

Perspective

Vol. 6, No. 4

Growing Edges

October, 1996

Written prayer, while never scorned, did not have a large place in the tradition in which I grew into faith. Reading a prayer felt a little like meeting an old friend on the street and quickly thumbing through a textbook to find an appropriate greeting. Intimacy was prized above precision.

Finding Merit

There is much of value in the Quaker concern about "book prayer", but over the years I have also come to appreciate the good in written prayers. For one thing, they help us articulate the yearnings of the heart that cry for expression. Sometimes it is hard for us to find the words to say what we feel. At other times we do not feel up to praying, and the words of a written prayer "prime the pump," as we say. Then, too, written prayers help us enter into "the communion of saints." We can offer up to the throne of grace the very words that have been prayed by followers of the Way for many generations.



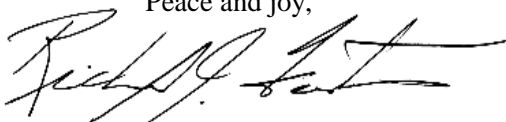
Also the written prayers of others help us resist the temptation of private religion. It is so very human of us to allow our petty concerns to be the whole burden of our prayer. Now, it is not wrong to pray over our own pressing needs, but that must never be the end of our prayer experience. By praying as our own the prayers of others, we are brought back to the life of the community of faith; we are instructed in sound doctrine; we are made to hear the whimper of the poor; we are forced to see the tumult of the nations.

Praying the Prayers of Others

Since we are focusing our attention in this issue upon written prayer, perhaps a word is in order about how we pray the prayers of others. The most obvious feature of written prayer is the words, and so I would encourage you to begin by looking at the words, reading the words (both silently and audibly), getting some sense of the texture and shape of the words. Some of the prayers are poetic in form, others are decidedly prosaic; some are stately, others simple; some draw us near in deepest intimacy, others cause us to fall back in godly fear. Attention to the words, then, is the beginning point of the prayer experience.

Written prayer, however, intends far more than linguistic significance; it seeks to usher us into the loving heart of God. As you pray the words, you are going beyond the words and into the reality which the words signify. Therefore, as you begin entering into whatever experience God in his infinite wisdom knows is best for you, I suggest you leave the words of the written prayer behind. They have served their purpose. Your task now is to be attentive, always attentive, to the heavenly Monitor. Listening. Resting. Interacting. Receiving. Ever in a posture of holy expectancy and holy obedience. As you do this, you will discover that Jesus Christ, your everliving Savior, Teacher, Lord, and Friend will guide you into what you need. Happy praying!

Peace and joy,



Richard J. Foster

P.S. The order of articles in this issue of the *RENOVARÉ Perspective* is a little different because of a special survey we are including on page six. If you are interested in this effort, please help us by returning it as soon as possible.

Going Places

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Staff</i>	<i>Contact & Phone</i>
10/4/96- 10/5/96	RENOVARÉ Regional Conference	Solana Beach Presbyterian Church 120 Stevens Avenue Solana Beach, California 92075	Richard Foster Marti Ensign George Skramstad	Cliff Briggs— 619-724-8709
10/5/96	RENOVARÉ Local Conference	First Presbyterian Church 1820 15th Street Boulder, Colorado 80302	Jim Smith	Valerie Hess— 303-442-2895
10/6/96	Preach at Worship Services	Solana Beach Presbyterian Church (see address above)	Richard Foster	Peggy Cantwell— 619-755-9735
10/8/96	30 Good Minutes Taping	Chicago, Illinois	Richard Foster	
11/8/96- 11/9/96	RENOVARÉ Regional Conference	Calvin College Chapel 3201 Burton S.E. Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506	Richard Foster Marti Ensign George Skramstad	Tom Schwanda— 616-940-0476
11/9/96	RENOVARÉ Local Conference	St. Andrew United Methodist Church 100 Amaryllis Borger, Texas 79007	Jim Smith	John Nichols— 806-273-9702
11/10/96	Preach at Worship Services	Christ Community Church 225 East Exchange Spring Lake, Michigan 49456	Richard Foster	Pete Theune— 616-842-1985
1/5/97- 1/18/97	Graduate Classes	Azusa Pacific University	Richard Foster	
1/24/97- 1/25/97	RENOVARÉ Regional Conference	Tallowood Baptist Church 555 Tallowood Drive Houston, Texas 77024	Richard Foster Jim Smith George Skramstad	Margaret Campbell— 713-781-1886
1/26/97	Preach at Worship Services	Tallowood Baptist Church (see address above)	Richard Foster	Donna Dee Floyd— 713-468-8241, Ex. 154
2/2/97	Speak at 25th Anniversary Celebration	Northridge Friends Church 2655 N. Bullinger Wichita, Kansas 67204-4612	Richard Foster	Ben Staley— 316-838-7724
2/14/97- 2/15/97	RENOVARÉ Regional Conference	Westside Church 2051 Shevlin Park Road Bend, Oregon 97701	Richard Foster Donn Thomas George Skramstad	Tully Ellsberg— 541-382-7504
2/16/97	Preach at Worship Services	Westside Church (see address above)	Richard Foster	Tully Ellsberg— 541-382-7504
3/1/97	RENOVARÉ Local Conference	Faith United Church of Christ 3030 - 175th Street Hammond, Indiana 46323	Jim Smith	Doyll Andrews— 219-845-2288
3/7/97- 3/8/97	RENOVARÉ Regional Conference	Pearce Memorial Church 4322 Buffalo Road North Chili, NY 14514	Richard Foster Emilie Griffin George Skramstad	Daryl Smith— 716-594-9488

