

when decisions are not clear and some decisions involve both bad and good. We cannot be understood, loved, and supported by a set of rules.

CHAPTER XIII THE SPIRITUAL DIRECTION OF OTHERS

Whenever one seeks to share with another one's perceptions and experiences of life and its transcendent dimensions, one is in some sense engaging in spiritual direction. It may be very informal and perhaps non-directive, but what is shared may have a directive potency relative to the way the hungers and needs of others respond to it. Thus it becomes apparent that much of what goes on in the life of the church may be spiritually directive without being formally so. The Pastor particularly functions as spiritual director of her/his people through preaching, counseling, administering, whether it is intentional or not. Even the Pastor who has lost confidence in the transcendent dimension of life functions as spiritual director by pointing to one's own void. Thus it is not that this was not happening before we became more conscious of the need to speak of it, clarify it, and (particularly as Protestants), to affirm it. Rather in the climate of the renewed concern for spiritual direction do we have the opportunity to think carefully about how it may be implemented and the spiritual life-process which we would wish to implement. That this can take place through many in the life of the church cautions us that we must not create a new "priesthood" of professional directors, a new elite to take the place of the old intellectual and professional elite of the clergy. Rather must this be seen as belonging to the whole church as ministry and priesthood belong to the whole church. Those who become somewhat professional in this area do so for the whole church and for the facilitation of the whole church. Thus it should be of the very nature of this renewal of interest in spiritual direction that it provide for the training and service of gifted lay persons. One of the humbling elements of both the Gospel and the spirituality of the church is that one is ultimately dependent on what is given by God, not merely the development of skills and intellect. Paul's comment to the Corinthians is worth remembering here:

God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption; therefore, as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord."⁵⁶³

Though there may be "spiritual directors" who function well with little formal training, the potential deceptiveness of spiritual experience, the unconscious tendency to intrude one's self into the process, and the danger of propagating inappropriate anthropologies and theologies necessitate education, development of skills, and a solid relationship to a Christian community and its traditions.

It may be helpful to examine Paul's understanding of spirituality here for he consciously theorizes about it in I Corinthians 12-15.

Paul indicates that for many of the Corinthians previous "spiritual experience" was deceptive. (12:2). Thus they must avoid both individualism and subjectivism. They must see themselves as related to the Christian community (12), possessing their varied spiritual gifts for its sake (12:7), and manifesting love (13). They also must align their spiritual experience with the historical Jesus, the tradition of his life and ministry, and be willing to confess him as contemporary Lord (12:3). The preaching of the Gospel, or Christian communication, is understood as speaking out of the experience of God's Spirit (presence/participation) to

⁵⁶³ I Cor. 1:28-31.

the experience of God's Spirit (presence/participation) in others (2:13), interpreting this for them. In the process of doing this one needs to adopt an appropriate methodology. Since one is dealing with a reality which transcends one's words and of which one is not in control, one must not try to communicate by the persuasive power of words or eloquence. Rather, one must use words that do not get in the way of the Transcendent Reality, but which prove, demonstrate, evidence "the Spirit and the Power." (2:1-5) Though the reality is one ("the same Spirit," "the same Lord," "the same God") (12:4-5), its manifestation is varied and the legitimacy of the varied and individual directions in which the Spirit gifts and leads must be preserved. Thus one cannot merely repeat in another the pattern of one's own spirituality. The primary manifestation of legitimate spiritual life is love, the "more excellent way," for this mirrors the nature of God towards us even though we "see in a mirror dimly." (13) Spirituality may have some forms relevant primarily to individual experience and benefit (e.g. tongues), but in public it should be understandable, communicating to insider and outsider for edification (prophecy). (14) Lastly, the terms of the Gospel remind us that though Christ's resurrection has happened, our resurrection is future. The resurrection is the completion of spiritualization in a spiritual body and this has not yet happened for us. We shall "bear the image of the man from heaven" (15:49), but not yet. Thus our spirituality has to be seen and lived out within the dimensions of our humanity. (15)

The above analysis of Paul's theology not only affirms the need for "discernment", development of appropriate skills, and knowledgeable responsibility to a tradition (aspects that call for some "professionalism"), but points up responsibility to the community, for the total manifestation of the Spirit only exists in the community. This should humble any false professionalism, and elitism.

Types of Direction

One might classify direction into:

1. Private and individual (one on one)

The advantages and disadvantages with this can easily be guessed at. One difficulty is that there are not enough directors for those desiring direction. This will become particularly true if there is any success in advocating that the primary ministry of the church is spiritual direction. Though there is a definite advantage in working with a professional spiritual director, one may join oneself with a spiritual friend to engage in a common journey of mutual assistance, with full recognition of the limitations of knowledge of each. Experiential and informational discoveries are then made along the way and experts can be consulted when necessary through books or in person.

If one wishes to pursue spiritual direction as a professional, paraprofessional, or in the context of other forms of ministry (e.g. in parish ministry or pastoral counseling), this book should be a start though it focuses minimally on the techniques of spiritual direction. There are the spirituality centers which provide training and experience and there is a great deal of literature available today to assist those interested in some specialization.⁵⁶⁴ There are also some graduate programs in spirituality. It is also important to gain

⁵⁶⁴ For example:

Barry, William and Connolly, William, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, Seabury Press, 1982.

