

# How to Choose a Spiritual Director

Finding and choosing a personal spiritual director can be a challenge. Except for the pastor, who may or may not be trained in spiritual direction, most parishes do not make formal spiritual direction available to their members.

Sometimes a pastor, spiritual guide or parish staff member can suggest someone who might be a likely spiritual director for you. If you know someone who is in spiritual direction now, they also may be able to suggest spiritual directors who would be a good fit for you.

When all is said and done, however, choosing a spiritual director is a highly personal spiritual experience and you will have to invest some time and prayer in finding a good one for you.

## **Here are some things you should think about in advance:**

- ☐ Does it matter if the director is younger, older, or the same age as me?
- ☐ Does it matter if they are or aren't the same gender as me?
- ☐ Does it matter if I know this person in another capacity?
- ☐ How often would I want to meet with a director?
- ☐ Am I open to online sessions or travel to meet a director?
- ☐ What are the important spiritual or personal issues I want to discuss with a spiritual director?
- ☐ What are my immediate, intermediate or long-term goals for spiritual direction?
- ☐ Do I want a director who is very directive or one who is not?
- ☐ Does it matter if the person is a professionally trained spiritual director or someone with experience who is capable of acting as a spiritual guide or companion?
- ☐ Does it matter if the spiritual director is ordained? Married? Single?
- ☐ Does it matter if the director is Catholic?
- ☐ Do I have a preference for a specific type of spiritual direction?

The next step is to make a list of potential spiritual directors that could be a good fit, based on what you know, have read or have been told about them. Then make arrangements to visit with them. Even if you have narrowed the list down, or there is only one available, it is important to schedule a preliminary visit and to find out as much as you can about the director.

## **Here are some questions you might ask a potential spiritual director:**

- ☐ What is your background, your spiritual journey, your training and experience in spiritual direction?
- ☐ Do you rely on your own personal experience in the direction you provide?
- ☐ What style(s) or type(s) of spiritual direction do you use?
- ☐ What do you think is the main purpose for spiritual direction?
- ☐ How do you define the difference between counseling and spiritual direction?
- ☐ Would you describe yourself as very directive, somewhat directive, or not very directive in spiritual direction? Can you give me an example?
- ☐ What do you think are the biggest challenges in giving or receiving spiritual direction?
- ☐ Are there circumstances or issues that you are not comfortable discussing in spiritual direction?
- ☐ What would be a sign that a person is not ready for spiritual direction?
- ☐ Have you had situations in which spiritual direction wasn't helpful to the person you

were directing?

- \_\_\_ Under what circumstances would you ask a person to stop spiritual direction?
- \_\_\_ Does my age, church practice, marital status, mental health, or sexual orientation matter to you?
- \_\_\_ What do you expect of the person you are directing?
- \_\_\_ How often do you usually meet with a person in spiritual direction?
- \_\_\_ What is the usual length, format and fee for a spiritual direction meeting?
- \_\_\_ What questions do you have for me?
- \_\_\_ Can you tell, based on our conversation, what would be the biggest challenge of being my spiritual director?

Once you have concluded your preliminary visits, you will want to begin discerning which potential spiritual director would be best for you.

**Here are some things you will want to discern about a potential spiritual director:**

- \_\_\_ Do I feel comfortable with this person? Why or why not?
- \_\_\_ Could I be honest with this person? Would this person be honest with me?
- \_\_\_ Are there some issues or concerns I might not be comfortable discussing with this person?
- \_\_\_ Does this person remind me of anyone with whom I have had a bad relationship?
- \_\_\_ Does this person listen well?
- \_\_\_ Does this person understand where I am coming from?
- \_\_\_ Does this person talk too much? Or too little?
- \_\_\_ Would this person be too directive or not directive enough?
- \_\_\_ Do I feel this person has the experience and knowledge to appreciate my spiritual or personal concerns?
- \_\_\_ Do I think I can trust this person?
- \_\_\_ If you are married, would your partner be comfortable with you visiting regularly with this person?
- \_\_\_ Do I have any concerns or reservations about this person?

Once you have concluded your preliminary visits, you will want to begin discerning which potential spiritual director would be best for you. There is no perfect fit for anyone seeking spiritual direction, but you should be able to tell if one or another potential director feels right for you: Which one makes you feel most comfortable and welcome? Which one seems to understand you best? Which one would be most helpful to you? Which one leaves you with the fewest doubts, concerns or fears? Which one makes you excited about entering into spiritual direction?

If you are undecided, continue to pray, and schedule another visit to discuss your reservations or concerns. Most spiritual directors are willing to meet for a “trial” period, after which the two of you can decide if it is working out or not. If you discover that the relationship is not working, you should discuss these concerns with the director to determine whether to continue or end the relationship. At first, finding a spiritual director is a little bit like dating: comfort, confidence and commitment develop gradually over time, but sometimes it’s clear early on that it’s not going to work and you should move on.