Going Deeper

In this issue we feature four books of prayers and two audio cassettes which lead us into praying.

Eye-Gate

The Prayers of Teresa of Avila is a jewel of a book. It culls from her many writings the prayers that crop up

(Continued on page 5)

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Growing Together

Below are selected prayers from the books featured on page five. As you read these prayers, may you be enabled to pass beyond reading and into praying.

Prayers of Teresa of Avila

I Beseech Your Majesty

O my Lord, since it seems You have determined to save me, I beseech Your Majesty that it may be so. And since You have granted me as many favors as You have, don't You think it would be good (not for my gain but for Your honor) if the inn where You have so continually to dwell were not to get so dirty?

The First Steps In Prayer

(After her conversion, Teresa prayed in this way:)

This is the method of prayer I then used: since I could not reflect discursively with the intellect, I strove to picture Christ within me, and it did me greater good—in my opinion—to picture Him in those scenes where I saw Him more alone. It seemed to me that being alone and afflicted, as a person in need, He had to accept me. I had many simple thoughts like these.

The scene of His prayer in the garden, especially, was a comfort to me; I strove to be His companion there. If I could, I thought of the sweat and agony He had undergone in that place. I desired to wipe away the sweat He so painfully experienced, but I recall that I never dared to actually do it, since my sins appeared to me so serious. I remained with Him as long as my thoughts allowed me to, for there were many distractions that tormented me.

Soliloquy For Lost Time

It seems, my Lord, my soul finds rest in considering the joy it will have if through Your mercy the fruition of Yourself is granted it. But first it would want to serve You since it will be enjoying what You, in serving it, have gained for it. What shall I do, my Lord? What shall I do, my God? Oh, how late have my desires been enkindled and how early, Lord, were You seeking and calling that I might be totally taken up with You! Do You perhaps, Lord, abandon the wretched or withdraw from the poor beggar when he wants to come to You? Do Your grandeurs or Your magnificent works, Lord, perhaps have a limit? O my God and my Mercy, how You can show them now in Your servant! You are mighty, great God! Now it can be known whether my soul understands itself in being aware of the time it has lost and of how in a moment You, Lord, can win this time back again. It seems foolish to me, since they usually say lost time cannot be recovered. May You be blessed, my God!

Recover, my God, the lost time by giving me grace in the present and future so that I may appear before You with wedding garments; for if You want to, You can do so.

(*The Prayers of Teresa of Avila*. Ed. Thomas Alvarez. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1990.)

Prayers of John Baillie

Lord Of My Life

Lord of my life, whose law I fain would keep, whose fellowship I fain would enjoy, and to whose service I would fain be loyal, I kneel before Thee as Thou sendest me forth to the work of another day.

This day, O Lord—

give me courtesy:

give me meekness of bearing, with decision of character:

give me longsuffering:

give me charity:

give me chastity:

give me sincerity of speech:

give me diligence in my allotted task.

Amen.