Edwards, Tilden, *Spiritual Friend: Reclaiming the Gift of Spiritual Direction*, Paulist Press, 1980.

Jones, Alan, *Exploring Spiritual Direction*, Seabury, 1982.

Van Kaam, Adrian, *The Dynamics of Spiritual Self-Direction*, Dimension Press, 1976.

In Search of Spiritual Identity, Dimension Press, 1975.

Foundational Formation, 4 vols., Crossroad, 1983ff

experience in practice under supervision, though unfortunately spiritual directors who can supervise direction are not readily accessible. If this is a real interest, one must do what one can, learn what one can, and always recognize one's limitations. Hopefully in the future more will be done in theological education to provide parish pastors with some knowledge and experience in this area.

2. Direction in common (distinct from group direction).

This would have to do with preaching, teaching, administration of the sacraments, etc., in the context of which spiritual formation might be explained and advocated. Depending on their understanding of their function, many on the church staff in an informal sense might function as "directors." Direction in common is to be distinguished from group direction by its usually taking place with larger groups and those in the group not necessarily having a clear interest in spiritual formation. Particularly important here is the way staff can be supportive of developing awareness of the spiritual and formative dimensions of life and the purposes of the Christian community. For those in a sacramental or liturgical tradition the celebration of Eucharist embodies many of the rhythms of the spiritual life and the liturgy eventually roots itself in one's mentality. Christian education, which has as its purpose formation rather than mere information, develops characteristics which focus upon the child's religious experience and life with God.

3. Group Direction

This is when a group of persons gather with a leader or director for the explicit purpose of spiritual formation. Some of the advantages of group direction are that the resources of the leader can be shared with more persons and that the insights and experiences shared by the participants illumine the nature of spirituality. The shortage of professional or paraprofessional directors, plus the fact that all do not need individual guidance, makes this more practical. The individual attention of individual direction is, of course, lost and there is the chance that some issues that might be shared in private will not be shared in group. If the director or leader provides for some opportunity for individual conferences this can be alleviated.

4. Pastoral Counseling/Direction

The pastoral counselor, in distinction from the purely secular therapist, would have as part of her/his concern the spiritual life of the person. The counselor would need to be responsible to the felt needs and crises which brought a client to therapy, but could deal with the spiritual dimensions of life as the client's needs call for this. It would seem to me that this could be a part of the understood contract between the counselor and the client because of the pastoral context of the counseling. If more formal and extended spiritual direction seems called for, the counselor and client would have to decide whether that would be appropriate or whether referral should be made. If Gerald May is right in his contemplative psychology, *Will and Spirit* and in *Addiction and Grace*, then interest in spirituality may also enable one to explore a methodology which will be helpful in dealing with the contents of the psyche.⁵⁶⁵ This is true not only of the value of a contemplative approach to the psyche, but also in the use of meditative and imaginative techniques as a way of enabling the contents of the psyche to be perceived, similar to what Jung called "active imagination."

Leech, Kenneth, *Soul Friend, The Practice of Christian Spirituality*, Harper and Row, 1980.

Merton, Thomas, *Spiritual Direction and Meditation*, Liturgical Press, 1960.

Thornton, Martin, *Spiritual Direction*, Cowley, 1984.

565. May, Gerald, *Will and Spirit: A Contemplative Psychology*, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1982. *Addiction and Grace*, Harper, 1988.

One of the major questions facing the pastoral counselor is the extent to which training in spirituality and the experience of direction is needed to understand and function within the full range of sensitivity and awareness appropriate to the pastoral counselor. Though there is now developing a significant body of literature on spirituality and pastoral care, there is little yet of which I am aware dealing with spirituality and the pastoral counselor or psychotherapist.⁵⁶⁶ An advisee of mine, Mrs. Louise Young, recently completed a Master of Arts in Pastoral Counseling thesis on "The Value of Spiritual Direction for the Personal and Professional Formation of the Pastoral Counselor/Psychotherapist, With Special Attention to the Ignatian Model of Spirituality." She is a pastoral counselor who has also been trained in spiritual direction at the Shalem Institute in Washington, DC, and has studied Ignatian spirituality. Ignatian spirituality which Jesuits often correlate with Jungian psychology, provides a helpful model for those sympathetic to Jungian psychology.

Mention should be made of several significant books which deal with spirituality in terms of psychoanalysis and Freudian psychology, since this is not treated elsewhere in this book. Ana-Maria Rizzuto explores Freud's understanding of religion and the ways in which childhood experience influences adult understandings of God.⁵⁶⁷ This book is most helpful, with its case histories, in understanding the ways in which inadequate resolution of Oedipal issues distort the understanding of God. W. W. Meissner, a Jesuit psychiatrist, provides an excellent treatment of Freud's struggle with religion, including discussion of Freud's long debate with Oskar Pfister. Pfister was a Lutheran clergyman who adopted the methods of psychoanalysis in pastoral care but strongly disagreed with Freud's interpretation of religion. Pfister was perhaps the only one of Freud's disciples with whom he was able to carry on a friendly debate which included strong differences of opinion. Meissner, who critiques Freud's major publications on religion, then shows how modern psychoanalysis has gone beyond Freud's understanding of religion as "illusion", to a rethinking of illusion as "an important aspect of man's capacity to involve himself in the world of his experience, a capacity that ultimately finds expression in man's creativity in shaping a human and meaningful environment and in achieving what Piaget describes as accommodation and assimilation."⁵⁶⁸ Here he is indebted to the thinking of Donald Winnicott. In his discussion of "Freedom in Psychoanalysis and In Theology" he concludes:

