

WHAT TO TALK ABOUT WITH YOUR SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR

Spiritual direction is commonly understood as a relationship between two people, centered in and open to the work of the Spirit. It is a chance for you to share how you experience God's presence or action in your life, as well as what seems to be blocking responsiveness to God's movements. It is a relationship through which you open yourself to accountability for spiritual practices, especially prayer. The role of a spiritual director is primarily to listen. They serve as spiritual guides to accompany you in developing your personal prayer through this retreat.

Spiritual direction is not meant to be counseling or therapy. While the purpose of counseling is often problem solving, the main concern of spiritual direction is spiritual growth and development. It is meant to focus on the personal relationship between you and God.

Spiritual directors are interested in the desires, ardor or despondency, tranquility or anxiety, joy or sorrow you experience during prayer, as well as the ideas and reflections you have during prayer. Some questions to reflect on before speaking with your director are:

- What did I experience during the time of prayer?
- What really happened between God and me during my prayer?
- How did God seem to be at work within me?
- How was I affected by what I was praying about?
- What were the reactions, impulses, suggestions, attractions, feelings, or intuitions I experienced within me?
- Was there anything that caused me uneasiness?
- Anything God seemed to be asking of me?
- Any particular distraction that kept recurring?

- Overall, how did I find the prayer experience?
- Was I satisfied and content or restless and unsatisfied?
- Was my prayer intimate and personal?
- Did I involve my heart and not merely my mind?

- How do I use my time outside the hours of formal prayer?
- Do I rush to other reading?
- Do I reflect on what God has shown me?
- Do I write a great deal or not at all?
- Am I physically rested?
- Do I have a schedule for the day?

- What was my general mood of the day: an atmosphere of peace, a feeling of encouragement, or a sense of joy; or was I sad, restless, tense, dull, or uninterested?

Note: Any thought during the prayer period itself of what to say to your director is often an unhealthy distraction and should be quietly put aside.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

- What do I do when I'm in a spiritual direction session?

Spiritual direction consists of discussion regarding your spiritual life. Your spiritual director may ask *you* what you want to talk about, to start off the conversation. Each experience is unique.

- What do I talk about when I'm there?

You will be discussing the state of your spiritual life; the graces and the struggles. It might be helpful to prepare a little beforehand and think about what you might want to talk about during a spiritual direction session (especially the first one). You are encouraged to think about what you would like to get out of spiritual direction. (Keep in mind, spiritual direction is NOT a form of counseling or therapy.)

Some questions that may be helpful to consider:

Where am I seeing God in my life right now?

How is God working in my life?

What am I doing to nourish my faith/prayer life?

What part of my spiritual life needs strengthening?

Am I experiencing consolation (a feeling of closeness or moving towards God) or desolation (a feeling of absence or moving away from God)?

The Spiritual Director may ask questions to help you explore your thoughts and feelings more deeply. There is no judgment about what you say or think. A spiritual director is someone who will listen and act as a sounding board. It may be helpful when you first meet to share with your director what some of your desires or needs are for your sessions, or what style of conversation might work best for you.

Other information regarding spiritual direction:

http://www.sdiworld.org/what_is_spiritual_direction2/what-is-christian-spiritual-direction.html

<http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/making-good-decisions/spiritual-direction/>