

IHMs in Action: Spiritual Direction

If we get lost on a road trip, we stop and ask someone for directions.

But when we get lost on "the road of life," how do we get back on track? One option is to seek the help of a spiritual director.

Evelyn (Marie Augustine) Booms, IHM, spiritual director of Heart of Jesus Prayer Center in St. Clair Shores, Mich., spends her days helping people know and understand their own spirituality and reconnect with God.



Sister Evelyn Booms also provides spiritual direction one-on-one.

Simply put, spiritual direction is the process of accompanying someone on her or his spiritual journey," Sister Evelyn explains. It helps people appreciate their own sacred rites and emphasizes growing closer to God by noticing God's movement in prayer and in the ordinary events of life. It invites us to a deeper relationship with the spiritual aspect of being human." According to Sister Evelyn, people seek out spiritual direction when their search for God has reached a fork in the road, or when they feel the need for an objective voice to help them explore their spirituality or when they want to find some form of intentional prayer and reflect on their lives.

A spiritual director challenges and supports the person and the process, but it's up to each person seeking direction to embrace whatever insights are uncovered or pursue a course of action. The director is a facilitator, but the journey is the "directee's" own.

Spiritual direction is a centuries-old practice in Christianity. For many years, only those in religious life sought it out. Today, however, through the chaos, confusion and general "speed of life," more and more lay people turn to it for spiritual growth. It is open to people of all faith traditions.

"Spiritual direction flows from the presumption that God communicates through our everyday experiences," Sister Evelyn says. "It is a step beyond traditional religious practices in that it considers the myriad life experiences that shape our image of the divine."

Sister Evelyn's workshops take those life experiences into account.

"I offer workshops in attending to the inner child," she comments. "Many times, problems experienced as an adult, such as depression and anxiety, have their roots in unresolved childhood issues. Once those issues are acknowledged, people are better able to 'tune in' to their spiritual side."

Sister Evelyn also uses dreams in her spiritual direction work. Twice a year, she offers workshops at the Heart of Jesus Prayer Center focused on helping people understand their dreams as a source of information to assist them in their spiritual direction.

"There are many paths to take in perceiving and appreciating our unique spirituality," she notes. "It is a very life-giving ministry, for both those who seek spiritual direction and for me - to be able to assist people in seeing that God is working in all of their challenges and experiences."

Sister Evelyn also works one-on-one with people as a spiritual director, meeting with them in her office within the former convent of St. Margaret of Scotland Parish, and offers directed retreats and parish programs in diocese across Michigan. She has worked in adult spirituality since 1990.