The general picture of human freedom that emerges from this juxtaposition of the theological and psychoanalytic perspectives is complex and ambiguous. The psychoanalytic view of man's limited freedom in a sense sets a realistic constraint on the extent to which the theological vision of the meaning of freedom can be realized in the actual human condition. The theological presumption that freedom is a necessary condition for a life of grace and indeed for any meaningful religious life is not absolute or itself unconditioned. The theological perspective, however, does not assert more than a defect in man's nature - a *vulnus naturae*. The theological concern, therefore, centers on the struggle to overcome the defect and thereby to achieve a full expression of humanity and human existence. Christian theology asserts as a basic postulate that man's nature does not in itself

⁵⁶⁶. Borchert, Gerald L. and Lester, Andrew D., eds., *Spiritual Dimensions of Pastoral Care*, Westminster, 1985.

Johnson, Ben Campbell, *Pastoral Spirituality: A Focus for Ministry*, Westminster Press, 1988.

Leech, Kenneth, *Spirituality and Pastoral Care*, Cowley, 1989.

Moreman, William, M., *Developing Spiritually and Professionally*, Westminster, 1984.

Thayer, Nelson, *Spirituality and Pastoral Care*, Fortress, 1985.

Johnson, Ben Campbell, *Pastoral Spirituality: A Focus for Ministry*, Westminster, 1988.

Journal of Pastoral Care, Kutztown, PA: XLIII, Summer 1989, No. 2.

⁵⁶⁷. Ana-Maria Rizzuto, MD, *The Birth of the Living God: A Psychoanalytic Study*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.

⁵⁶⁸. W. W. Meissner, S.J., M.D., *Psychoanalysis and Religious Experience*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984, p. 164.

possess the potentiality to overcome its intrinsic limitation and defect. The power of God through grace is required.

The psychoanalytic perspective, on the other hand, has no interest in theological suppositions or implications. It is concerned with the actual conditions and constraints of the exercise of human freedom. Moreover, it makes its business the discovery of the nature of intrinsic impediments to the individual's realization of a sense of autonomy. In a sense, then, theology takes up where psychoanalysis leaves off.

While the divergence and differences must be respected, the important and enlarged areas of mutual reinforcement and dialogue should not be ignored. If psychoanalysis sets limits on the realization of the theological ideal, it nonetheless addresses the terms on which the theological dimension defines itself. By the same token, the theological endeavor can no longer make an unquestioned presumption of the presence or exercise of freedom without taking into account the actual extent of realized freedom in individual humans. Insight into the human conditions of freedom is the preserve of psychoanalysis and its related disciplines. In essence, then, theological reflection cannot take place in a vacuum, as it too often has done in the past. It necessarily involves a theological anthropology that cannot sustain itself without psychoanalytic input.⁵⁶⁹

In all of the above categories, it is important for those assuming responsibility for more professional spiritual direction to have clearly in mind psychological models, an understanding of life and its dynamics, and some models of Christian faith and life they wish to advocate. This involves not only an understanding of how one would approach spiritual direction, but an adequate consciousness of one's own preferences so as to be conscious of how these may intrude themselves into the process and prevent one from adequately hearing what the directee is describing. One must be sure adequately to listen to and hear the client before one intentionally brings one's models and understandings into play.

Understanding the Goals of Spiritual Direction

The process of spiritual direction is clearly affected by what one hopes to accomplish through it and how one understands it. The director ought to have in mind the goals that are seen as harmonious with the Christian life, but goals should also become explicit in the contract with and expectations and needs of the individual. Of course there are goals which are inappropriate and this should be made clear. There are also ways, as in counseling, where the gifts of the director and the needs of the directee need to coincide and not all directors can work with all persons.

Sometimes goals have to do with personal growth and deepening of spiritual sensitivities. At other times discernment of vocation or life directions may be primary, as was the original intention of the *Ignatian Exercises*.

It is important to keep in mind the following:

1) It would seem to be appropriate to conclude that always, in some way, the primary goal is the deepening of the relationship with God and opening one's life to God's participation and direction. The

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid. pp. 239-240.

deepening of the relationship should have consequences in many areas of life and these can be dealt with as they appear. This is the primary relationship in which we find ourselves loved and enabled.

2) The cultivation of attention. Attention is valuable in so many areas of life, but especially in the spiritual life. Attention is attained by the stilling of all that would draw us away from our primary object. Thus it is symbolized by silence. However, it is an active silence. It is also a loving attention, for love is the libidinal quality of the energy of attention.

3) Since openness to the spiritual dimension of life also creates openness to the mystery of one's own being, materials should be expected to emerge from the unconscious and will merge with, implement, or hinder spiritual growth. Patient discernment is important here. Patient discernment is discernment which does not rush in too quickly, but listens.

4) The cultivation of willingness, not willfulness (Gerald May's terms in *Will and Spirit*), the giving up of the attempt to control everything, and a sensitivity to the dynamics of one's own inner life and the spiritual life is important. Living with the mystery of our own inner life is analogous to living with the mystery of the spiritual world. We can't control either. Such willingness does not mean that we surrender all self-control, but that we always stay open to what is not self-controlled.

