
Christ has **no body**, now
on **earth**
but yours,
no **hands** but yours,
no **feet** but yours,
yours are the **eyes** through
which
Christ's compassion
is to look out
to the
earth,
yours are the **feet** by
which he is to go about
doing good
and yours
are the **hands**
by which He is to **bles**
us now.

Attributed to St Teresa of Avila
(1515-82)

no body
on
earth
but yours

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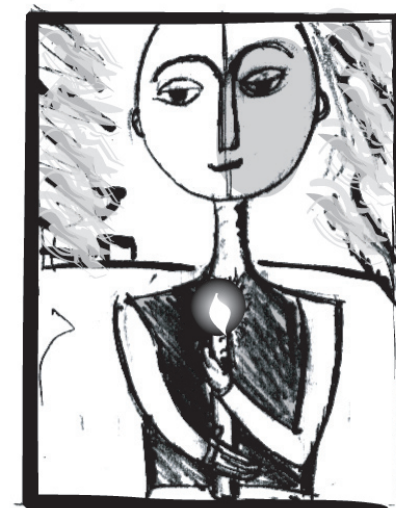
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Christian Life

Spiritual Direction



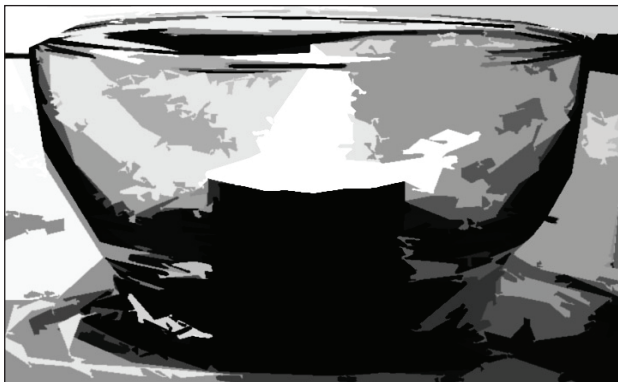
What is it?

Spiritual direction is the term given to Christian guidance, help and encouragement provided by one person to another.

Why do it?

All of us are registered with a doctor, whom we may see regularly, occasionally or in an emergency. With spiritual direction, the pattern is just as variable, and for many of the same reasons. Our physical health affects how we feel, our work and personal life, our sexual life and our mental ability. Similarly, how we are spiritually has its impact on every corner of our lives.

Our relationship with God is centred on prayer: our individual relationship with him. It is shared with and affected by our life in the Church – the sacraments we receive, the teaching we absorb and the Christian fellowship to which we belong. But it is worked out, earthed and put to use, and to the test, in the whole of our lives.



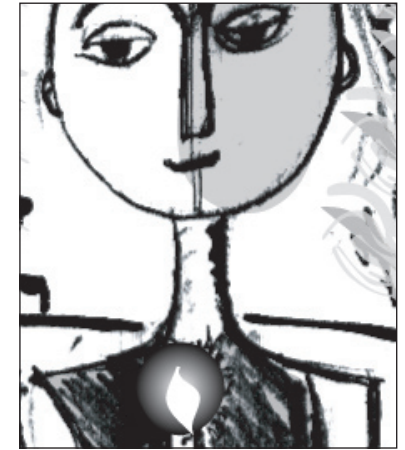
Spiritual direction involves regular meetings with someone of wisdom and experience in our search for God in everything. For the Christian, the 'spiritual life' is all life in the Spirit – not merely a 'religious' corner set aside for God. Spiritual direction, then, is not a practice only for a 'spiritual elite' or for those who are professionally religious – monks, nuns or clergy. We all need guidance in discerning God's action in our lives, and in the lives of those around us.

'... spiritual direction should begin and end with our openness to God ...'

Whatever else it is about, spiritual direction should begin and end with our openness to God in prayer and worship – for this is the basis of everything: being where God reaches us most intensely. As we open ourselves to him, we start to see the world through his eyes, and our lives begin to change as God opens the eyes of our mind.

For some Christians it may be that they need a spiritual director to teach them to pray at all, or to help with the difficulties most of us have in praying. Other kinds of help may be available elsewhere, but this rarely is. Even if we feel we know how to pray, we need to advance, to go deeper and ensure that our prayer bears fruit. A wise confidant can also discern where we need to be challenged or consoled, and can see patterns of growth and reasons for

thankfulness and praise. On our own, we miss so much that is good and encouraging, and avoid that which needs repentance and challenge.



How do I do it?

You may be able to meet from time to time with a priest you know. (It is often easier to tell whether you are on the same wavelength if you have heard someone preach!) Many spiritual directors are laypeople, others are members of religious communities. If you want to pursue this, ask your parish priest, someone at your cathedral, or find out if your bishop has asked someone to coordinate the work of spiritual direction.

To be accompanied on your spiritual journey is not a sign of weakness, but rather a sign of strength and wisdom.

FURTHER READING

Gordon Jeff, *Spiritual Direction for every Christian* (2007)

Nicolas Stebbing, CR, *Confessing our Sins* (2002)