

Franciscan Season of Giving

a word from Ann...

Join us in a season of prayer, thanksgiving, and reflection.

We offer these voices from our Franciscan community to help you pay attention to what is sacred in your life.

We also ask for your support - financially as we seek to meet our year end obligations, in prayer as we look to the future, and with your presence.



Noticing and Wondering about Group Spiritual Direction (Companionship)

This spring I was invited to facilitate a six-session introduction to group spiritual companionship with a church in Washington. The group was made up of six participants, most of whom had little experience with Spiritual Direction as a practice. We met entirely over zoom for three months.

One of the core practices in group spiritual direction (or companionship) is the discipline of noticing and wondering. During the group process we alternate between times of silent reflection and speaking. Each person is

given uninterrupted time to share something from their own internal reflection. As we listen together, we pay close attention to whomever is sharing, and then pause and sit in silence to thoughtfully and prayerfully attend to any response. We might 'notice' connections that the speaker does not see, we might observe body language or a change in voice, we might notice how the story hints at something deeper that is unspoken. And then we might wonder – asking a reflective question inviting the speaker to explore a little more, to consider the themes and underlying questions in their own spirit.

Being invited to 'notice and wonder' means we are free from needing to offer responses that sound like 'good advice' or 'have you thought about' or to share our own stories as in 'that reminds me of when' We are encouraged to refrain from trying to fix a problem or trying to make someone feel better. We are simply participating with the Spirit in the transformational work of growing spiritual awareness, and companioning one another in the process.

After meeting with this group, I wrote the following poem in response:

I noticed how quickly you went from 'I've known you for years' to 'I never knew that about you'

I noticed how it took a while to share the most vulnerable stories, and how everyone was patient with your tender spots

I noticed how your voice quivered when you spoke about the losses, and that sorrow had become a companion

I wondered how long it took you to make friends with grief

I noticed the childlike wonder expressed over the miracle of hummingbirds, and the way the sun hits the garden in the afternoon

I wondered what it has been like for you to find your world so much smaller than it used to be

I noticed that when she asked that beautiful question you hesitated before undressing thoughts not normally revealed in public

I wondered how it felt to be so seen by others

I noticed that the quality of our silences grew over time

And I wondered how long we could hold one another in Love

With gratitude,

Ann Steigerwald

Spiritual Director, Program Lead for Group Spiritual Direction, Retreat Leader, Kayak Leader

In this Season of reflection and thanksgiving, consider supporting the Franciscan Spiritual Center so we may continue to foster and hold sacred space for others.

If your spiritual community or group would be interested in learning more about Group Spiritual Direction (aka Companionship), we have trained spiritual directors who would love to introduce you to our practice.

Please contact Ann Steigerwald for more information at ann@francisspctr.com.

To make a charitable donation to the Franciscan Spiritual Center:
Mail a check payable to FSC, PO Box 144, Marylhurst, OR 97036
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