5) A recognition that the spiritual life involves growth and change, that it is dynamic. This means that one cannot merely look for peace and rest and must face the pain of growth and the grieving due to change. It is to be understood that "dark nights" are at times part of the growth process. As important as growth and integration are, it should be recognized that deep spirituality as gift may exist where there is little development, though it may not have much articulation.

6) Manipulation and the desire for magic changes must gradually be surrendered.

7) Honesty about resistance and feelings is important. They are integral to our humanity and accepted by the God who loves us.

8) The resources and techniques of the spiritual life need to be provided and practiced.

9) As most spiritual masters indicate, though spirituality is in some sense for its own sake, its primary purpose is the enablement of life, love, and service, and it relates one to community in one's individuality.

10) Important as a starting point is the discernment of God and spiritual experience in the life of the directee. Thus a spiritual autobiography should be done, accompanied by a discussion of its results. This will help to discern life patterns, points at which God seems to have been experienced, perceptions of the spiritual dimensions of life, and understandings which can be built on and misunderstandings which will eventually have to be dealt with.

Relationship and Spiritual Direction

Much within this book assumes that in spirituality relationship is central, relationship with God and relationship with others. Christian life starts in a gift from God, a relationship which cannot be severed by the cross and all this symbolizes of human rejection. This gift is so astounding that not everywhere in the New Testament is it adequately grasped. The radical nature of God's gift in some traditions is perceived as dependent upon our performance, and blessing is pronounced only upon the obedient. In other traditions God's love is seen as only for the believer or the repentant sinner. And yet in the Parable of the Prodigal

there are no preconditions to love while in Philippians 2 Christ, as Adam in reverse, empties himself and becomes servant, not considering equality with God something to be grasped. So for Paul this should be the "mind" of the Philippians "if there is any incentive of love." I Peter develops an ethic for behavior of the Christian towards the non-Christian world based upon Christ's self-sacrifice. And there is the great hymn of love included by Paul in I Corinthians where human love, patterned after the divine, "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."⁵⁷⁰ This is the love from which nothing can separate us.⁵⁷¹

The limited perception of this love in some New Testament traditions attests to its radical nature, like some precious jewel discovered and hidden again in disbelief. There is so little love of this kind in the world, where does one find analogy for it? Even Jesus' use of "Abba, Father," for the relationship with God is defamiliarized in the polite phraseology of Matthew's form of the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father who art in heaven,"⁵⁷² a term that for some cannot speak of love because of childhood abuse or parental distance. I would venture to suggest that love for Paul is the unique power and yet unbelievability of the cross. In I Corinthians 1 Paul indicates that Greeks seek wisdom and Jews demand signs, but God gave a cross in which God makes foolish the wisdom of the world and the weak of the world find a source of life. Paul must not allow eloquence to decorate this display of God's powerful weakness, for it bears its own power to those "who are being saved" if not hidden by human eloquence or attempts to turn it into something that makes better sense. ⁵⁷³

Though spirituality relates to the whole of life, it starts in relationship and the primary task of direction is to do what one can to facilitate this relationship which is God's gift, but which we approach with fear, hesitation and doubt. To accept it we must go against much of experience and a great deal of culture, and the journey toward the God who is already there may be long and arduous.

In the learning of relationship there is a reciprocity between relationship with God, relationship with others, and relationship with the director. The issues which are in one relationship are in all. Though in spiritual direction the primary focus should be on the relationship with God, relationships with others and with the director will clue one to the difficulties and possibilities of relationship. The relationship with the director, as it develops, draws to it all of the issues of relationship with transference and projection from previous primary relationships. Thus the director should work hard on his/her own issues of relationship and willingness to be open to the love of God, or at least to be aware of one's own relational issues. Otherwise in countertransference the director will be drawn into the issues of the directee in ways that are not helpful.

Thus Barry and Connolly in their excellent book on spiritual direction make "Fostering the Contemplative Attitude" central.⁵⁷⁴ Contemplation creates an open space for God in which we may pay attention "to God as he reveals himself" and the directee may be helped to "recognize his reactions and decide on his responses to this God."⁵⁷⁵ As Simone Weil points out in her essay "The Right Use of School Studies With A View To the Love of God," many things contribute to the development of the contemplative attitude,⁵⁷⁶ and Barry and Connolly suggest as part of direction that the directees would benefit "from spending some

⁵⁷⁰. I Cor. 13:7

⁵⁷¹. Rom. 8:38-39

⁵⁷². Matthew 6:9.

⁵⁷³. I Cor. 1:17-2:5.

⁵⁷⁴. William A. Barry and William J. Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, NY: Seabury Press, 1982, pp. 46ff.

⁵⁷⁵. Ibid. p. 46.

⁵⁷⁶. Simone Weil, *Waiting for God*, NY: Capricorn Books, 1959.

time at first in some activity they enjoy that has a contemplative aspect to it," asking the Lord to make himself known within it and finding those "privileged places" where we can more explicitly place ourselves in the Lord's way.

