

Episcopal Cursillo Ministry

Spiritual Direction



Spiritual Direction is founded on the belief that God communicates personally with each of us and invites us into an ever-deepening relationship. Through Spiritual Direction, we learn to listen for God's voice, recognize God's presence and action in our lives, and become more aware of our responses. Through Spiritual Direction, we're encouraged to explore, nurture, and strengthen our relationship with Jesus, God and the Holy Spirit. It encourages a deeper reliance on God, a greater integration of faith into daily living, and a growing openness and trust in God's guidance.

Like the Cursillo experience itself, Spiritual Direction is deeply personal and unique to each of us. While it is not easily defined, it is rooted in the belief that God's love is personal, present, communicative, and experienced as a gift. Along with Group Reunion and Ultreya, Spiritual Direction is an important part of the Fourth Day experience. It offers a way to deepen one's faith journey and recognize God at the center of life.

Fruits of Spiritual Direction

A central question in Spiritual Direction is: "Where is God in this experience?" As we learn to recognize God's presence and our response, we gain clarity about our spiritual journey and whether we're moving closer to God or drifting away.

Spiritual experiences often go unnoticed because we struggle to express or reflect on them. Spiritual Direction provides a trusted relationship where these experiences can be explored. Its focus is not simply on learning about God, but on deepening our personal relationship with God and living more fully in God's love.

Spiritual Direction is a gift that we experience.

Elements of Spiritual Direction

Holy Listening and Companionship

At its core, Spiritual Direction is a relational journey. The director acts as a listening companion, providing a safe, non-judgmental space to share your sacred stories, struggles, and joys. The focus is entirely on your experience of the divine, rather than fixing or diagnosing problems. A Spiritual Director does not have to be ordained clergy. The role of a Spiritual Director is to listen prayerfully, help another person recognize God's presence and activity in life, and encourage deeper spiritual growth. Many gifted and well-trained lay people serve as Spiritual Directors, bringing wisdom, discernment, and a deep commitment in this ministry.

Honest, Open Communication

Spiritual Direction requires openness and trust. Sharing our prayers, struggles, hopes, and experiences of God can make us feel vulnerable. Meaningful Spiritual Direction calls us to let go of some control, be honest about our lives, and allow God to work more deeply within us.

Discernment and Guidance

Spiritual Directors are guides on our journey, not counselors or decision makers. They ask thoughtful, evocative questions to help us recognize where the Spirit is moving, what God is inviting us into, and how to respond. They help us listen, discern and respond with the Holy Spirit's guidance.

Spiritual Direction is different from ...

- **Psychotherapy:** Therapy focuses on psychological healing and resolving past issues. Spiritual Direction focuses on grace, virtue, and relationship with God.
- **Life Coaching:** Coaching is goal-oriented for advancing life or career goals. Spiritual Direction is about surrender to the Spirit and embracing your spiritual struggles.
- **Discipleship:** While related to Christian teachings, direction doesn't follow a set curriculum. It is a completely customized process based on where you are individually in your faith journey.
- **Pastoral Counseling:** This helps people work through specific life problems from a Christian perspective. It is generally short-term and focused on practical solutions.

Finding a Spiritual Director

Finding a Spiritual Director is a personal process. Recommendations may come from clergy, retreat centers, schools of theology, or organizations such as Spiritual Directors International. As you search, consider whether you prefer a lay or ordained director, a man or woman, or someone with a theological perspective like your own.

An initial conversation helps both the director and the person seeking direction discern whether they are a good fit. The conversation may include the director's training and experience, the seeker's spiritual journey and hopes for spiritual direction. Trust, openness, and mutual respect are important.

The Spiritual Direction Meeting

Spiritual Direction meetings are grounded in three principles:

- **Confidentiality**, creating a safe and trusting environment.
- **Prayer**, recognizing that God is present throughout the conversation.
- **The Holy Spirit**, who is the true Director and guide.

Meetings typically include prayer, silence, conversation, reflection on Scripture, and discussion of one's Rule of Life. Most people meet about once a month, although the frequency varies according to individual needs. Before beginning, both should agree on expectations, confidentiality, meeting frequency, and any fees.

An Invitation

Spiritual Direction is an invitation to become more attentive to God's presence and guidance in the ordinary moments of life. Whether you are seeking clarity, longing for a deeper prayer life, or simply wanting to grow in your relationship with Christ, a Spiritual Director can be a trusted companion on the journey. Consider taking this next step in faith. God is always at work in our lives. Spiritual Direction can help us recognize, respond to, and rejoice in the holy presence of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

Resources

- Barry, William A. & William J. Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, HarperOne, 2009 (this is a replacement for the first book on the list)
- Benner, David G., *Sacred Companions: The Gift of Spiritual Friendship*, IVP, 2004
- Collins, Susan S., *Candlelight: illuminating Spiritual Direction*, 2008, Morehouse Publishing (part of a series)
- Edwards, Tilden. *Spiritual Director, Spiritual Companion*. New York: Paulist Press, 2001.
- Gratton, Carolyn. *The Art of Spiritual Guidance*. New York: Crossroad, 1992.
- Guenther, Margaret. *Holy Listening*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cowley Publications, 1992.
- Merton, Thomas, *Spiritual Direction and Meditation*, 1960, Liturgical Press.
- Moon, Gary W. and David G. Benner, editors, *Spiritual Direction and the Care of Souls*, 2004, IVP Academic.
- Nouwen, Henri, J.M. , *Spiritual Direction: Wisdom for the Long Walk of Faith*, HarperCollins, 2006
- Paintner, Christine Valters and Betsey Beckman, *Awakening the Creative Spirit: Bringing the Arts to Spiritual Direction*, 2010, Morehouse Publishing
- Pickering, *Spiritual Direction: A Practical Introduction*, 2011, Canterbury Press
- Ruffing, Janet K., *Spiritual Direction: Beyond the Beginnings*, 2000, Paulist Press
- Sheehan, Barbara A., S. P. *Partners in Covenant, The Art of Spiritual Direction*. Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 1999.

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