

## "To Lead an Apostolic Community, Under Authority, That Brings People to Jesus Christ."

### Bishop's Note: March 17th, 2016 Spiritual Disciplines - Spiritual Direction

As I write this Bishop's Note I am in Asheville, North Carolina, on retreat with several bishops from around the Anglican Church in North America. Not surprisingly, we are hitting on the subject of our walk with Christ and the importance of being both under Spiritual Direction and serving as a Spiritual Director.

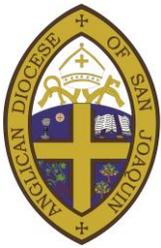
I was first introduced to the whole concept of Spiritual Direction back in 1979. I was in my first year of college and had just begun my journey with the Third Order of the Society of St. Francis. Fr. Bob Woodfield, the associate priest at All Saints, Long Beach - my home parish - was also a Third Order Franciscan. As an aspirant with the Third Order, one of my tasks was to establish a Franciscan Rule of Life, which included, at the top of the list, meeting monthly with a Spiritual Director. I went to Fr. Woodfield for assistance. "What is a Spiritual Director?" I asked. Fr. Woodfield explained that a Spiritual Director is a mature Christian whose life demonstrates a deep and abiding relationship with Jesus Christ, who is gifted as a compassionate listener, and who has the gift of discernment. Fr. Woodfield explained that normally one meets monthly with their Spiritual Director, who, if a priest, can also be your confessor. However, being a Spiritual Director is not uniquely a priestly gifting. Any mature Christian may be called and gifted to serve as a Spiritual Director. Fr. Woodfield explained that a Spiritual Director helps us discern how Christ is active in our lives, and how we can be more attentive to Him and to the Holy Spirit moving in and among us. Fr. Woodfield also explained that Spiritual Direction is not psychological counseling. There is generally no fee for a Spiritual Director; they don't practice psychoanalysis or psychology, they simply listen attentively, give feedback and direction on how to draw closer to God, and on how to live out our lives as God's adopted Children.

Needless to say, Fr. Woodfield was my first Spiritual Director thirty six years ago, and I've been in Spiritual Direction ever since. What a blessing to have someone who listens to me in a nonjudgmental way, and who has the authority to speak the truth to me in love. I value deeply the mirror that my Director holds up to me and the Grace that he helps me live into.

I wonder if the Lord might be calling you into a relationship with a Spiritual Director? These are men and women whom you trust and who demonstrate a mature Christian life. This Lent, perhaps you could have a conversation with one of your clergy and ask them about Spiritual Direction?

I would also bid your prayers as we establish, within the Diocese, the Schofield Institute for Spiritual Direction and Pastoral Care. It is our prayer that in the next eighteen months we can call and fund a director, set aside a space, and establish a curriculum to train men and women across the diocese and across the country to become Spiritual Directors.

Please join me in prayer... "Almighty God, father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you for the gift of your son and His example of leading people to recognize the Kingdom of God in their midst. We thank you for the men and women throughout the centuries who have picked up this ministry and faithfully served the church. We pray that you will raise up in the Anglican Diocese of San Joaquin



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men and women who are willing and able to pick up the torch and serve you by becoming Spiritual Directors. This we humbly ask in the name of your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen."