

What Spiritual Direction is and is not

*“Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”
—Luke 24:32*

It is good to keep in mind that the real director in the spiritual direction relationship is the Holy Spirit. In striving to live their Christian faith more fully, the primary responsibility is on the directee, not the director, to become more aware of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

Spiritual direction is:

- An experience that over time, helps you become more attentive to God’s presence and action in your life
- An opportunity to facilitate the growth of your relationship with God and lead to a greater appreciation for the role of the Sacraments in your life
- A contemplative approach rather than a psychological approach
- A way to facilitate the formation of your growth (and/or development) in both the human and the divine likeness of Christ
- Most particularly relating to your life of prayer and service, but not exclusively
- Something that flows from and enriches your religious experience
- A relationship of trust that involves a commitment to be open and candid

*Spiritual direction is **not**:*

- Directive in terms of telling a person what to do
- Psychological counseling
- Pastoral or crisis counseling
- Life coaching
- Relinquishing of personal responsibility
- Primarily advisory (although some suggestions might be offered)
- Primarily informative (although there can be “teachable moments”)
- Always comfortable
- The Sacrament of Penance; however, if your spiritual director is a priest, you may discuss with him how confession may fit into the direction setting

Choosing a spiritual director

*“Where two or more are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them”
—Mt. 18:20*

The process of choosing a spiritual director is important and should involve careful consideration and prayerful reflection. Interviewing potential directors can offer you confidence in selecting someone you are comfortable with, both in whom they are as an individual and as someone acting as a minister of the Catholic faith.

The following are possible topics that might be part of an initial conversation with a potential spiritual director. These are not intended to be a checklist and the discussion would vary depending on the person and on what you may or may not already know about them. A good director will welcome any questions you may have. They can serve as a reflection of what is important to you in working with someone in a spiritual direction relationship. Prayerfully reflect on the questions and pray before and after the interview. Ask and trust the Holy Spirit to guide you in this discernment.

You might consider when choosing a spiritual director:

- The director’s own experience of receiving and offering spiritual direction
- The director’s own experience of prayer, celebration of the Sacraments and works of charity
- The director’s theological education and spiritual training
- The director’s continuing education and enrichment
- The director’s participation in a supervision group
- The director’s sense of serving as a minister of the Church
- The director’s knowledge, familiarity and faithfulness to Church teaching, particularly the Catechism of the Catholic Church
- The director’s ability to listen attentively and ask insightful questions while avoiding monopolizing the discussion

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis offers a Spiritual Direction Discernment Companion that can assist seekers in finding a spiritual director.

If you would like help in finding a spiritual director, please send your contact information to spiritualdirection@archindy.org

A discernment companion will contact you shortly

Some general thoughts to consider as you enter into the experience of spiritual direction

"With all my heart I seek you"
—Psalm 119:10

It is good to keep in mind that spiritual direction is not a replacement for the sacraments or active participation in your parish. Spiritual direction by its very nature is integrated into and flows from our full, active participation in the life of the Church.

Spiritual direction may be experienced as an ongoing process or during a time of retreat. A normal rhythm for ongoing spiritual direction is once a month for about an hour.

Preparing for a spiritual direction session:

In preparing for your session, it can be helpful to spend time in intentional prayer about what has been happening in your relationship with God since the last time you met. A few questions to ponder might be:

- What am I grateful for in my life and in my relationships?
- When/where have I been aware of and responded to God's presence?
- When/where have I moved away from God?
- Am I discerning anything in my life or in my relationships?
- Do I seek forgiveness for my own actions or do I feel the need to forgive others?
- What has been my experience in celebrating the Sacraments?



After a spiritual direction session:

After the session, spend time asking God to help understand any truths revealed during the session and any actions you feel God has asked of you to take as you move forward. Express your gratitude to God. Express your desire to love God faithfully and to live the life that God desires for you.

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

*I am the
Way the Truth
and the Life*

John 14:6

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