



Introduction to the Interior Life, Spiritual Direction, and Contemplative Journaling

*by Deacon Scott Gilfillan
for the aspirant couples August 29, 2026*

*Were not our hearts burning within us while
he talked with us on the way. Lk 24:32*

Agenda

1. What is Spiritual Direction?
2. The Benefits
3. The Director
4. The Church



What is spiritual direction?

The guiding of a person into a life truly under the dominion of the Holy Spirit, who is the primary director.



1. It's a process

- Growth-oriented
- Regularity and continuity

Five elements of spiritual direction



2. Focus Areas

- Spiritual growth of the directee
- His/her relationship with the Lord.
- Vocational discernment

Five elements of spiritual direction



3. A Competent Guide

- Charisms
- Approved course of study.
- Adept at needed skills

Five elements of spiritual direction



4. Personal Relationship

- God's call and our response.
- One-one
- Safe place with a trusted companion

Five elements of spiritual direction



Five Benefits of Spiritual Direction



1. Intimate Union with God

God calls us all to this intimate union with him. (CCC 2014), a call more difficult without the help of a guide.

“As a blind man cannot follow the good road without a leader, no one can walk without a guide.”
(Augustine)

Benefits of Spiritual Direction



2. Discernment of a Vocation

- a. Regarding the many “calls within a call”.
- b. Identifying gifts
- c. Exploring possibilities for serving God within one’s state in life.

Benefits of Spiritual Direction



3. Formation of life and prayer

- Growth in the virtues
- Faithfulness to daily prayer
- Greater awareness of God's presence
- Finding the “way of prayer” that is most suitable

Benefits of Spiritual Direction



4. Consolation / Encouragement

- Comfort in trials, difficulties and sufferings, particularly in the spiritual life
- Help in persevering in the spiritual life

Benefits of Spiritual Direction



5. Healing

- By growing in intimacy with the Lord.
- By being listened to without judgment.
- By recognizing healing is on ongoing.

Benefits of Spiritual Direction

What
Spiritual
Director is
and is not...



Varieties of Spiritual Companionship

	Agenda	Process	Role of Helper	Goal of the Learner
Pastoral Counseling	Set by counselee	• Problem solving • Crisis management • Healing of past wounds	Facilitator	"Healthy"
Mentoring	Chosen by mentor and mentee and influenced by an "external" such as a workplace or educational institution	Development	Coach	• Improvement • "Like the external"
Discipling	Set by the discipler	Instruction	Transmitter	• Learning • Incorporation • "Like the teacher"
Spiritual Direction	Revealed by the Holy Spirit	• Noticing • Paying attention • Praying	Pray-er Listener	• Imago Dei • "Like God" • "Like Christ"



You and Your Spiritual Director

A “Good fit”

A formal
agreement.

You commit to
consistent prayer
and director’s
guidance.

Freedom to
explore

Confidentiality.

Typical Agenda of a Spiritual Direction Session

Friendly greeting
and brief casual
conversation

Opening prayer

Dialogue

Wrap-up; possibly
giving suggestions
to the directee

Closing prayer

Schedule next
meeting date and
time



What does the
Church say about
Spiritual Direction?



Sussidio per Confessori

64. Spiritual counselling has been practised from the earliest history of the Church down to our own times. It is sometimes referred to as spiritual direction or spiritual accompaniment. It is an ancient and tested practice which has produced fruits of holiness and evangelical readiness.

65. While spiritual direction was always imparted by monks and priests, other members of the faithful (religious and lay) have also given spiritual counsel... There are to be found also well formed lay people – both men and women – who offer this service of counsel along the journey of holiness.



The Joy of the Gospel

169. Ordained ministers and other pastoral workers can make present the fragrance of Christ's closeness... The Church will have to initiate – priests, religious and laity – into this “art of accompaniment” which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other (cf. Ex 3:5).

171. Today more than ever we need men and women who, on the basis of their experience of accompanying others, are familiar with processes which call for prudence, understanding, patience and docility to the Spirit, so that they can protect the sheep from wolves who would scatter the flock.



A photograph of a church interior, likely a cathedral or large parish church. In the foreground and middle ground, several people are kneeling in prayer on a red carpeted floor. They are wearing white robes or cassocks. The church has high, vaulted ceilings with intricate architectural details, including pointed arches and stained glass windows. The lighting is soft and warm, creating a solemn atmosphere.

National Directory for the Formation, Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons

The role of the spiritual director, who must always be a priest, is critical to the initial formation process. 125

The aspirant's spiritual director is critical to the formation process... and must be well trained and knowledgeable about the diaconate. 202

Throughout his formation, the candidate is "to secure the assistance of a...[spiritual director], to cultivate regular patterns of prayer and sacramental participation, and... to reflect spiritually on [his] ministry." 225

Questions?