When the Way Seems Dark

Eternal God,

When the way seems dark before me, give me grace to walk trustingly:

When much is obscure to me, let me be all the more faithful to the little that I can clearly see:

When the distant scene is clouded, let me rejoice that at least the next step is plain:

When what Thou art is most hidden from my eyes, let me still hold fast to what Thou dost command:

When insight falters, let obedience stand firm:
What I lack in faith let me repay in love.

And if still I cannot find Thee, O God, then let me search my heart and know whether it is not rather I who am blind than Thou who art obscure, and I who am fleeing from Thee rather than Thou from me; and let me confess these my sins before Thee and seek Thy pardon in Jesus Christ my Lord. Amen.

For All Sorts and Conditions of People

I would pray to-night, O God, for all those sorts and conditions of people to whom Jesus Christ was wont to give especial thought and care;

For those lacking food or drink or raiment:

For the sick and all who are wasted by disease:

For the blind:

For the maimed and lame:

For lepers:

For prisoners:

For those oppressed by any injustice:
For the lost sheep of our human society:
For fallen women:
For all lonely strangers within our gates:
For the worried and anxious:
For those who are living faithful lives in obscurity:
For those who are fighting bravely in unpopular causes:
For all who are labouring diligently in Thy vineyard.
Amen.

(*A Diary of Private Prayer*. New York: Collier/Macmillan, 1977.)

Prayers of Peter Marshall

For the Lonely

Lord Jesus, Thou hast walked earth's trails; Thou knowest the nostalgia of human life. Thou who hast been alone in the wilderness, bless now the members of the fraternity of loneliness.

To all who are bewildered, homesick, or ready to desert their post, give new courage. May they hear in the portals of their own souls the bugle call announcing the arrival of reinforcements.

May the friendship of Jesus of Nazareth be made known to them. May they find a welcome in this company of God's people. Wilt Thou guide and inspire them. Keep them from the mean and the low. Point them ever to the uplands of fellowship with thee.

Transform for them their homesickness into new endeavors. Enable them to translate the affection of the heart into a new zest for living.

Direct our hearts that we may all be kindly affectioned one to another, abounding in love and sympathy, keeping back the unkind word, checking the hasty judgment, in all things being gentle and full of compassion in a world of hate. So may we walk softly before Thee and deal gently with one another, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Senate Prayer Monday, April 7, 1947

We know, our Father, that there is a time to speak and a time to keep silence. Help us to tell the one from the other. When we should speak, give us the courage of our convictions. When we should keep silence, restrain us from speaking, lest, in our desire to appear wise, we give ourselves away.

Teach us the sacraments of silence that we may use them to know ourselves and, above us, to know Thee. Then shall we be wise. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For Humility on the Mountaintop of Life

Lord, forgive me that when life's circumstances lift me to the crest of the wave, I tend to forget Thee. Yet, like an

errant child, I have blamed Thee with my every failure, even as I credit myself with every success.

When my fears evaporate like the morning mist, then vainly I imagine that I am sufficient unto myself, that material resources and human resources are enough.

I need Thee when the sun shines, lest I forget the storm and the dark. I need Thee when I am popular, when my friends and those who work beside me approve and compliment me. I need Thee more then, lest my head begin to swell.

O God, forgive me for my stupidity, my blindness in success, my lack of trust in Thee. Be Thou now my Saviour in success. Save me from conceit. Save me from pettiness. Save me from myself! And take this success, I pray, and use it for Thy glory. In Thy strength, I pray.
Amen.

(*The Prayers of Peter Marshall*. Comp. Catherine Marshall. Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen/Baker, 1982.)

Prayers of Richard J. Foster

A Prayer at Coffee Time

Somehow, Jesus, I like praying with a cup of coffee in my hands. I guess the warmth of the cup settles me and speaks of the warmth of your love. I hold the cup against my cheek and listen, hushed and still.

I blow on the coffee and drink. O Spirit of God, blow across my little life and let me drink in your great Life.
Amen.

A Simple Prayer

I am, O God, a jumbled mass of motives.
One moment I am adoring you, and the next I am shaking my fist at you.
I vacillate between mounting hope, and deepening despair. I am full of faith, and full of doubt.
I want the best for others, and am jealous when they get it. Even so, God, I will not run from your presence. Nor will I pretend to be what I am not. Thank you for accepting me with all my contradictions.
Amen.

