**The 3 R’s of Spiritual Direction**

**Student’s Notes**

I. The most frequently asked question from students during the first year of our spiritual direction training is often, “Am I doing this right?”

This question reminds us that spiritual direction is more of an art than a science, more of a journey of exploration rather than a trip toward a precise destination.

In thinking of spiritual direction as a journey of exploration, the 3 R’s are like signposts that describe the arc of the spiritual direction process. They help directors and directees **recognize** God’s presence and action, **reflect** on that experience, and **respond** to God’s involvement in their lives.

The objective for our conversation today is to understand and apply the 3 R’s as a framework when offering spiritual direction so that a directee’s life experiences become holy ground for noticing God’s presence and action.

Any questions or comments before we dive in?

II. **The first R: Recognize**

**Q: What have you noticed gets in the way of *you* recognizing the presence and involvement of God in your life?** (write down your responses)

To recognize God’s presence and action, we look for the means through which it is being *mediated*. “For God to be experienced, your encounter will invariably be mediated. In other words, God will come to you through something else: a “burning bush” in nature, an inner quiet prompting, a dream or vision, an evocative gospel story, a recurring theme, or through some much-needed provision. The medium is not always tangible, but it is *sensory*. In other words, through your human senses, including your emotions, you perceive God through the experience.” *When Faith Becomes Sight,* P.4

**Common:**

Scripture – especially through approaching it in a more personal, contemplative posture

Prayer – especially listening in prayer where prayer becomes more dialogue than monologue

Imagining Jesus from the gospels – giving permission to see oneself in a gospel story and through the eyes of Jesus

**Less common:**

Our 5 senses in what we might call *Shimmering Attractions* – those burning bush moments that grab us as we go about life

Symbols and themes – those recurring places, experiences and objects that seem to be woven into a noticeable pattern that is personal and meaningful

Even our desires – looking within to befriend our longings and consider that what draws us might in fact be God within us prompting these desires.

**Q:** What other common or unusual means would you add to this list from your own experience or your directees experiences?

III. **The second R: Reflect**

For any experience to become a spiritual experience, we must reflect on it. “Reflection is what takes the encounter into you, allowing it to impact you, to find a place of resonance within you. It’s what allows a very ordinary event in your life to become deeply personal, spiritual and transforming. These kinds of experiences deepen your assurance of God’s nearness as they become windows through which you see the activity of the Divine.” *When Faith Becomes Sight,* Pg.4

If you’re drilling for water, it’s better to drill one hundred-foot well than one hundred one-foot wells. Pg. 59

Susan Scott, *Fierce Conversations*

**Q:** What gets in the way of directees reflecting on their experiences?

Best practices that help us reflect:

1. Staying with an experience for some time

2. Journaling

3. The Spiritual Location Exercise

4. Re-telling the experience to someone else

5. A daily examen to review experiences of God

6. [Examen Qs](https://www.fallcreekabbey.org/product-page/examen-qs-card-set)

IV. **The third R: Respond**

We are always responding to our experience of God: the question is, “Am I responding in the way I truly want to respond, and God is inviting me to respond?”

**“What are the most fundamental tasks of the director? Let us propose that there are two, and that they issue from the insight: the contemplative core of prayer and of all Christian life is conscious relationship with God. The tasks are: First, helping directees pay attention to our self-revealing God; second, helping directees recognize their reactions and decide on their responses to this God.”** *The Practice of Spiritual Direction* by William Barry and William Connelly, pg. 48

Consider three types of responses:

* Unconscious reactions
* Conscious responses
* Resistant responses

Responding to God’s presence and action is what completes the transformative cycle of becoming “contemplatives-in-action, whose doing {or responding} flows out of a rich inner life of prayer and discernment.” Urgings of the Heart, Au and Canon