

Spiritual Direction is a Relationship

Pope John Paul II Meditation on Givenness:

- “[I]n creating man as man and woman, God imprints on humanity the mystery of that communion which is the essence of his interior life.”
- “Can one man say to another, ‘God has given you to me?’ As a young priest, I once heard my spiritual director say to me: ‘Perhaps God wills to give that person to you.’ These were words of encouragement, urging me to trust God and accept the gift one man becomes for another.”

St. Paul’s Model of Spiritual Fatherhood (Motherhood)

Gal 4:19 - *My little children, with whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you!*

1 Cor 4:14-16 - ¹⁴ *I do not write this to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children.* ¹⁵ *For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel.* ¹⁶ *I urge you, then, be imitators of me.*

1 Thess 2:11-12 - ¹¹ *for you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you* ¹² *to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.*

With a Spiritual Father/Mother, Poverty Becomes Littleness

Mt 18:1-4 - At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” ² And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them, ³ ¶ and said, “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

St. Therese – little one = *haser lev*

For me to become great is impossible. I must bear with myself and my many imperfections; but I will seek out a means of getting to Heaven by a little way—very short and very straight, a little way that is wholly new...I read these words uttered by the Eternal Wisdom Itself: “*Whosoever is a little one, let him come to Me.*”... Thine Arms, then, O Jesus, are the lift which must raise me up even unto Heaven. To get there I need not grow; on the contrary, I must remain little, I must become still less. (Story of a Soul, Ch. IX)

What does littleness mean?

“It is to recognize our nothingness, to expect everything from God as a little child expects everything from her father; it is to be disquieted about nothing, and not to be set on making our [own] living....it is not to become discouraged over one's faults,

for children fall often, but they are too little to hurt themselves very much.” (*Last Conversations*)

The fruit of confidence

I ought to be extremely sorry at sleeping (for seven years) during my prayers and *my times of thanksgiving*. Well, I’m not sorry ... I think that *little children* please their parents as much when they’re asleep as when they’re awake. I think that in order to perform operations, doctors put their patients to sleep. Finally, I think that the Lord “knows how much we are formed, he remembers that we are dust” [Ps. 103:14].

Monastic Model: Spiritual Direction is a Relationship of Self-Revelation

“It is noteworthy in this passage that the starets assists his disciple not by words of counsel alone but by the pattern of his entire life...what he offers is not so much instruction as a personal relationship” (Bp Kallistos Ware, Foreword to *Spiritual Direction in the Christian East*, xi).

St. Benedict – reveal all your inner thoughts

- Novices are entrusted to a “senior chosen for his skill in winning souls” and he is called to “look after them with careful attention” (RB 58:6)
- One of the tools for good works: “As soon as wrongful thoughts come into your heart, dash them against Christ and disclose them to the spiritual father” (RB 4:50).
- “[The] fifth step of humility is that a man does not conceal from his abbot any sinful thoughts entering his heart, or any wrongs committed in secret, but rather confesses them humbly.” (RB 7:44)

Positive Effects of the Relationship

Vulnerability Heals (Relationship creates a “brave space”)

- The Woman at the Well
- The Man with the Withered Hand
- The Ten Lepers
- Blind Bartimaeus
- Man at the Pool of Bethesda (Pope Leo XIV’s audience this week)

St. Ignatius – revealing thoughts defeats desolation

“In the same way, when the enemy of human nature brings his wiles and persuasions to the just soul, he wishes and desires that they be received and kept in secret; but when one reveals them to one’s good confessor or to another spiritual person, who knows his deceits and malicious designs, it weighs on him very much, because he perceives that he will not be able to succeed with the malicious undertaking he has begun, since his manifest deceits have been revealed.” (Rule #13)