To stay open to relationship with God means to work on issues of trust: that the One who loves us is really there and can be trusted. It means to eventually bring before God our whole life, including our history and our interior life: all that we are in our humanness. To bring our whole life before God has not only to do with the need to discover ourselves accepted by God, but to stay open to all the feelings and perceptions which are a part of the relationship. In staying open to all that comes we can be sensitive to the interplay between ourselves and God. To stay open to one's feelings is difficult for some and also opens the portals to the submerged feelings of the past. Thus as we pay attention to God and our presence to God, discernment may be needed as to the factors of our experience.

To exist with someone in trust and openness is a process filled with uncertainty and resistance, a learning to experience and be in new ways. Thus patience is its key.

As evident in the Jungian personality types, not all persons prefer an orientation to relationship in spirituality. It is true that intellectual activity is formative for many, as is action, and none of the modes of formation should be neglected. However, even if one is not inclined to a relational focus by preference or life-experience, relationship is so foundational to the Christian concept of spirituality that it can scarcely be avoided: the soul's ultimate longing in its restless search is for God. Moreover most of the New Testament sees the Christian life as the expression of this relationship and the dynamics it brings (i.e. the Spirit).

Congregational Groups

You really need three essential elements to start a group in your congregation. *First*, of course, is a group of interested persons. Their interest can be cultivated by preaching, teaching, personal conversation, and the support of relevant church boards and committees. *Second* is to have gone through an advocacy and decision making process which gives you the support of your church boards and committees. *Lastly*, you need to have a plan for your program -- which really should be first.

It is possible to have your group exist for its own purposes or to have it, or some within it, train and in the future provide leadership for other similar groups within the congregation. For the first group the pastor needs to provide leadership, and if the use of spiritual formation groups is intended in any way to impact the congregation as a whole, then leadership needs to be provided for the future beyond the availability of the pastor.

The intent of the groups is not only to foster devotional life, but to help congregational members explore the understanding and practice of their Christianity in its fullest sense. For this they need to discover what Christianity is, what the Gospel and the God it proclaims is about, how this will help them to live life as they experience it, how they can turn their life into a "calling," based upon their baptismal "ordination" to the ministry of the people of God, and how this calling impacts and dignifies all that they do. You will be leading them beyond the intellectual and traditional to where faith and life intersect.

Both for recruitment of participants and the decision making process of your boards you need to be able to express clearly what spiritual formation is and the way such a group would function, including its value to both individuals and the congregation.

Procedure:

1. *Decide on the goals of the group(s).* Though all such groups have spiritual formation as their goal, there can be particular goals for different groups. Besides a concern for helping persons to understand Christianity intellectually and experientially, foster development of devotional practice, encourage personal growth, there might be included a strong emphasis on helping laity to realize their vocation within the world, a design to support some mission or ministry of the congregation, and the inclusion of emphases on the spirituality of your own denominational tradition.

2. *Form the group(s).* You should examine the groups already extant within your congregation as a possible base. Often this will not work well because of already established agendas of each group unless some group wishes to commit its time temporarily to such a venture in order to provide better understanding of and spiritual support for its ministry. You will probably want to recruit a total group of 10-30 persons which would meet as a whole for instructional purposes and devotional exercises. This would then need to be broken down into smaller groups consisting of from 3 - 6 persons to provide opportunity for sharing and discussion. The large group should preferably include both men and women and does not need to be organized according to age groups, except as is necessary for instructional purposes. Since the church includes diverse persons brought together in Christ, any group concerned with spirituality should seek to foster this. In the small groups intended as a place of personal sharing the inclusion of diversity depends upon whether the members of the group can share, function well and establish trust. There should be some consideration also as to whether wives and husbands, or members of the same family, should be in the same small sharing group, basically depending on whether they will facilitate or hinder sharing. Since family members can be together in the larger instructional group, it would seem less awkward that they not be together in the small sharing groups.

Some may know of programs where spiritual friends were arranged for sharing on a two by two basis. My preference is for several persons in a sharing group. The exchange and insights are richer and if difficulties arise in the interaction of two persons others are present to provide balance.

3. *Design the program.* The group should meet together for at least three months. They may wish to decide to continue after that. Thus September through November or February through April would be good times to start a group. February through April could be joined with the special emphases of the Lenten and Easter season. It would be good for the group to covenant to meet together once a week for 1 1/2 to 2 hrs. If the meeting would need to be every other week, the program could begin with a retreat to start it off and establish personal relationships and trust.

The time could be used as follows, assuming a larger group for instructional purposes, and then smaller groups for sharing:

30-45 min. instruction and discussion

15-30 min. practice and experience of some devotional and spiritual techniques

10-15 min. break and snack

30 min. small group sharing

Instruction:

Your program will need some input which will provide persons with material to reflect on and enable spiritual growth related to the particular foci of your program. You can derive such instruction from the content of this book, or make use of a book designed especially for use with laity (see bibliography near the end of this chapter).

Devotional and Spiritual Techniques

There should be opportunity to explore devotional practices such as devotional reading, meditation, contemplation, intercession, developing a daily practice, etc..

Spiritual Autobiography

It is helpful to have persons write their spiritual autobiography in order to get in touch with the spiritual dimensions of their lives. The form provided in the chapter on "Spiritual Journey" could be used or modified.

