



**Dominican Center Marywood
at Aquinas College**

a ministry of Dominican Sisters-Grand Rapids

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SPIRITUAL FORMATION PROGRAMS

SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR PRACTICUM OVERVIEW

Spiritual direction can best be described as the art of contemplative listening carried out in the context of a one-to-one trusting relationship. It is when one competent guide journeys with another person, listening to that person's life story with an ear for the movement of the Holy Spirit, of the Divine, and offering response as is appropriate. An important component of listening is discernment of patterns and relationships that lead toward God or away from God. The director and directee become co-listeners, or co-discerners, who sit before the Word as it stirs in the heart of the directee.

In the ancient Christian tradition of spiritual direction it has always been understood that God is the director and the spiritual director assists the seeker in uncovering and discovering the direction of God in that person's life. This enables the directee to receive and reverence God's action and invitation in such a way that it elicits a natural and genuine response. We believe that God is active in all areas of life. Therefore, in addition to listening to the personal and interpersonal stories of others, spiritual directors are assisted to learn how to listen to the wider context of the directee's life - the communal, organizational, and environmental arenas in which people experience God acting in their lives.

After attuning our ears to the whispers of the Spirit through *Lectio Divina*, hearing a word within the Word of God, we turn our attention to the words of our directees' sharing. At Dominican Center the insights and foundation of Ignatius of Loyola's Spiritual Exercises are enhanced by the Dominican charism of contemplative prayer, shared study, and community building for the purpose of service. Our service provides direction, support, and discernment for others' spiritual journeys.

THE CHARISM AND CALL

The first indication that someone is called to the ministry of spiritual direction is that others are seeking that person out. It does not originate with the idea that this is something I want or something at which I would be good, like any other career move. The person is already engaged in contemplative listening and responding to others and is deeply committed to his or her personal spiritual journey. A maturity about life and a depth of "good" theology, psychology, and spirituality are evident. The starting point is the presence of the charism, as gift for and to the Church, a ministry to the people of God; a gift that can then be fine-tuned in a spiritual direction training, education/formation program. The focus of such a program is on the doing of spiritual direction under the guidance of an individual mentor/supervisor. Those completing the program receive a certificate of completion. This is not a credential because there is no certifying body for spiritual directors as of yet. Spiritual Directors International (SDI) continues to hold discussions on this topic at its annual conference.

REQUIREMENTS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Spiritual directors journey with and assist in discerning spiritual experiences and the Spirit's direction in the interior life of the other, as well as confirm or challenge those experiences and sometimes suggest paths of growth in grace. They consequently need to have considerable experience of the inner life and a reasonable depth of knowledge of their own faith tradition, theology, scripture, spirituality and ethics as well as a degree of psychological health in one's life. They need to be well grounded in their own spiritual formation and reflect significant inner freedom – a discerning heart.

FORMAL REQUIREMENTS FOR ADMISSION TO THE PRACTICUM

- Completion of Foundations in Spirituality with not more than two missed sessions
- Rooted in a faith tradition
- Willingness to reflect on personal experience and participate fully in practicum
- Basic foundation in spirituality, theology, scripture, psychology, and/or a BA degree in one of these areas or equivalent experience
- Experience as a directee in individual or group spiritual direction for one to two years
- Recommendations by others for the ministry of spiritual direction
- Already sought out by others for this ministry
- Attendance at all sessions
- Annual directed retreat within each year of the Spiritual Formation program

TWO-YEAR SPIRITUAL DIRECTION PRACTICUM REQUIREMENTS FOR COMPLETION

- Three modules each year focused on Spiritual Direction, Christian Discernment, and Adult Development
- A written integration paper for each module
- Required readings for each module (2-3 books per module and 2-3 articles)
- Experiential sessions that involve the participants in an adult learning model of small and large group work, prayer and reflection, individual presentations, art work, videos, and more
- Peer group at each session
- Meeting directees for spiritual direction sessions outside session time (6-8 over the two years)
- One-hour meeting with an individual spiritual direction mentor (assigned by staff) once a month outside session time for a total of nine meetings each year.
- Preparation of a spiritual direction conversation for each mentor meeting
- Continued development of a life of prayer and contemplation and on-going review of a personal Rule of Life
- Extensive study of the Spiritual Exercises and Guidelines for Discernment of St. Ignatius of Loyola
- Annual 4- or 6-day directed retreat
- On-going discernment of the call to the ministry of spiritual direction

The Spiritual Direction Practicum draws heavily on the readings and work begun in Foundations in Spirituality. Study of the mystics and great spiritual teachers, or Spiritual Giants, influences all aspects of the program and formation process. Each participant is asked to choose one of these “giants” as a personal spiritual mentor to help deepen one's charism and approach to the spiritual direction ministry as a complement to the appropriation and application of the teachings of St. Ignatius.

ADDITIONAL PROGRAM DETAILS

Participants (now called Associate Spiritual Directors) are expected to have as many as 4 – 6 directees over the course of the practicum – the place where theory and practice meet. Associate Spiritual Directors are strongly encouraged to receive their own spiritual direction throughout the Spiritual Direction Practicum. Dominican Center staff will assist Associate Spiritual Directors in finding directees, but ultimately it is the responsibility of the Associate Spiritual Director. It is most important that you have as broad an experience of individual directees as possible during the program. Attendance at all sessions is expected.

PROGRAM FEES / \$2,000 PER YEAR

- Cost of tuition/materials/handouts (does not cover required text books)
- Meals/breaks
- Monthly individual mentoring/supervision
- Resource persons

APPLICATION FEE / \$25

- Includes administration and interview costs

PAYMENT

We recommend payment be made in quarterly installments in September, November, February, and May of each year, payable to Dominican Center. Limited scholarship or matching grant money is available.

Dominican Center may match a parish/church grant up to \$175 and grant some scholarships of \$125.00) After acceptance into the practicum forms will be made available to participants.

REQUIRED READING

The required reading list and final overview of the program is made available in late summer for those accepted into the program. In addition, articles are made available during the program. The list of required texts are available upon acceptance.

APPLICATION SUBMISSION

To be considered for the Spiritual Direction Program we must receive your application materials, application fee, and two recommendations. Please submit all materials and application fee to:

Diane Zerfas, OP, Spirituality Program Coordinator
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