

## Chapter 1 : The Gift of Counsel – The Catholic Spiritual Life

*Counsels on the Spiritual Life* has 23 ratings and 3 reviews. One of 60 low-priced classic texts published to celebrate Penguin's 60th anniversary. All th.

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**SUMMARY** American society is driven by competitive economic forces that cheapen and exploit the personal dimensions of human relations and community life. Our major academic and religious institutions must support disciplines of inquiry into the nature and practice of care-giving, and into the human needs and problems that prompt this care. In John Patton coined the phrase "paradigm shift" to describe a dramatic turn in the practice of pastoral care. Patton pointed out that pastoral care was focusing more and more on social and cultural concerns, moving from a "clinical pastoral paradigm" to one that Patton named "communal-contextual. Pastoral care concentrated primarily and often exclusively on the gospel message. It disregarded the concrete particularities and individuality of persons and contexts and tended, as Patton said, to "universalize its understanding of human problems and express them in exclusively religious terms. Mainline seminaries employed clinically trained professors of the therapy, and theological students flocked to their courses. A new ministerial profession -- professional counseling -- appeared, and psychotherapeutic modes of thought pervaded theological reflection and congregational life. Narrative theory and theology also made an impact when Charles Gerkin and Donald Capps urged pastoral counselors to have their "clients" an unfortunate term create and articulate a narrative of their experiences -- to "tell their stories. While it did not abandon psychology or systems theory, the narrative approach emphasized meaning-making as fundamental to human life and to the pastoral role. In this context, pastoral caretakers could reintroduce theological concerns, and identify social and cultural differences. The most comprehensive change, however, has come in the past decade with the communal-contextual paradigm. Closely related is a strong emphasis on fostering community that is inclusive, just and caring. Today we aim to "hear all voices. As valuable as the latest developments have been, it would be a mistake to sweep away what was gained in the past, and what was generally good in the earlier paradigms, including the classic one -- in which theology was central. Telling and hearing stories, for example, can lapse into uncritical exhibitionism or romanticism if one does not apply the clinical paradigm, with its critical edge of analytic psychologies and empirical assessments. The "communal-contextual" approach requires reflection too. This term has acquired strong interpersonal connotations that tend to idealize and romanticize the often unglamorous task of living together in family, church or civil society. Missing in much contemporary discussion of pastoral care is the structural element that makes community dependable and trustworthy overtime. By this logic, pastoral care ought to be concerned about fostering personal commitment to religious institutions and organizations, and about shaping personal lifestyle in relation to traditions of moral and spiritual practice. But it is not clear whether the teachers of pastoral care acknowledge this fact or its implications for pastoral care and counseling, even though the "communal-contextual paradigm" is a priority, and creating community is often invoked as a fundamental aim of ministry. Clinical pastoral education CPE remains a central component of training in pastoral care. It complements classroom instruction with pastoral experience in situations of intense need and suffering. CPE courses continue to increase, apparently driven by an influx of laity -- a trend which may suggest a softening, broadening and secularizing of the "pastoral" part of CPE. Minority participation, mainly from African-American and Pacific Rim students, has also increased; CPE is based, however, on the secular-medical model of professionalism. It does not fit easily with the diverse shaping pastoral identity and formation? Even those who support an emphasis on a medical context can agree that we need to develop more pastoral care supervision in congregational settings. Nevertheless, CPE programs have been revised in ways that parallel seminary teaching -- a greater emphasis on context, narrative and themes of cultural diversity and gender. I am told that these concerns often overshadow the attention formerly given to psychological analysis. The increasing number of women they account for half of all CPE units taken has no doubt contributed to

