

How Spiritual Direction Can Benefit a Parish

What is Spiritual Direction/Companioning?

The spiritual life is one of the whole person on a journey deeper into God. Many people seek guidance on that journey. Some may desire simply to share their experiences with another who is also seeking to grow in this way. This is often referred to as "companioning."

Others may want a more in-depth experience. This kind of study and spiritual practice, growing out of an on-going relationship with a trained person, is what is meant by the term "spiritual direction." It is important to understand that even though a spiritual director is involved in many areas of the directee's life, this relationship is NOT one of counseling or of psychotherapy. The role of the director is to help the directee recognize and become increasingly open to the work of the Holy Spirit in their faith journey.

How does this ministry fit into parish life?

Often parishioners will come to clergy with a concern, not a crisis, that truly can be transformed through new and deeper practices of prayer. The God-given desire to launch out on such a faith journey frequently prompts Christians to seek spiritual guidance. Having a person in the congregation who is trained in spiritual direction can be a valuable resource for the clergy, because the spiritual director's primary work is to help others deepen their faith journey. Trained spiritual directors adhere to the Code of Ethics set forth by Spiritual Directors International.

Is a spiritual director paid for this ministry?

This is a matter of philosophical choice for the director. Some view their work as an unpaid ministry, but some do prefer to accept payment. Those who choose payment usually have sliding scales or other ways to accept payment from a directee. Unpaid directors sometimes suggest donations to the church or other charitable ministries from directees who want to pay.

Can a spiritual director offer anything besides one-on-one direction?

A trained director is an excellent educational resource. Such a person is able to:

- Supervise group spiritual direction,
- Plan and lead retreats, quiet days, and other spiritual growth offerings,
- Give prayer and spirituality presentations,
- Assist with Inquirer's class, and
- Help form and/or lead prayer groups.

A trained spiritual director can be a valuable asset in a parish, providing a vibrant prayer ministry and instruction in a wide variety of Christian spiritual practices, which help grow the faith community.

FIND - School for Spiritual Direction and Formation began in the Episcopal Diocese of Texas in 1997. Classes are held monthly on a Saturday at Middleway Urban Monastery in Bryan, Tx. For more information, contact:

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