THE ROLE OF THE ABBOT AND PRACTICE OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION
From The Rule of Benedict and RB 1980 (Fry), Appendix A (Commentary)

The role of the “elder” or abba/amma outlined on pages 332-337 of the Appendix to the RB’80 may be similar to the role of the spiritual director. “The Rule relates this essential function of the abbot [as a channel for the word and will of Christ] to his title abbas: this name means ‘father,’ and the essential role of the abbot is to be a father to his monks.” p. 350

THE CHIEF REQUISITES OF THE ABBA OR AMMA
Not age, but wisdom of experience
The amma (director) herself is spiritual and this spirituality is not an intellectual achievement, but learned through experience

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AMMA
has lived the life herself
has come to know herself; continues to grow
struggled against her passions and demons
surrenders to the power of grace
has a “doctrine” not by study only, but especially by wisdom learned from life experience
has experienced that holiness is no personal achievement, but a gift of the Spirit of God who dwells in her
is aware of being directed by the Holy Spirit

THE PORTRAIT OF ONE WHO PRACTICES THE ART OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION
knows he is dealing with mystery demanding of respect
gives no unasked for advice
knows that entering into the mystery of another=s relationship with God is no trivial matter
lightly undertaken
shows no shock or surprise at the matter presented
has a profound sense of respect for each person
does not impose a set of stock solutions
does not exercise subtle control or manipulation
endeavors to honestly know the other person in order to assist the other surrender to the creative power of God
has a sincere affection, compassion for the other
does not impose judgement, rebuke or superiority
does bring a sense of realism and truth

THE PROCESS
a companioning relationship with another
the individual humbly opens her inner self to the amma
the amma assists in discernment of spirits
the amma aims at assisting the individual to come to knowledge of her/his true self before God

THE METHOD
the disciple was given a “word”
the amma is faithful to the traditions of spiritual direction handed on down through the ages;
the amma aids the individual in unpacking, savoring, discerning the spiritual experience and prayer the individual brings uses a variety of skills; “by word and example”

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