many of the changes. Once known as a confrontational, crisis-inducing mode of learning susceptible to abuses of power, clinical supervision today has a different spirit -- more collegial, less authority-centered and more socially, culturally and theologically oriented. In , a dispute over the direction of these changes led to the formation of an alternative clinical pastoral organization, the College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy. Beneath all these differences and developments lie fundamental religious questions. What is pastoral caregiving? What makes it religious? How should it relate to the dominant models of care in our culture? How should it relate to worshiping communities? Fundamental social and political issues face CPE as well. Who is to be included and considered authoritative in the teaching and learning of the pastoral art? Whose pastoral care practices and traditions should be considered authoritative for pastoral education and why? Seward Hiltner, one of the patriarchs of the pastoral care movement, worried years ago that pastoral caregiving was losing its religious component. Hiltner opposed the move. He feared that creating a separate profession would split the ministry, create distance between pastoral counseling and the church, and secularize the field. Although it includes theological and spiritual perspectives in its self-understanding, it is only loosely related to the churches. On one hand, there is no question that specialized pastoral counseling is valuable to people who are trying to sort out their lives and gives them a measure of depth, dignity and integrity. Pastoral counseling is an enormous asset to the churches and deserves more support from them, including financial support. In addition, pastoral counseling reaches persons who might otherwise not venture near a church or pastor. Such "seekers" can begin to take the measure of their lives without fear of being subjected to proselytizing or moralistic judgment. They can work in an intimate, trusting relationship with a psychological healer who by dint of long, challenging training and commitment is able to "enter their pain" and help them toward constructive solutions. Given recent developments in secular psychotherapy and psychiatry, the influence of managed care, and the psychotropic drug revolution, the need for this social service and witness has never been greater. But who will pay for it? Pastoral counseling is often long-term therapy, but even in the short term it is labor-intensive and costly. To qualify for insurance reimbursement, pastoral counselors need to be licensed and certified through a professional organization such as the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists AAMFT. In most states, meeting state qualifications involves accountability to a non-pastoral training and credentialing process. In other words, to earn a living as a pastoral counselor it is necessary to become a certified secular psychotherapist. There is little economic incentive for becoming a pastoral counselor. There has also been a precipitous decline in the number of AAPC training centers, and an increase in the number of therapists who meet AAPC theological standards but have not been trained in its centers. A generation of pastoral counselors has been theologically educated but not clinically formed in theologically based, pastorally defined programs. Economic pressures, moreover, continue to make it difficult for pastoral counselors to make their services available to low-income persons hence the need for church- or community-based subsidies. It is hard to predict how this will shake out. Perhaps pastoral counseling will reaffirm its pastoral identity through a closer institutional tie to the churches and community organizations, and will develop forms of economic support that are relatively independent of managed care and insurance reimbursement. Studies and experience repeatedly show that there is a large pool of people who specifically seek a theologically based form of psychological help and who are willing to pay for it without insurance -- if they can. If they cannot, support from churches and community sources is sometimes available. Perhaps developing such support should be a priority of churches as well as pastoral counseling centers, for without these changes, pastoral counseling could disappear as a profession, and its members could become absorbed into secular professions. This can be averted only by clarifying and reinforcing pastoral identity, connecting more closely with sponsoring churches and developing new funding sources and marketing strategies. A closely related issue is the proper role of religion in the practice of pastoral counseling. Counselors typically keep a low profile here, avoiding heavy-handed proselytizing and moralizing in order to encourage a wide-ranging, deeply personal and honest soul-searching. Many pastoral counselors do, on occasion and when it seems appropriate, discuss matters of faith and ethics. But the therapeutic or "health" model has so defined the aims and methods of the profession that little room is left for questions of faith and ethics in their own right, questions that cannot be completely subordinated to the psychological healing process and may be in

tension with it at points. We need "theologically informed psychotherapy. The theoretical and practical problems in all of this are complex and vexing, but basic to the struggles of the field. Clinically oriented pastoral theology took shape as a discipline in with the organization of the Society for Pastoral Theology. The society has defined the field and created a viable, socially inclusive institutional context for supporting pastoral theology as a discipline. At the same time, pastoral theology struggles to achieve recognition in the academy, especially in the university-related divinity schools that pride themselves on achieving excellence in traditional forms of research and scholarship. Sad tales are told of faculty arguments over its legitimacy, and of promotion and tenure reviews that come to grief over the issue. Some believe that the field of pastoral care is in decline and will be replaced by courses and faculty appointments in "spirituality" and other fields. Is the larger academic field of theology and related traditional disciplines prepared to include, learn from and support the kind of contextualized theological reflection that pastoral theology represents? The questions have public importance. American society is driven by competitive economic forces that cheapen and exploit the personal dimensions of human relations and community life. Pastoral caregiving is an important and essential variation on this theme, with its concern for plumbing the depths of meaning involved in caring, in the humanity thus disclosed, and in the divinity. As a hybrid discipline of academy, church and clinic, pastoral theology -- and its counterparts of pastoral care and counseling -- are of profound importance, however far we are from a full recognition -- or even a vision -- of its character.

