponsored by The Navigators has gone out from their headquarters at Glen Eyrie in Colorado Springs (P. O. Box 6000, 80934). We are excited about the four retreats we are doing with them over the next sixteen months and are working on teaming up with another center near Kansas City to do a retreat there in the fall of 1993.

Responses from people wanting to help sponsor a Local Conference have been wonderful. As you can see (above), we have three confirmed dates and are working on several others. Again, if you or anyone you know would be interested in helping us in this way, please call Lynda Graybeal at 316-261-5872.

The official publication date for the Devotional Readings and Spiritual Formation Group Workbooks has been changed to February. Jim Smith will be doing the revision work this summer, and then HarperSanFrancisco will publish and market them, utilizing their expertise and retail outlets.

Richard and Lynda met with the Founder's Fellowship in Denver the last of May and had a wonderful time of fellowship, mental stimulation, and reflection. The people at Downing House (3680 S. Downing St., Englewood, CO 80110) were gracious, the food was good, and everyone who attended went home a little fatter in spirit, mind, and body!

A group of Denver area people also met with Richard and Lynda to discuss the possibility of a National Conference. They were enthusiastic, excited, and supportive. We talked about holding the conference sometime in October, 1993, and they are now contacting people about serving on a Steering Committee. Please pray for this effort.

And pray for each of us individually; we need all of the help we can get to discern God's way for RENOVARÉ.