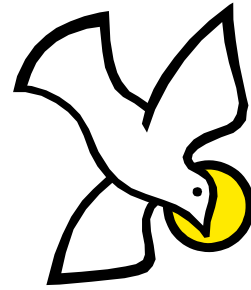


SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

at St. Daniel



What is Spiritual Direction?

The Christian tradition of spiritual direction dates back to around the third century, when individuals sought a more radical life by going to live in the desert. As their reputation grew, they would be sought out for advice and guidance. Today, there is renewed interest in spiritual direction. Many people are seeking spiritual guidance and there are several programs offering training in how to be a spiritual director. The purpose of spiritual direction is to learn how to heighten the awareness of God's presence and action in one's life and to make decisions based on that awareness. This is known as the discernment process.

Since we live so close to ourselves, it is not always possible for us to look at what is happening in our lives objectively, to be as sensitive as would like to God's Spirit. We need a guide, a companion, someone who can act as a reflector for us. So, an essential element of spiritual direction is someone of choice who will accompany us on this adventure. You are looking for someone with whom you can share your spiritual journey, someone you feel comfortable with, someone you can trust.

Spiritual directors operate first, foremost, and always from the premise that God is the only director of any person. A director is consequently no more than God's instrument in the process of spiritual direction. The spiritual director's guidance is, in reality, nothing more than a way of leading the directee to see and obey our real director – the Holy Spirit, hidden in the depths of the soul.

What Spiritual Direction is Not

Although spiritual direction uses some of the same techniques as counseling (active listening, self-disclosure), spiritual direction is not counseling or psychological therapy. Spiritual direction may cooperate with counseling and vice-versa, but spiritual direction is primarily concerned with the relationship of the directee with God and the process of spiritual growth. Spiritual direction is not having a chat with a friend over coffee. Spiritual direction is not an opportunity to receive lecture-type input on growth in the spiritual life.

Role of the Director

A spiritual director should be someone called to and well trained in this ministry. He or she should be grounded in the Scriptures, sustained by a deep prayer life, acquainted with the various ways of spirituality, and carefully trained in the area of discernment. There are many programs designed to train spiritual directors. A director may also have educational background in theology or religious teaching. It is imperative that a spiritual director be in their own ongoing spiritual direction.

A spiritual director serves as a guide or companion pointing out signs of the presence of God acting and working in the lives of those they are accompanying. The director, whether cleric or lay, should be a good listener. If so, they will be able to ask insightful questions and reflect back to you what you are saying, or trying to say. Your director may make suggestions or point out apparent contradictions. In order to grow, you must be open to challenge. Being aware of the different movements of the spirits (discernment) is an essential requirement of a spiritual guide.

A Typical Session

Sessions are usually approximately one hour long – plus or minus, based on the conversation and the movement of the Spirit. Content is centered on the directee's spiritual life and prayer experiences.

Frequency of meetings varies with individual needs and circumstance. Some people find that meeting every three or four weeks is ideal. Frequency may be more or less, or may vary with certain life situations or movement of the Spirit. Like any growth process, consistency is important. There may be a temptation to meet less frequently when things are going very well or when time seems exceptionally difficult. If one is serious about spiritual direction, it is necessary to make a commitment to the process.

Is There a Fee?

Many spiritual directors do ask for a stipend or a fee for the services they provide. In the initial meeting, it is important to discuss this. Some directors will not accept a fee, but may suggest that a donation be made to a charity or to support the Center in which they minister. However, no one should be turned away because of an inability to pay.

How Do I Start?

St. Daniel has several trained spiritual directors in the parish. For a list of names, please contact the Faith Formation Office at 248-625-1750, e-mail Kathy Desrochers kdesrochers@ameritech.net or go to <http://stdanielclarkston.org/prayer.htm>

An additional source of names of trained directors is the Manresa Jesuit Retreat House in Bloomfield Hills. They provide training, spiritual direction, and maintain a list of trained spiritual directors throughout the metro-Detroit area. They can be reached at 248-644-4933.



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Spiritual Directors International