### Chapter 2 : 10 Counsels on Spiritual Formation, Part Two - Richard J. Foster - Renovare

*Note: Citations are based on reference standards. However, formatting rules can vary widely between applications and fields of interest or study. The specific requirements or preferences of your reviewing publisher, classroom teacher, institution or organization should be applied.*

Spiritual counseling is not psychological counseling, but rather reflective listening and faith-filled prayer, that helps remind an individual that we are immersed in Spirit and God is always present in every situation, as a constant resource and a mirror to guide us in what needs to be healed or learned. Spiritual Counseling helps an individual relate spiritual principles and law to stories and situations that they find themselves in. Through this internal processing blocks are removed from our awareness, revealing a deeper understanding and connection in our life. You can search the world for your answers, but until you truly understand yourself and the way you silently, and unknowingly, engage the laws of the universe, the happiness, self-love, inner wisdom, peace and enlightenment you seek will most likely evade you. This will help you clarify in your own mind the issues before you. Instead, you will be encouraged to reach within yourself to your own inner guide to find your own best solution. As with other kinds of counseling, spiritual counseling affords you the opportunity to talk in confidence with someone who will hear you fully without exercising any form of personal judgment. Simply by being allowed to tell your story in your own words you will begin to feel great relief and comfort. This Infinite potential fills your being is a creative power that can solve any problem you face. As you are reminded of your divine inner potential and connection, you will be guided on how to use your own internal resources to find solutions. You will see that the key to every problem is an awareness of the presence of God in your life. Your spiritual counselor will support you to know this truth. One to three sessions should be sufficient to awaken you to your own internal guidance system. If the spiritual counselor, or you, feel that you would also benefit from another kind of counseling, you will be offered the name and phone number of a local therapist, who is trained to help you explore your problem in a psychological way. As such, they are bound by a code of ethics, which requires total and absolute confidentiality. The only exception to the confidence requirement occurs when you tell the spiritual counselor something that violates the laws of the State of Oklahoma and requires them to report to law enforcement officials – this includes the abuse of a child. What does it cost? Spiritual counseling and our entire ministry is supported entirely by the responsible giving of those who receive their spiritual inspiration and nourishment from this center. You may leave an appropriate gift with your counselor at the end of your visit. Checks should be made payable to Unity Spiritual Life Center and should indicate for spiritual counseling in the lower left hand corner. For the measure you will give will be the measure you get back. Patrick has received extensive training in spiritual counseling. Both had many real life learning situations that pushed them to their limits before finding their way to Unity in From – Rev. Patrick attended extensive trainings with Dr. Both have continued to learn and teach how God works and moves in daily life. Patrick received a BS in Psychology and Business Management with a focus in Human Resources when he graduated from James Madison University in Virginia in , and was employed for 21 years in supervisory roles where he was provided lots of opportunity to use his college training.

### Chapter 3 : Counsels and Instructions of a Spiritual Father to Nuns / [blog.quintoapp.com](http://blog.quintoapp.com)

*The spiritual counsels of Mark, a fifth century monk in Asia Minor, are equally rich in theological insight and historical interest. His writings were deeply valued by Byzantine ascetics, were circulated during the Reformation, and were read by Lutheran divines and Roman theologians.*

