

THE PERSON AND PRACTICE OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION
from
the RULE OF SAINT BENEDICT
RB 80 Appendix A

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 DETERMINING FACTOR IN CHOOSING AN AMMA OR ABBA

(p. 232): not age, but wisdom of experience

THE CHIEF REQUISITE OF THIS PERSON

(p. 332) the (spiritual person) director herself must be spiritual, not an “intellectual achievement” but learned through experience

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SPIRITUAL PERSON (pp 332-333)

- has lived the “life” her/himself
- has developed self-awareness – continues to grow in that knowledge
- has come to know, and has struggled with her own passions and demons (Evagrius; John Cassian)
- surrenders to the power of grace
- has a “doctrine” (a value tradition and internal belief) not only by study, but especially by wisdom learned from life experience
- one who has experienced that holiness is no personal achievement but a gift of the Spirit of God who dwells in us
- one who is aware of being directed by the Holy Spirit

THE PORTRAIT OF ONE WHO PRACTICES THE ART OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION (p335)

- knows s/he is dealing with mystery demanding respect
- does not give 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 of another
- endeavors to honestly know the other person in order to assist her/him surrender to the creative power of God

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- has a sincere affection, compassion for the other
- does not impose judgment, rebuke or superiority
- does bring a sense of realism and truth (a “necessary severity”)

THE PROCESS (p. 334)

- a companioning relationship with another (“...the elder became a spiritual father/mother through a personal relationship with the disciple)
- the individual manifested thoughts to the elder. The individual humbly opens her/his inner self to the director: (not only “bad” thoughts, but whatever occupied the interior faculties)
- the director aids the individual in discernment of spirits
- the director aims at helping the individual come to a knowledge of her/himself...to come to a knowledge of her/his true self and to know God

THE METHODS (p. 33 and 336)

- The disciple was given a “word”...
- The director is faithful to the traditions of spiritual direction handed on down through the ages. The director aids the individual in unpacking, savoring, discerning the spiritual experience and prayer the directee brings
- Uses a variety of skills (“by word and example...”)

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Prayerfully consider the material above. Consider each of the following topics:

Personal Characteristics of the Spiritual Person

The Portrait of One Who Practices the Art of Spiritual Direction

The Process

From each of these topics chose

- one area you believe you have grown in
- one area on which you wish to focus for continued growth

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