

In this season of thanksgiving, reflection, and prayer, consider how you nuture your long term relationship with God, with yourself, and with your neighbors.

We also ask for your support as we close out the year and plan for the year to come.

Christine, FSC's Director



a word from Eileen

The Gift of Long-Term Relationships

Like a marriage, long-term spiritual direction relationships can develop an intimacy that can only develop over time as a result of shared history.

There are several directees I've seen during my tenure at the Franciscan Spiritual Center (approaching eleven years now.) While we don't finish each other's sentences, as some married couples can, a shared language does arise over time. Short-hand allusions to repeated dream imagery or past events and their consequences.

Heartaches and losses shared, joys experienced together. Spiritual practices that have deepened or been set aside. Vocational expressions that have changed. Deepening attention to the Holy in ordinary life.

It is both astonishing and humbling to be a part of someone's life in such a deep way, over an extensive period of time. I've had a Thomas Merton quotation on my desk for so long I don't remember where I found it. But it does speak to one of the gifts of a long-term spiritual direction relationship.

"All the good that you will do will come not from you but from the fact that you have allowed yourself to be used by God's love. Think of this more and gradually you will be free from the need to prove yourself and you can be more open to the power that will work through you without your knowing it."

In other words, it's not about me. AND spiritual direction is a front-row seat to work that God has been doing in another's life all along.

One charism of monastic life is stability: staying in one place long enough to become rooted. A good, long-term relationship is like that. Becoming rooted together, the directee trusts me to be present in pain, if that's what is going on. I trust the directee to know how far they can go in becoming present to "the same old pain," perhaps this time in a new way.

Sometimes a directee will come to address a specific issue in their life. Maybe they are grieving the loss of a parent, or trying to discern a new direction in their career, or longing for a child they will never have. God, apparently, is never in a hurry. The directee and I can sometimes tread the same path month after month before the directee realizes the decision has already been made. Or the pain has been transformed. Or they have discovered their heart's desire differently. The patience of a long-term relationship allows that to happen in God time.

Not all spiritual direction relationships are long-term. Sometimes a person comes to direction with one question on their mind, and when that's resolved, they move on to other spiritual communities and practices. Sometimes individual direction doesn't meet their felt need, and they are more comfortable in group spiritual direction. Sometimes another director is a better fit. These are more reminders that it's not about me.

That is SUCH good news. When we train Franciscan spiritual directors, we remind the students that Holy Spirit is the “real” director. In any spiritual direction conversation, there are really three conversations: Holy Spirit with the directee, Holy Spirit with the director, Holy Spirit with the two of you. It is such a privilege to engage in this intimate three-way conversation with both the Creator and the created. It is a deep privilege to do this over the course of many years.

Peace and all good,

Eileen Parfrey
Spiritual Director and Training Program & Retreat Facilitator

November 2026

To make a year end charitable donation to the
Franciscan Spiritual Center
PO Box 144, Marylhurst, OR 97036
or
use our online portal.

Give

To learn more about our Spiritual Direction Training Program and to apply, see our website.

Our Website

Franciscan Spiritual Center | PO Box 144 3159 Furman Dr. | Marylhurst, OR 97036 US

Unsubscribe | Update Profile | Constant Contact Data Notice

Constant Contact

Try email marketing for free today!