Here we turn the corner from the contemplative life to the active life. At the heights of life in the Spirit, and at the origin of everything else, is contemplation. Wisdom is a simple gaze on God, and seeing everything in relation to him. Notice that there are no visions here. Normal life is not left behind. Rather, the Holy Spirit extends our normal abilities, takes us deeper – though much deeper – into the natural process of reading or listening to the liturgy and seeing how it all fits together. The gift of Counsel is the beginning of that process. Here, too, human nature is not left behind, but elevated. In fact, Counsel might be the nicest place of all for thinking about what it means to say that grace perfects, and does not destroy or replace, nature. Thomas points out the significance of Isaiah using the word Counsel. And perhaps sometimes that may happen. But it is not the ordinary working of the Holy Spirit, and indeed it is not the deepest penetration of the Spirit into our humanity. A command leaves your own mind out of the discussion. When we take counsel, it is we who are in charge. We go to a friend, and we ask our friend to help us think things through. This is how the gift of Counsel works. It does not replace our human prudence, does not keep us from thinking things through, or knowing why we make a choice. Like the contemplative gifts we considered above, Counsel merely extends our own ability to think. It means we notice the key points for our decision making, pick out the significant details. In our prayer, we should have the freedom and love to play, to read Scripture, enter into the liturgy, and know God. In our active life, we should deal with our own lives. Only we can ultimately make the decision what makes sense in our life – though sometimes a superior may tell us what is required of us for our role within a certain community. We need friends, or we will often make poor decisions. But what we ask for is counsel: He enlightens us, so that we ourselves can think clearly. And, more deeply, so that we ourselves can connect our spiritual aspirations with all the details of our life. The work of the Holy Spirit in us is deeply personal, deeply human. [Subscribe](#) Enter your email address to subscribe to The Catholic Spiritual Life and receive notifications of new posts by email.

**Chapter 4 : Spiritual Counseling | Spiritual Counselor | Counselor of the Heart**

*Counsels on the Spiritual Life, Volumes One and Two: Mark the Monk. Popular Patristics Series Volume The spiritual counsels of Mark, a fifth century monk in Asia Minor, are equally rich in theological insight and historical interest.*

The book was written at the request of the nuns, who asked him for ongoing guidance in the monastic life. Joseph slightly changed the texts he cited in order to apply them to nuns, but these instructions are aimed at all spiritual strugglers, regardless of gender. First of all, to pray greatly and fervently to God and to ask His help in this matter. To ask God with all your soul that He would show you the monastery, the place of your ascetic struggle, and the mother abbess—your instructress and guide in the monastic life. To ask and learn, to gather the necessary information from other people. Having found what you are seeking, to commit yourself in perfect obedience to your superior, for this virtue—sincere obedience—is the main, most necessary and good fruit-bearing virtue in the life of a nun. In this way, by making requests in prayer, and not by self-willed wandering in trackless lands, a nun may achieve success in the interior life and escape the deceptions, attacks and snares everywhere laid by the invisible enemies of our salvation. Archbishop Juvenaly Monastic Life The Fundamental Rule of Monastic Life The entire ranks of Godly-wise fathers and holy ascetics assures us by their counsels that whosoever desires to undoubtedly save herself in monasticism and to pass through the field of this struggle with profit for her soul, it is necessary, especially at the beginning, to have obedience; that is, to submit her will to the superior, who is experienced in the spiritual life—to do everything and to strive to think in agreement with her counsels and instructions, and also with the instructions of her spiritual father, but at the same time to diligently study the Holy Scriptures and works of the holy ascetical fathers. This is the beginning of a correct monastic life. But this whole life, encompassing at times many years and even decades, should consist of an uninterrupted succession of spiritual labors—external ones performed by the body, and internal ones, by the powers of the soul. It is not sufficient for a nun to have only physical prayers, that is, prostrations, long psalmody and so on in this vein; interior work is also necessary—attention to oneself, guarding of the heart. Archbishop Juvenaly Physical Labors of a Nun: Fasting Vigil and Physical Prayer Fasting 1. Fasting and temperance are absolutely necessary for a struggler. Fasting is not a virtue in and of itself, but rather only an instrument of virtue, that is a means and aid toward the acquisition of the virtues of purity and chastity. A fast should be kept in mind and soul; the second, as guarding yourself from all that is displeasing to God, is necessary for everyone at all times, while physical fasting should be conducted with great care and at the advice of those more experienced. A young, sturdy and strong woman should wear herself out with appropriate fasting, according to the advice of her eldress or spiritual father, for otherwise it is difficult and even impossible to preserve physical purity. An older person who is sickly and altogether weak in body should, avoiding any excess, moderately strengthen her powers, and exchange the severity in fasting that is inaccessible to her due to bodily weakness for abstinence from all evil deeds, words and thoughts. The true podvig of a nun actually consists in this. In our sad times, zeal for labors of fasting is apparently waning, and an inclination towards slackness is noticeable in the majority; but perhaps such zealots of labor and podvig may be found who might ask: But we think to determine abstinence not only as abstinence from foods, but first of all as abstinence from the roaming of the eyes. For what advantage is there if while abstaining from food, you devour with your eyes the lust of fornication, or eagerly listen with your ears to vain and devilish talk? There is no profit in abstaining from food without abstaining also from boasting, high-mindedness, vainglory and other passions. John Climacus writes of vigilance: Vigilance is the quenching of fleshly fires, the deliverance from dreams, the filling of the eyes with tears, the softening of the heart, the preservation from thoughts, the best furnace for burning the food consumed, the subjection of evil spirits, the binding of the tongue, and the expulsion of daydreaming. Excessive sleep is the cause of forgetfulness; while vigilance purifies the memory. Vigilance, or physically keeping vigil, according to the words of the holy fathers, is essential to the nun. It cleanses the mind, refreshes and strengthens the memory and comprises the inevitable conditions for preserving chastity and conquering the passion of sloth. They also allow a short rest in the afternoon of about one hour. It is necessary for a woman in a monastery who is laboring for the salvation of

