

Franciscan Season of Giving

a word from Tom...

Together, we are entering a season of prayer and thanksgiving.

We share with you the voices of our Franciscan community as an invitation to recognize what is sacred in your life.

We also invite your partnership through financial support.

With your gifts, we can reach our \$30,000 goal and continue this work into the year ahead.



What do you think of when you hear a word like “supervisor” and “supervision?” Someone watching over you? A boss? Something or someone you hope to avoid? When I was participating in a forensic psychiatry fellowship years ago, supervision meant having my written evaluations scrutinized by a wise, but exacting mentor. No misplaced comma or dangling participle went unnoticed. Luckily, at the Franciscan

Spiritual Center supervision has a much different definition, and I have the privilege to provide it as well as receive it.

For spiritual directors, supervision is a process of examining what is going on within themselves as they meet with directees. This is usually accomplished in group, sometimes called peer supervision. A director prepares a summary of a situation they have encountered in a spiritual direction session. The focus is on the director not the directee. The director formulates a focus question and enlists the help of his or her peers in examining what might be the deeper meaning behind a strong feeling arising, a sense of wonderment, or what insights the director might have received. This process is similar to the type of supervision I received during my psychotherapy training and later with a peer group.

When I was in psychiatric residency, I saw patients for ongoing psychotherapy, sometimes weekly, for up to three years. Supervision with a faculty member, both individually and in a group of my peers, looked at phenomena like transference and countertransference. Although spiritual direction is not psychotherapy, similar phenomena can arise. The director can experience feelings or respond in a way that mirrors how they reacted to a significant person in his or her life. These reactions are often unavoidable, but with supervision a director can better identify them when they happen and not let them interfere with being fully present and responsive to a directee.

The supervision process requires a great deal of openness and authenticity on the part of directors. As a supervision group meets over time, the level of intimacy and trust grows so that the sharing of thoughts and feelings grows deeper. The insights gained ultimately are in the service of their directees, as they enable the directors to truly listen with their hearts without their own blind spots getting in the way. Supervision also provides accountability of the directors to each other and can serve as a space to examine ethical issues. The supervision process is so important that every spiritual director at the Franciscan Spiritual Center is required to receive it, and time is designated for a peer-facilitated supervision group. Some of the directors have received additional training and provide supervision to directors who don't work at the Franciscan Center.

I meet via Zoom with a group of spiritual directors who sign in from various places in Oregon, as well as across the county and around the world. As the supervisor, I facilitate the meetings, but everyone contributes to the process. Over time this group has developed trust in each other and are amazingly insightful. They also all have great senses of humor. They truly are mirrors of the Divine! It is a joy for me to meet with them each month, and I think I get more out of the sessions than I can ever

contribute as an individual.

Did you ever associate the word “joy” with “supervisor?” I suspect not many of you have. But for spiritual directors and supervisors, joy is just one of the benefits of being associated with the Franciscan Spiritual Center and living out the Franciscan Tradition.

With gratitude,

Tom Welch, MD, MA

Spiritual director, supervisor, mentor in the training program

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