

Cursillo and Spiritual Direction

The strategy promoted by Cursillo to help us persevere in our 4th Day journey focuses on relationships – both our relationship with Christ and our relationship with others. The Cursillo Method specifies three complementary ways of tending these relationships – Spiritual Direction, a 4th Day Reunion group, and Ultreya.

Who should seek Spiritual Direction?

Anyone who is serious about exploring and developing their relationship with God would benefit from receiving Spiritual Direction:

- you might be going through a desert experience of your own;
- you may feel yourself being drawn to pray in new ways;
- you might be aware of God calling you in some way.

The Spiritual Director's task is to help you discern and recognize God's activity in the fabric of your daily life.

Choosing a Spiritual Director

Choosing a director is a very personal decision. As you seek a director, pray for openness, discernment and clarity about the type of director you want. Some factors to consider may include:

- Do you want your director to be a woman or a man, lay or ordained, a member of a religious order?
- Is the denomination of your director important to you? Do you want them to belong to the same denomination as you or a different one?
- Does the age of the person matter to you?
- Is it important to you that your director is grounded in a particular tradition (e.g. Benedictine, evangelical, charismatic), or would you like someone with an eclectic approach?
- Do you hope for a director who shares an interest in something important to you (e.g. music, poetry, painting)?
- Would you prefer your director to be someone whom you will not meet in any other context?
- Is this person someone you are sure you can trust to maintain confidentiality?

Some people wonder about their director's qualifications for the ministry of Spiritual Direction:

- Would you like your director to have undertaken formal training for this ministry (e.g. in the Contemplative tradition, the Ignatian tradition)?

- Is it important to you that the person belongs to the national Association of Christian Spiritual Directors of Aotearoa-New Zealand and will abide to their ethical guidelines?
- Would you like a director who draws clear boundaries between Spiritual Direction and counselling, or one who sees overlaps between them?
- Would you like your director to be experienced in a particular personality indicator tool (Myers-Briggs, the Enneagram)?
- Is it important to you that your director makes regular retreats?

Two important considerations are:

- Is your director also receiving their own spiritual direction?
- Is your director receiving formal supervision for the ministry they are offering?

Practicalities

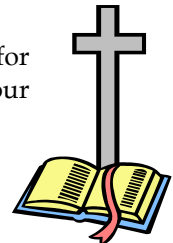
As well as considering the nature of the relationship you are looking to form with your director there are some practical matters to consider as well:

- How often do you hope to meet with your director (e.g. monthly, every 2 months, irregularly)?
- Are you able to travel to meet a director, or do you need to be visited at home? How far are you willing to travel?
- Might it be important that the relationship be able to be conducted by email or via Skype on occasions (e.g. in times of incapacity, sickness, or physical distance)?
- Would the relationship be affected by other one-to-one meetings you may be having (e.g. counselling, therapy)?
- How do you view the question of payment? Some directors are able to offer this ministry without charge, while others welcome or need a contribution in recognition of their time and effort and the cost of their own training and/or supervision.

Meeting with your Director

The first meeting with any director is exploratory – a chance for you to get to know each other and for you to have some of your questions about the person and/or the direction relationship answered.

Your meetings will be most fruitful if you prepare for them beforehand:



A guide to the practice of Christian Spiritual Direction

for Cursillistas in the Anglican Church, New Zealand

- Looking back over the time since the last meeting, what has been going on in your life? How have you been feeling? What have been your prevailing moods during this period?
- Have there been moments when you have been particularly aware of God's presence or activity in your life? How did you feel during those times? Have there been any surprises?
- What is occupying most of your thinking? In your heart, what do you most hope for?

Reviewing the Relationship

For the relationship to be fruitful there must be commitment: this is a spiritual discipline, and it may take time for you to get to know and trust each other. Nevertheless it is good from time to time to reflect on the relationship:

- How do you feel as you prepare for a meeting?
- How do you feel during meetings? Do you feel heard?
- Do you feel accepted and respected or insecure and judged?
- Do you feel supported or alone? Accompanied or pressured?
- Are you able to speak honestly or do you feel reserved?
- Do you feel at ease?
- Do you feel free to lay aside suggestions and follow your own leading or do you feel "expected" to follow directions?
- Do you feel the relationship is fruitful? Do you feel you are growing in your knowledge and love of God?
- Do you feel the relationship has become stuck? Can you discuss this with your director?

Some possible ways of finding a Spiritual Director

You may already have someone in mind, or know someone who can suggest possible directors. Ask around. Someone you know may either be receiving spiritual direction or may know of people who offer this ministry in your area. The national professional association for Spiritual Directors (ACSD-ANZ) has a website (<http://www.acsd.org.nz/>) which has a list of people offering spiritual direction in each region. Contact details are available from this site.

What is Spiritual Direction?

Spiritual guidance, spiritual midwifery, spiritual advice, soul friendship - these terms go some way towards describing the various facets of the pastoral ministry of Spiritual Direction.

Spiritual Direction is not counselling; it is not mentoring. It is a specialised relationship focused on your prayer life and relationship with God. The real Director is the indwelling Holy Spirit who continually invites you to grow in holiness and wholeness. The human director's role is to help you become aware of God's action in your daily life, so you can respond and grow in intimacy with God.

By inviting another person to share our journey we open a door for the Holy Spirit to work in our lives in a new way. Our spiritual journey becomes less affected by the vagaries of our emotional state and more centred on the action of God in our lives.

Is it something new?

Spiritual Direction is almost as old as the Christian church. When Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire in the 4th Century, large numbers of men and women felt called by God to go and live lives of solitude and discipleship in the desert.

Soon, other people were going into the desert to ask advice of these "Desert Fathers and Mothers" (as they became known). This was the beginning of the practice of seeking and giving Spiritual Direction. This ministry has existed in the life of the Church in various forms since those early days.