her soul to pray at night or attend the nightly praise of God—that is, Matins, for this is the best time for prayer. The rest and sleep needed by the body should be designated so that she receives before and after Matins about six hours per day, and if she be in strength, a little less. Physical Prayer Man is composed of soul and body, and therefore when he prays he should pray not only with his spirit, but with his body. Bodily prayer, or the bodily labor of prayer, should express itself in patient standing during church services and during prayers in the cell with prostrations. Bodily prayer is inseparable from spiritual prayer, and therefore its order is determined by the rules described below for spiritual prayer in various instances.

### Chapter 5 : Spiritual Counsels : The Spiritual Life and How to Be Attuned to It

*Spiritual Counsels. The Spiritual Life and How to Be Attuned to It. St. Theophan the Recluse. Product details. If There Is Life I Want to Live.*

These counselors ensure proper growth and relational development within religious communities, and provide traditional counseling services such as addiction recovery, marriage and family therapy, and school counseling. While spiritual counseling can take many forms, as a discipline it is rooted in the belief that the spirit is connected to the mind, body, and emotions. Spiritual counselors work in schools, churches, hospitals, and clinics to help people from all walks of life meet their spiritual, emotional, and relational goals. Many counselors enjoy their work because they find it rewarding to walk with people on their journey to emotional and spiritual wholeness. Spiritual therapists blend truths from the great religious traditions into their secular therapy, resulting in a robust service to their clients. For some positions, spiritual counselors need to hold a doctorate. While most people do not enter spiritual counseling to earn a lucrative salary, it is a fast-growing and financially rewarding field. Advanced education and additional licensure can result in higher salaries and more job opportunities.

**Types of Spiritual Counseling**

**Christian Counseling:** Used to describe many different counseling practices, Christian counseling can be secular psychotherapy with a theological orientation, or it can be nouthetic counseling, which relies entirely on the Bible for all mental health answers. Christian counselors may become licensed therapists, pastors, priests, spiritual directors, or laypeople with a deep knowledge of and experience with the relationship between the emotions and the spirit. Christian counselors work in hospitals, churches, or offices. Islamic counselors help Muslims who are planning to marry, struggling in a relationship, divorcing, or in need of arbitration in business. They also serve clients who need mental health or behavioral services. Much of the practice of Jewish counseling is contemporary secular psychotherapy modified for the cultural and religious expectations of Jewish clients and therapists. Some Jewish counselors rely on the history of the Jewish people, including the holocaust, to help clients make sense of traumatic experiences. Most Jewish counseling takes place in offices, hospitals, and synagogues. Buddhist therapy tries to reduce or eliminate suffering through the application of the Eastern religious teachings of Buddhism. Typically, this form of counseling rests on three pillars of practice and thought: Most Buddhist therapy is not linked to Western psychotherapy, although some contemporary counselors may appropriate elements of Buddhism in their clinical work. Pastoral counseling interweaves spiritual care with psychological therapy to help clients navigate life experiences. The discipline of pastoral counseling leans heavily on the tradition of ministers counseling their parishioners, but it incorporates new understandings of behavioral science as well. Clients often choose pastoral counseling to experience therapy that reflects their own religious convictions. Pastoral counseling typically happens in offices or places of worship. Becoming a Spiritual Counselor