Be the Gardener of My Soul

Spirit of the living God, be the Gardener of my soul. For so long I have been waiting, silent and still—experiencing a winter of the soul. But now, in the strong name of Jesus Christ, I dare to ask:

Clear away the dead growth of the past,
Break up the hard clods of custom and routine,
Stir in the rich compost of vision and challenge,
Bury deep in my soul the implanted Word,
Cultivate and water and tend my heart,
Until new life buds and opens and flowers.

Amen.

(*Prayers From the Heart*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1994.)

unexpectedly in the midst of her narrative accounts, while she is still maintaining dialogue with the reader. This is a characteristic trait of her writing. She is always addressing two different readers—us, the human reader, and the Other reader, her Lord and "her Majesty". She shifts from the one to the Other with ease, speaking to the Second in the presence of the first, which becomes a most effective way of teaching how to develop a relationship with a great Friend. This volume gives the background to each of her prayers and so becomes a helpful introduction to the whole of her writing.

John Baillie's *A Diary of Private Prayer* is one of the few modern books with enduring value. Prayers for each day

of the month, morning and evening, have facing blank pages for personal petitions and intercessions. One of its great values is how carefully the words are chosen to reflect the beauty of heart devotion .

Catherine Marshall has done us a great service by compiling *The Prayers of Peter Marshall*, thereby preserving some of the great man's most important words. I am especially glad that a good number of his Senate Prayers are here, for, in this election year we desperately need his calm wisdom, steady civility, and genuine devotion.

My book *Prayers from the Heart* in the British edition intersperses my own contributions with prayers from Christians throughout the ages.

Ear-Gate

I like *Teach Us to Pray* and *Teach Me to Pray*, two audio cassettes by British author—now missionary in Cyprus—Joyce Huggett. I like them because they teach me to pray in the only way that it is really possible to teach prayer; namely, by leading me into the actual experience of prayer. The simple instructions provide a helpful prelude to prayer, and the lovely flute music prepares the spirit for prayer. But the heart of these tapes is prayer itself. By the artful use of Bible passages,

Ms. Huggett guides the listener almost unawares into praying the Scripture which in turn leads into the prayer of the heart.

As I said, I like these tapes. I like Joyce Huggett's quick turn of a phrase; "Drop anchor into God." I like her gentle, British way of calling me to the Quiet. I like her ease and pace which is free from the need to cram "wonderful insights" into every second of tape time. I think you will like them too.

Richard J. Foster



Order Form

Name

Street Address

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Quantity	Item	Suggested Donation	Total
1 Set	<i>Prayers of Teresa of Avila, A Diary of Private Prayer, The Prayers of Peter Marshall, and Prayers From the Heart</i>	\$39.00	
1 Set	<i>Teach Us to Pray and Teach Me to Pray</i>	\$15.00	
TOTAL			

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Growing Pains

For many years we have received telephone calls and letters from Christian leaders who inquired if we knew of places inside or outside academia that offered classes in spiritual formation. And for several years we have dreamed about starting an institute for spiritual formation that could offer greater flexibility than academic institutions. But the time never seemed right. We were busy establishing the office, developing books, planning conferences, and more.

We now feel the time has come to establish The RENOVARÉ Center for Spiritual Formation. Before we do, however, we want to explore whether there is a big enough demand for the classes we might offer to make this first project worthwhile.

- Spiritual Formation: Understanding How God Transforms Lives
- The Life of Prayer and Virtue: Listening, Talking, and Cooperating With God
- Discernment and Guidance: Receiving and Giving Spiritual Direction
- The Incarnational Life: Experiencing and Ministering God's Presence in the World

Can you help us answer this question and others by filling in this short questionnaire and returning it to us? Thank you in advance for your help.

How long do you think each class should last?

- ☐ Five days ☐ Ten days

Could you travel to any place in the U.S. or Canada?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

How many times a year could you attend a class?

- ☐ Once ☐ Three times
☐ Twice ☐ Four times

Would you need CEU certification?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

What months would work best for your schedule?

Would you like this to be part of your graduate program?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

Where would you prefer classes be held?

- ☐ Hotel ☐ Retreat center
☐ University, college, or seminary campus

Who would you like to suggest as instructors? _____

Comments: _____

Name _____ Phone _____

Street Address _____ Apt. # _____

City _____ State/Prov. _____ Country/Zip _____

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