Group Sharing:

Though this could be a place where reflection on the topics and experiences of the meeting could be shared, the primary purpose is to help each other with their spiritual and life journeys. Thus this is the place where spiritual autobiographies should be shared along with the experience of one's ongoing relationship with God and that to which God is leading one in life.

A Possible Outline for 12 Sessions

The sessions could focus around a book dealing with one of the several aspects of spirituality or could be structured as follows:

Session 1 *One Lord, Many Faiths*

The concern of this session would be to introduce how our common Christian heritage and commitment to Christ as Lord is lived out in various individual ways. Some of what has been discovered about personality type and faith development could be shared. Biblical studies could be done on the passage concerning the variety of spiritual gifts in I Cor. 12 or description of the individual faith journeys of such as Paul, Peter, and even Christ. The spiritual autobiography would be assigned for next time.

Session 2 *What's God Like?*

The presentation should focus on Jesus' teaching about God as Father and God's gracious love for God's children. Luke 15, and especially the parable of the Prodigal, gives good opportunity to discuss this. Also Luke 11, Jesus' teaching of the Lord's prayer, enables us to see how Jesus taught this as a part of prayer relationship with God. This then can be compared with the understanding of God that many carry with them from childhood and previous experience. The use of the Lord's prayer can be presented as a devotional technique and the autobiographies can be shared and discussed in small groups.

Session 3 *Discovering Our Gifts*

There are the gifts that our genetic inheritance provides, there are the opportunities to develop and be conscious of gifts that life gives us, and there are gifts that God gives us. Any of these God may call us to use within or outside the church. The passages about gifts in the N.T. could be examined, but gifts should be seen more broadly as ways in which we can express our faith and live to serve God and others. It is also important to talk about "roles," jobs that need to be done in which we may not be especially gifted. Gifts and roles are lived out not only in the church but in our everyday world. Each person needs to discover how this is so. Small groups could continue the autobiographies or share around the issue of gifts.

Session 4 *What's Life Like?*

This would be an examination of how the New Testament understood the complexity of life and what might be an equivalent way for us to understand life. Where is God in all of this. How do we understand suffering? Spiritual reading might be introduced as a devotional technique and the groups could deal with how each person understands and copes with suffering.

Session 5 *Growing Spiritually*

Here would be the place to provide a basic psychological model, including how the spiritual dimensions of the person might be seen. It is important to then explore what sort of spiritual growth is possible, what helps this growth, and what its limits are (including the continuing existence of our humanness). Paul's discussion of this in II Corinthians 3-5 and elsewhere would prove helpful. It should be kept in mind that growth is not only a growth in "being" but also in "doing." An exercise in meditation on Scripture could be provided. Group discussion could deal with the issues experienced related to "growing."

Session 6 *Being Christian in my Body*

This could be an extension of the previous session, but focusing especially on how early Christianity gained a dualistic perspective from its background and how we need to gain a new understanding of what it means to be spiritual in a body. This also means learning to live with and understand the way our bodies are without rejecting and repressing our humanity so that it functions without our awareness. Of particular importance is the handling of sexuality since men and women are called together into a common ministry by Christ. An exercise here

might be one in which attention is directed meditatively towards one's body, feelings, and the self which exists through the body. There should be plenty for the group to discuss on this subject.

Session 7 *Some Elements of Christian Devotion*

This would be an opportunity to acquaint persons with the many elements that have been a part of "practicing our relationship with God." The value of each should be indicated and they could begin to think about how each would like to develop their personal discipline. Various aspects of these elements could be introduced in the coming weeks. A few have already been introduced. The material on "Christian Praying" in the chapter of "Forming A Spiritual Discipline" could be used. Some acquaintance with devotional literature should be provided. The exercise for the evening could focus on intercession, which would then become a part of group life and individual practice thereafter.

Session 8 *Silence - Just Being With God*

So much of life is connected with activity and accomplishment. We also have little experience of just being with ourselves and with God, so that it seems strange. Being with God satisfies our basic human needs, and yet we are attached to so many other things. How do we simplify life and rest in our relationship with God, using this as a resource for living. This session could be a time to teach the techniques of relaxing mind and body, of simply being with God in silence. Group discussion could focus on this.

Session 9 *Developing a Spiritual Discipline*

This would involve some reflection on what has already been experienced and found helpful. What might then constitute a practice of one's Christianity and devotional life would be planned in the light of further information shared and a planning process which would be provided participants. The hope is to get each person to think about committing themselves to Christian practice and devotions which are reasonable for them and necessary to support their Christian life and carry out the vocation God gives them. Here commitment to living out Christian responsibility at work and at home would be as important as devotional practices. This commitment would be seen as something that would be open to constant review according to the changing circumstances of life.

Session 10 *Making Christian Decisions*

This session would help persons understand the guidance which the Bible provides and what it does not provide, the role of Jesus as our Lord in decision making, and the presence of God in the Spirit to help decision making. It will examine how complex situations can be in which we try to be responsible and how some decisions need to be made that we can never be sure are completely right. It should also include some treatment of the difference between Christian values and societal values and how this creates difficulty for decision making in non-Christian contexts. This points up the need for God's love and forgiveness as we try to live a Christian life in a complex world.