**Degree Requirements**

As a vocation, spiritual counseling can take many professional paths. Some spiritual counselors are people of faith who choose to work as professional counselors in secular settings such as K schools, hospitals, mental health clinics, and social service agencies. Others go on to become ordained clergy that serve on the staff at a house of worship. Still others focus their training and career on spiritual direction and serve clients out of their home or a separate office. Spiritual counselor degrees may emphasize counseling, psychology, religious studies, or pastoral ministry. For instance, students may attend a religious university for a degree in counseling psychology, or they may choose a ministry degree at a seminary and emphasize pastoral counseling. In fact, states require state-licensed counselors to hold significant numbers of graduate credits -- usually 60 -- to obtain their license to practice. Most denominations also require their ordained clergy to hold a master of divinity or other graduate degree in religion. Many counselors go on to earn doctorates in psychology, counseling, or ministry because these degrees open up new kinds of clinical work and provide chances to teach at the college or university levels. Online learners can complete many spiritual counselor degrees entirely online, but some programs require short on-campus sessions. Clinical Experience Requirements

Graduate students pursuing degrees in counseling typically complete a required internship as part of their programs. Spiritual counselors not planning to become licensed or certified may not

have to fulfill this requirement. Those who seek state licensure, however, need to show how many hours of practical counseling work they have completed. Licensure requirements -- and therefore clinical experience demands -- vary by state and license type. For first-tier licenses such as the licensed professional counselor and licensed mental health counselor, most states require 2,000 hours, with 3,000 hours as the most common. For second-tier licenses like the licensed mental health counselor and licensed professional clinical counselor, states required 3,000 hours, with 4,000 being the most common. Internships are a time for students to observe seasoned counselors, practice therapeutic work themselves, and network with other professionals in their field. In certain circumstances, students may perform their internship hours at their house of worship. Regardless of location, most counseling interns only begin the clinical part of their work in the second year of their degree programs.

**Licensure and Certification Requirements** Depending on their specific profession or position, spiritual counselors may need to become licensed. While spiritual directors or pastoral counselors are not required to have a license to practice, licensing is always beneficial. By holding a license, counselors may bill insurance companies, assure their clients of their professional standing, and avoid innocently engaging in harmful practices. Licensing requirements vary by license and by state. A spiritual counselor may choose to become a licensed professional counselor, licensed mental health therapist, licensed social worker, or another professional designation. Each state establishes and directs its own requirements for licensing. Typically, however, counselors can take advantage of reciprocity agreements between states that allow them to transfer their licenses with minimal hassle. Licensure is different from certification. A state or federal government agency grants a license to practice counseling or social work according to their legally established requirements. In licensed professions, any practitioner must hold a qualifying license. Certificates, on the other hand, are usually private and voluntary. A certificate is not required to practice counseling; a license, however, is. There is no single, nationally recognized spiritual counselor certification, but many spiritual counselors pursue certification as spiritual directors or as national certified counselors to provide better service to their clients. Others specialize with a certificate in art therapy, play therapy, pastoral counseling, biblical counseling, or another subgenre of counseling. However, there are various advantages to holding a doctoral degree, including a significantly higher salary, opportunities to teach, and leadership positions over a team of counselors.

### Chapter 6 : Counsels on the Spiritual Life | Orthodox Books in Australia

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Here we turn the corner from the contemplative life to the active life. At the heights of life in the Spirit, and at the origin of everything else, is contemplation. Wisdom is a simple gaze on God, and seeing everything in relation to him. Notice that there are no visions here. Normal life is not left behind. Rather, the Holy Spirit extends our normal abilities, takes us deeper – though much deeper – into the natural process of reading or listening to the liturgy and seeing how it all fits together. The gift of Counsel is the beginning of that process. Here, too, human nature is not left behind, but elevated. In fact, Counsel might be the nicest place of all for thinking about what it means to say that grace perfects, and does not destroy or replace, nature. Thomas points out the significance of Isaiah using the word Counsel. And perhaps sometimes that may happen. But it is not the ordinary working of the Holy Spirit, and indeed it is not the deepest penetration of the Spirit into our humanity. A command leaves your own mind out of the discussion. When we take counsel, it is we who are in charge. We go to a friend, and we ask our friend to help us think things through. This is how the gift of Counsel works. It does not replace our human prudence, does not keep us from thinking things through, or knowing why we make a choice. Like the contemplative gifts we considered above, Counsel merely extends our own ability to think. It means we notice the key points for our decision making, pick out the significant details. In our prayer, we should have the freedom and love to play, to read Scripture, enter into the liturgy, and know God. In our active life, we should deal with our own lives. Only we can ultimately make the decision what makes sense in our life – though sometimes a superior may tell us what is required of us for our role within a certain community. We need friends, or we will often make poor decisions. But what we ask for is counsel: He enlightens us, so that we ourselves can think clearly. And, more deeply, so that we ourselves can connect our spiritual aspirations with all the details of our life. The work of the Holy Spirit in us is deeply personal, deeply human.

