

An Introduction to the Interior Life, Spiritual Direction, and Contemplative Journaling for the Deacon Aspirants

by Deacon Scott Gilfillan

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me." (Revelation 3:20)

Conference One: The Interior Life: A Journey into the Heart

The Question: How is God trying to form me?

Opening Remarks

- My Background
- Discussion encouraged
- A mini retreat
- Activities: Olympic Swimmer Example

The Heart: Where I Encounter God

"The heart is the dwelling place where I am...the place of encounter." (CCC 2563)

"The heart is the place of sincerity, where deceit and disguise have no place." Dilexit Nos, 5

Affectivity

"You have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you." St. Augustine, Confessions

Affectivity in the spiritual life as the way our desires, loves, attractions, emotions, and interior movements draw us toward or away from God. Affective prayer: paying attention to desires, fears, peace, resistance, and consolation.

The Prayer Replay

What thoughts and feelings did you experience during Morning Prayer?

Questions and Discussion

"How did God reveal himself to you this week?"

Conference Two: Spiritual Direction

The Question: Why does God give us spiritual directors

Scripture

"Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." (1 Samuel 3:10)

Church

"The Church continues to recommend the practice of spiritual direction not only to all those who wish to follow the Lord up close but to every Christian who wishes new life in Christ." Pope Benedict XVI

Topics (Powerpoint)

- What is Spiritual Direction?
- The Benefits

- The Director
- The Church

Scriptural Models of Spiritual Direction

- Jesus and the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24)
- Adam and Eve
- Eli and Samuel (1 Samuel 3)
- Elijah and Elisha
- Jethro and Moses (Exodus 18)
- Nathan and David (2 Samuel 12)
- Elizabeth and Mary (Luke 1)
- Jesus and the Samaritan Woman (John 4)
- Barnabas and Paul (Acts 9); Paul and Timothy (2 Timothy)

Three Chairs

You are a spiritual director, I sit in my chair and you sit in yours.

I have come to see you with a longing that mystifies me.

You draw my attention to the third chair in the room.

You invite me to see with the eye of my heart to the Source of my longing.

The eternal, invisible, loving, guiding, challenging, insistent Mystery in the third chair.

Jennifer Jinks Hoffmann

Questions invite reflection.

Questions reveal the heart. A good spiritual director follows the example of Jesus by helping another person listen more deeply to God.

Jesus formed disciples primarily by asking questions. Examples include:

- "What are you looking for?" (John 1:38)
- "Who do you say that I am?" (Matthew 16:15)
- "What do you want me to do for you?" (Mark 10:51)
- "Why are you afraid?" (Matthew 8:26)
- "Do you want to be well?" (John 5:6)
- "Do you love me?" (John 21:15-17)

Activity

Role play spiritual direction session.

Conference Three: Beginning Spiritual Direction

The Question: How do I prepare to meet God?

Scripture

"Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart." (Luke 2:19)

Quotes:

- *"God is in all things..." (St. John of the Cross)*
- *"[Spiritual Directors] make present the fragrance of Christ's closeness and his personal gaze."*
Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 169
- *"We urgently need the mediation of another's eyes to love ourselves and accept ourselves. The eyes may be those of a parent, a friend, a spiritual director; but above all they are those of God our Father."* Jacques Philippe, *Interior Freedom*

Tips on Preparation

- Bringing my real heart rather than my ideal self.
- Preparing by paying attention, not preparing speeches.
- Recognizing recurring themes.
- Honesty, humility, patience and trust.
- Journaling as preparation for spiritual direction.

Conference Four: Contemplative Journaling

The Question: How can I become more attentive to God's presence?

Scripture

"Mary remained outside the tomb weeping..." (John 20)

Church

"Be still, and know that I am God." (Psalm 46:10)

From Ordinary Journaling to Holy Journaling

Activity: A Way to Pray When the Words don't come?

- Write a contemplative poem

Tips on Writing Reflection Papers

- Write for your benefit, not to impress or be graded
- Write in 1st person singular
- Describe affective movements, feelings
- Look for a single theme or pattern
- Title your reflection
- Read some of my blog posts for style: <https://fontofmercy.org/category/reflections/>

Daily Spiritual Practices

- Examen
 - Simple form
 - Where did God show up today?
 - Where did resistance to him show up
 - What is one response tomorrow?

- If you need help, see <https://fontofmercy.org/a-way-to-add-focus-during-your-daily-examen/>
 - Journaling
 - Silent Contemplation
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Conclusion

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock..." (Revelation 3:20)

Christ has been knocking throughout the entire day. Spiritual direction, prayer, and journaling simply teach us to recognize the knock and open the door.

Appendix A: Recommended Reading

Beginning the Spiritual Life

- *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Part Four
- Pope Francis, *Dilexit Nos*
- St. Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*
- Henri Nouwen: *Spiritual Direction: Wisdom for the Long Walk of Faith*

Prayer

- St. Teresa of Avila, *The Way of Perfection*
- Thomas Dubay, *Fire Within*

Growth in Holiness

- Ralph Martin, *The Fulfillment of All Desire*
- Jordan Aumann, *Spiritual Theology*

Discernment

- Fr. Timothy Gallagher, *The Discernment of Spirits*
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Appendix B: Quotations for Prayer and Reflection

Sacred Scripture

"Be still, and know that I am God." (Psalm 46:10)

"Guard your heart with all vigilance." (Proverbs 4:23)

"Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." (1 Samuel 3:10)

"Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart." (Luke 2:19)

"What are you looking for?" (John 1:38)

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock." (Revelation 3:20)

Catechism

"The desire for God is written in the human heart." (CCC 27)

"The heart is the dwelling place where I am...the place of encounter." (CCC 2563)

"Contemplation is a gaze of faith fixed on Jesus." (CCC 2715)

Pope Francis

Only by starting from the heart can our communities succeed in uniting and reconciling different minds and wills." (*Dilexit Nos*, 28)

St. Teresa of Avila

"It is love alone that gives worth to all things."

St. Francis de Sales

"Be who you are and be that well."

St. John of the Cross

"In the evening of life we shall be judged on love."

Thomas Merton

"The whole idea of contemplation is one of awakening."