Session 11 *Sharing Faith and Life With Others*

This session would help persons understand how the Christian faith and understanding of life is something to be shared with others. The way we would try to share it is bound up with our

understanding of what it is. The Christian faith is about God's love and gracious invitation into relationship (in a world that doesn't believe much in gracious love), and the Christian life is about how we can live responsibly for God in a complex world. Thus sharing faith and life is first of all living it out. Secondly, it is sharing our understanding as we are able, as we find God making people ready to listen or as their life situations provide opportunities. It is not forcing people to believe before they are ready to believe. God is their creator and so God can be trusted to have a process for them with which we should cooperate and which we should not force. Gentleness is a key word. I Peter 3:13-18 is a good passage through which to deal with this. One of the important things that Christians have to share is their understanding of life which enables them to live and face life's difficulties. Many persons are looking for a meaningful understanding of life and some clue as to how to live it. The devotional portion of the evening might take participants through an imaginative reliving of John 4 and have them listen in on what the Samaritan woman says to her townspeople when she returns to her village. In the small groups each person might be asked to briefly share their understanding of the Christian faith. If the next session is to be the last, then some plans should be made to celebrate the experience together and to determine whether the small groups would wish to continue as support groups.

Session 12 Summation and Celebration

This session should be focused on summing up what has happened to the group and what has been learned. It might include not only the summary and challenge of the pastor, but the comments of several of the participants. Some time should be given for small groups to meet and the session should conclude with a worship service, perhaps utilizing John Wesley's Covenant liturgy.

There are many books available which could be very helpful in developing a course of study and formation for lay persons.⁵⁷⁷ One such book, focusing on the style of Christian leadership, appropriate for

577.

Developing a Spiritual Life

Foster, Richard, *The Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, Harper and Row, 1978.

Nouwen, Henri, *Reaching Out: Three Movements of the Spiritual Life*, Doubleday, 1975.

Edwards, Tilden, *Living Simply Through the Day*, Paulist Press, 1977.

Use of the imagination/ meditation

Kelsey, Morton, *The Other Side of Silence: A Guide to Christian Meditation*, Paulist Press, 1976.

de Mello, Anthony, *Sadhana, A Way to God: Christian Exercises in Eastern Form*, Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1978.

Suffering

Allen, Diogenes, *The Traces of God In a Frequently Hostile World*, Cowley, 1981.

Spirituality and the Jungian psychological model

Welch, John, *Spiritual Pilgrims: Carl Jung and Teresa of Avila*, Paulist Press, 1982.

Lay Spirituality

Muto, Susan, and van Kaam, Adrian, *Commitment: Key to Christian Maturity: Discovering God through faithfulness to our daily commitments*, NY: Paulist Press, 1989.

Muto, Susan and van Kaam, Adrian with McBride, Susan, *A Workbook and Guide for Commitment, Key to Christian Maturity*, Paulist Press, 1990.

Susan Muto and Adrian van Kaam have also produced six video tapes in a series entitled *Becoming Spiritually Mature*, available from Epiphany Association, 1145 Beechwood Boulevard, Pittsburgh, PA 15206-4517.

Spiritual Reading

Muto, Susan, *A Practical Guide to Spiritual Reading*, Dimension, 1976 (contains annotated bibliography on devotional classics).

Spiritual Diaries

Nouwen, Henri, *Genesee Diary: Report from a Trappist Monastery*, Doubleday, 1976.

both laity and clergy, is Henri Nouwen's *In The Name of Jesus*. I would like to conclude this chapter with a review of it because it so well portrays the way Christ calls the Christian community to his style of life and raises issues about cultural values.

Henri Nouwen, *In The Name of Jesus*

There is much in Christianity that is contra-cultural. One only has to regard the crucifixion which has become Christianity's central symbol to realize the tension between what seems to be said in the cross and the values of the world that crucified Jesus. This tension is clearly presented in the Gospels when Jesus refuses the traditional Messianic mission, speaks of his own coming suffering, and struggles with his disciples over the differences in their understanding.⁵⁷⁸ It is no accident that the temptations in Matthew and Luke are really quite like what many Jews understood to be the Messianic mission.

One cannot criticize Judaism for not understanding Jesus' mission. Jesus' disciples did not either, at least during his life time, and the history of much New Testament theology can be written in terms of the struggle of the post-resurrection church over the cross: whether to keep it in their paradigm or to regard it as merely a historical event of the past but not formative of the present. Luke in Acts, as did many of the Gentile converts, preferred the resurrection without the cross as a paradigm. It is not only that the Mysteries Religions of the ancient world saw the death of the Saviour only as prelude to the resurrection and without special meaning (except as reflecting the tragedies of life), but that no one really wants to buy into all of the implications of the cross -- unless that is God's way.

Nouwen's book is an excellent presentation of the contra-cultural nature of Christianity in the form of "Reflections on Christian Leadership," a new/old paradigm for Christian leadership in the twenty-first century. I call this new because it runs against the way we have often understood leadership. But it is old, because it is Jesus' way, much like the new/old commandment to love in I John 1:7ff. In it Nouwen "stays as close to my own heart as possible,"⁵⁷⁹ for it is not merely a theological exercise but the way he has chosen to live, among the retarded children of God in the L'Arche community, leaving the academic world which was part of his life for many years. Jean Vanier, founder of L'Arche, had said to Nouwen during a period of burnout: "Go and live among the poor in spirit, and they will heal you."⁵⁸⁰

Gracias: A Latin American Journal, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983.