**Chapter 7 : Counsels on the Spiritual Life by Thomas À Kempis**

*Author of dozens of articles and six books, including Celebration of Discipline, Richard continues to write on the spiritual life. He and his wife,Carolynn, have two grown children, Joel and Nathan, eight grandchildren, and live near Denver, Colorado.*

Practical as ever, Richard Foster offers a glimpse into some of the pitfalls and proactive measures of living with intention into Christlikeness. Today, we look at three ideas he would caution us to avoid as we engage in the spiritual disciplines and practices. We get all excited about lectio divina, for example. But then we think that this is the way – the only way to be formed spiritually – and we begin to think that anyone not doing lectio is not experiencing spiritual formation. Such an attitude will only produce legalism and bondage, and it utterly defeats spiritual formation. The Christian idea of spiritual formation is, very simply, the formation and conformation and transformation of the human personality – body, mind, and spirit – into the likeness of Jesus Christ. Ten counsels, in fact. I got the idea from the Bible and its Ten Commandments. Three of them are stated in the positive: Three positives, seven negatives. For my counsels in spiritual formation I want to switch the ratio and give three negatives and seven positives. Christian spiritual formation has nothing essentially to do with such practices. Many of these practices are useful, to be sure, and some are more useful than others. But none is essential. What is essential is life with Jesus, interactive relationship with the great God of the universe, inner transformation into Christlikeness. Remember, as far as we know Jesus did not keep a journal – and he turned out OK! Do not focus on curriculum-based solutions. Curricula of all sorts are important in the work of spiritual formation. But they are not the most important. First comes the relationship with Jesus, our living Head. All the classical language on prayer is relational, even erotic: Like them, we are to fall in love with Jesus, our living Lord, over and over and over again. Second come the ideas. We must distinguish Christian spiritual formation from formation in general that is everywhere in the culture. Christian spiritual formation is the redemptive process of forming the inner human world so that it takes on the character of the inner being of Christ himself. We must think carefully and experience fully the Christian spiritual disciplines. And we must understand how that functions in conjunction with human effort, but how it also goes far beyond human effort. Far too many people rush to the curriculum program of chapter 9 without first establishing into their lives the foundations set forth so carefully in all that comes before. Do not aim at outward action. There is a hidden dimension B to every human life, one that is not visible to others or fully graspable even by ourselves. At its conscious center is the human spirit. It is the renovation of the heart we are after in spiritual formation. This inward work is much harder than mere outward conformity. It is harder because we cannot see it, test it, control it. We cannot program the heart of another human being. We cannot program our own heart. But this is also what makes it easier. God is the One who sees the heart. We work, but we work resting. First, choose books that stir the soul and have an enduring quality. Then read with God and others at an unhurried pace, attentive to what the Holy Spirit wants to teach. It runs October – May

Originally published in Reformed Worship magazine. He and his wife, Carolynn, have two grown children, Joel and Nathan, eight grandchildren, and live near Denver, Colorado. 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.

**Chapter 8 : 10 Counsels on Spiritual Formation, Part One - Richard J. Foster - Renovare**

*Here is the second part of Richard Foster's ten guidelines for spiritual formation, this time with seven "do's" that will take us deeper into living and sharing the with-God life. With our focus on these ideas, we can go forth boldly into whatever is in store.*