The Road to Daybreak, Doubleday, 1988

Christian Leadership

Henri Nouwen, *In The Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership*, NY: Crossroad, 1989.

Creation Spirituality

Fox, Matthew, *Original Blessing: A Primer in Creation Spirituality*, Bear and Company, 1983.

Personality Type, Gifts, Lay Ministry and Spirituality

Harbaugh, Gary L., *God's Gifted People: Discovering and Using Your Spiritual and Personal Gifts*, Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988.

Faith Development

Stokes, Kenneth, *Dynamics of Adult Faith Development: Faith Is A Verb*, Mystic, CN: Twenty-Third Publications, 1989.

Social Action and Spirituality (Church of the Saviour, Washington)

O'Conner, Elizabeth, *Journey Inward, Journey Outward*, Harper and Row, 1968.

Business and Spirituality

Ray, Michael and Myers, Rochelle, *Creativity in Business*, Doubleday, 1986.

578: Mark 8:27-38; 10:35-45.

579. Henri Nouwen, *In The Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership*, NY: Crossroad, 1989, p. 9.

580. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

It is divided into three sections, each of which move from one of the temptations of Jesus to the call of Jesus to ministry in the conversation with Peter in John 21, resulting also in a call to a discipline. The first temptation is "to be relevant," a prevalent issue in a professional, self-confident and controlling culture. The call to Peter is really a call to respond to God's "first love," as it became flesh in the heart of Jesus, with our "second love." The discipline which makes this possible is contemplative prayer, "dwelling in the presence of the One who keeps asking us, 'Do you love me? Do you love me?'"⁵⁸¹ It is not enough to be moral, well informed, professional and relevant. "For Christian leadership to be truly fruitful in the future, a movement from the moral to the mystical is required."⁵⁸²

The second temptation is to be spectacular, seeing leadership as essentially an individual affair of a solo performer. Rather is it communal and mutual. Leadership is that of the servant -- "in which the leader is a vulnerable servant who needs the people as much they need him or her."⁵⁸³ The discipline is confession of our brokenness and asking forgiveness from those to whom we minister. These are "the concrete forms in which sinful people love one another,"⁵⁸⁴ where leaders and people confess together their humanity, lay aside their fear and share their deep pain.

Carl Jung in his autobiography says much the same of the therapist:

The doctor is effective only when he himself is affected. "Only the wounded physician heals." But when the doctor wears his personality like a coat of armor, he has no effect. I take my patients seriously. Perhaps I am confronted with a problem as much as they. It often happens that the patient is exactly the right plaster for the doctor's sore spot. Because this is so, difficult situations can arise for the doctor too - or rather, especially for the doctor.⁵⁸⁵

The third temptation is to be powerful, one of the major sins of the church throughout the centuries. This temptation is an "easy substitute for the hard task of love."⁵⁸⁶ Peter in John 21 is reminded that ultimately life will be outside of his control. This is a downward mobility where out of strength "power is constantly abandoned in favor of love."⁵⁸⁷ The discipline here is "strenuous theological reflection" which "will allow us to discern critically where we are being led,"⁵⁸⁸ "to be able to discern from moment to moment how God acts in human history and how the personal, communal, national and international events that occur during our lives can make us more and more sensitive to the ways in which we are led to the cross and through the cross to the resurrection."⁵⁸⁹ It is "reflecting on the painful and joyful realities of every day with the mind of Jesus and thereby raising human consciousness to the knowledge of God's gentle guidance."⁵⁹⁰

581. Ibid., p. 28.

582. Ibid., p. 32.

583. Ibid., p. 45.

584. Ibid., p. 46.

585. Carl Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, recorded and edited by Aniela Jaffe, transl. by Richard and Clara Winston, NY: Vintage Books, Random House, 1961, p. 134.

586. Henri Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus*, p. 39.

587. Ibid., p. 63.

588. Ibid., p. 65.

589. Ibid., pp. 66-67.

590. Ibid., p. 68.

In a world where Christian leadership is called upon to be so many things and compete with the world of professionalism and management, Nouwen calls upon us to be who we are. If we are not who we are in God, then we have nothing unique to offer and suffer that primal pain of being called from our true being.

The difficulty is that we must live in the world also as well as in God, but as Peter indicates in I Peter, we are aliens and exiles,⁵⁹¹ who know that we are "chosen -- in the foreknowing of God the Father, by means of the action by which the Spirit sets one apart, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling with his blood,"⁵⁹² born anew to a living hope by a glimpse of the transcendent through the resurrection of Jesus.⁵⁹³ Peter grasps here as no other New Testament writer that we must honor all humanity and live the same redemptive purpose towards the world as Christ.⁵⁹⁴ Thus Peter speaks of civic, familial, and slave-master ethics where all relationships, though cast in terms of first century social structures, are to be the expression of what we draw from the heart of God through Christ.⁵⁹⁵ As Peter says in a lovely poem:

Without having seen him (Christ),
 You love him;
Though you do not now see him
 You rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy.
As the outcome of your faith
 You obtain the salvation of your souls.⁵⁹⁶

591. I Peter 1:1, 2:11.

592. I Peter 1:2, my translation.

593. I Peter 1:3-4.

594. I Peter 2:17, 3:18.

595. I Peter 2:11-3:12.

596. I Peter 1:8-9.