Foster on November 16, Topics: Do root spiritual formation in the Great Commission. We are to disciple the nationsâ€”that is, all peoples, all ethnic groups; to immerse them in the Trinitarian life and teach them to obey all that Jesus has commanded. A disciple is an apprentice, a follower of Jesus. But primarily it means that we are to be thinking always of the whole human family. What is essential is life with Jesus, interactive relationship with the great God of the universe, inner transformation into Christlikeness. Thus we respect diversity. The jars of clay represent the human body and the various cultural forms we use to enshroud the treasure. We receive every person within the context of their unique vessels, both personally and culturally. We never try to impose our own culture upon them. At the same time, our work of spiritual formation must focus on our commonalityâ€”the things the human family holds in common: Do think in terms of the Church universal. Sectarian reform movements that cement an eternal split only become ends in themselves. Those involved in the task of spiritual formation work instead for the transformation of the whole Church, the whole People of God in all her multifaceted expressions. Catholic and Orthodox and Protestant. Big church and little church; house church and Crystal Cathedral. We attempt no end run around the Church. God is with his people in all their waywardness and silliness, and so are we. What we are after is life in the kingdom of Godâ€”a life that all can live. We are today in the middle of a spiritual centrifuge. Old densities are breaking up, new densities are forming. We are learning new ways to do church: The new ways may not involve buildings the way it has in the past. The new ways may not involve liturgies in the same way it has in the past. Likely we are in for lots of changes in the days ahead. But the point is we are for the People of Godâ€”all the People of Godâ€”whatever form that takes. Do give sustained attention to a balanced vision. Another tendency today in spiritual formation work is to focus attention only on the Contemplativeâ€”because that tradition has been sorely neglected. But we need to remember that that is only one dimension of the spiritual life; other traditions include Holiness; Charismatic; Social Justice; Evangelical; Incarnational. We seek a balanced vision of Christian life and faith: Can you see it? Even though it feels like peering through a glass darkly, can you see a country pastor from Indiana embracing an urban priest from New Jersey and together praying for the peace of the world? Can you see a Catholic monk from the mountains of Colorado standing alongside a Baptist evangelist from the streets of Los Angeles and together offering up a sacrifice of praise? Can you see social activists from the urban centers of Hong Kong joining with Pentecostal preachers from the barrios of Sao Paulo and together weeping over the spiritually lost and the plight of the poor? Can you see laborers from Soweto and landowners from Pretoria honoring and serving each other out of reverence for Christ? Can you see the sophisticated standing with the simple, the elite standing with the dispossessed, the wealthy standing with the poor? Can you see people from every race and nation and tongue and strata of society joining hearts and hands and voices, singing, Amazing graceâ€”how sweet the soundâ€”that saved a wretch like me! I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see. The People of God throughout history instruct us in the way eternal. We learn from Moses. We learn from Luther. We learn from Joseph of Arimathea. We learn from Catherine of Genoa. These are our teachers, our models, our inspiration. Do take the long view. We want quick results. We think in terms of lifetimes and centuries. But the soul will live forever. It is precious beyond imagining. Thus investing deeply in even a few folk will count for all eternity. In fact there are vast numbers of people who are committed to the long haul. They really want to be like Jesus with all their heart and soul and mind and strength. And, believe me, investing in these precious lives will take all the energy and all the time and all the prayer and all the weeping and laughing and singing and hoping we can possibly muster. Do develop the highest possible Christology. There simply is no one to compare with this fully human, fully divine person who strides across the pages of the Gospels. Let me make this as straightforward as I possibly can: Jesus is the absolute maestro of life. He is the Master of every situation: And the wonder is that this very

Jesus who walked the hills of Galilee and who died on the cross of Golgotha—this Jesus also rose from the dead, victorious over all the powers of death and hell and is now alive and here to teach his people himself! Jesus will teach you and me how to live, really live: Jesus would never crush the needy — never snuff out the smallest hope. The good news we share in spiritual formation is this: Jesus the Master Teacher has come to town and is giving master lessons in how to live life well! First, choose books that stir the soul and have an enduring quality. Then read with God and others at an unhurried pace, attentive to what the Holy Spirit wants to teach. It runs October — May Originally published in Reformed Worship. He and his wife, Carolynn, have two grown children, Joel and Nathan, eight grandchildren, and live near Denver, Colorado. 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.

### Chapter 9 : Selah - To Pause, To Think: Counsels on the spiritual life

*This work of Aquinas, On the Perfection of the Spiritual Life has not yet been completely translated here (Chapters and 15 are complete). A complete translation was previously published under the title, "The Religious State, the Episcopate and the Priestly Office," but it is out of print.*