



## THE UNNAMED COMPANION ON THE ROAD: SPIRITUAL ACCOMPANIMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF YOUTH MINISTRY

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### Introduction

Not long ago, I was participating in a training programme in Spiritual Accompaniment. For my prayer one morning, I chose the story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35). During my many years of active youth ministry I have used this text as a model of youth ministry. The Wedge Model of youth ministry is based on this story (Finn, 1993; Kimball, 1987; Zanzig, 1987). This model has been elaborated also in the African context by Selvam (2006). In this model, the youth minister is seen as one who joins the two young people on the road, listens to their stories, enlightens their mind and heart, and finally enables them to experience Jesus as the Risen Lord. Thus youth ministry becomes a process that empowers young people to go back to their daily life with a deep sense of hope. This hope flows from their experience of Christ. When they begin to share their own hope with others, the young people in turn become ministers to their peers.

That morning, during my training programme, however, as I began to contemplate on that story I saw myself as the unnamed companion of Cleopas (Lk 24:18).

*The air seemed dusty and gloomy. We walked towards the setting sun. It was quiet and lonely. As I was walking together with Cleopas my heart was heavy. I was silent as he continued to ruminate aloud about the events of the weekend. I got a sense of what that story meant for him. I empathised with him. I knew he reminded me of the heaviness in my own heart. (The memory of that prayer moment seems so fresh that I feel the need to change the verb tense.) On that dusty, hazy road we see a person walking ahead of us. He seems to know where he is going. At one point*

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*we catch up with him and want to go past him. But I see that he wants to join us. Soon enough, he is walking along with Cleopas leaving me on the other side. I am aware of the stranger's presence but do not remember looking at his face. Without appearing forceful he enters our company and begins to enquire about the subject of our conversation. We end up telling him all about the events of the weekend, and even more. He responds to us. Whatever he says seems to come from his heart. The stranger is wise, serene, and compassionate. At one point, I look up at the face of Cleo and I notice his face light up. I become aware of my own heart – I am at peace too.*

*We reach a fork on the road. We want to go straight on to Emmaus, but the stranger takes the diversion. We reluctantly continue our journey to Emmaus. I feel relaxed. The sun is setting. Suddenly the sky is colourful. I hear the distant birds settle down for the evening. The heaviness of heart has vanished into thin air. I look at Cleo and ask him how he feels about the stranger. He is lost for words and mutters, "I feel my heart burn within me!" Suddenly I become aware that the process is not complete. As I listen to Cleo, I turn my gaze at the direction of the stranger. The silhouette of that graceful figure could still be seen against the golden rays of the setting sun. "Do you think we should invite him?" I suggest. The next thing I see is Cleo running after him, stretching out his hand towards the stranger as Cleo calls out to him. The dust that Cleo raises makes the whole scene appear mystically hazy. The stranger turns around gently, and Cleo asks him hesitatingly, "Why don't you stay with us. It is getting dark." He obliges and moves towards me. I am excited that the stranger has obliged. We are beginning to enjoy his company yet again – and more intimately.*

In the context of the training, I saw the prayer moment as being very significant in my ministry of spiritual accompaniment particularly in the context of youth ministry. My role as a spiritual director consists in being the unnamed companion on the road to Emmaus. As I accompany someone on their faith journey, even if he or she comes with the story of confusion and despair, I need to recognise that Jesus is present in this journey. Amidst the strands of their story, which perhaps in some way could resemble my own, I need to recognise the uniqueness of their story and honour it. Gently I propose that they might want to invite Jesus into their lives, converse with him, get in touch with their feelings, and deepen their own intimacy with him. This ministry then offers me the possibility of strengthening my own personal experience of God in Jesus.

In this article, I would like to explore a model of spiritual

accompaniment and to examine its possible use in accompanying young people on their spiritual journey. The model invites the practitioner to be the unnamed companion on the road to Emmaus. The theoretical framework for the model is drawn from various Christian traditions of spiritual accompaniment, particularly the Ignatian tradition. The Ignatian tradition originates from the spirituality of the Spanish Saint, Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), who founded the largest religious order within the Catholic Church: the Jesuits (Idígoras-Tellechea, 1994). The Saint himself provides some implicit guidelines for the process of spiritual accompaniment in the context of what is called, "The Spiritual Exercises" (Fleming, 1996). Despite its Roman Catholic origins, the Ignatian spirituality and the Spiritual Exercises are becoming increasingly popular in non-Catholic contexts (Huggett, 1990; Wakefield, 2006). Other authors have explored related concepts like "discernment" (White 2005), "contemplation" (Yaconelli, 2006), and "spiritual caring" (Dunn, 2001) in the context of youth ministry. Discernment and contemplation are key components of the Ignatian tradition of spiritual accompaniment.

The target readership of this article is any Christian youth minister who is interested in one-on-one spiritual accompaniment of young people. The present reflection assumes some understanding of youth ministry, but little knowledge of spiritual accompaniment. It proposes skills that are relevant to spiritual accompaniment. As it is the case in any skills-based practice, it is in the repeated, conscious practice of these techniques that a spiritual director acquires competence in the use of this model. It is hoped that this article will attract youth ministers to consider the possibility of using spiritual accompaniment in their ministry, and in due course seek further training. Some case stories are employed in the article to illustrate the use of the relevant skills. The stories are based on real experiences of the author in accompanying young people. The stories are included here with due permission from the individuals concerned, and some details have been modified to safeguard individuals' identities.

### **What is Spiritual Accompaniment?**

Spiritual direction or spiritual accompaniment could be understood in various ways depending on different theologies and spiritual traditions (Vest, 2003). The expression, "spiritual direction" seems to suggest that the spiritual director is a type of a guru who knows exactly where the "directees" should proceed, and directs them to that end. On the contrary, spiritual accompaniment, as it is explored in this article, alludes to the reality that it is the Spirit who directs the individuals, and the spiritual director is only a companion

who facilitates the discernment. In the Ignatian tradition, the term “discernment” carries with it at least three distinct, but related, connotations: a) discernment as an attitude of constant openness to the will of God; b) discernment of spirits: this is particularly related to movement and countermovement, and consolation and desolation; I will explore the meaning of these terminologies shortly; c) discernment implied in the process of decision making, in what St Ignatius called, “election”. St Ignatius offers separate set of ‘rules’ for use in these three types of discernment (Fleming, 1996; Toner, 1982; Toner, 1991). Though the three meanings of discernment will be explored in this model of spiritual accompaniment, it is important to note that it is the openness to the will of God that underpins even the other two types of discernment. David White (2005) has pointed out to the importance of practising discernment as a core dimension of transformative youth ministry. The present article suggests spiritual accompaniment as a valuable method in enabling young people in the practice of discernment.

Most of the contemporary literature on the subject uses the terms, “spiritual direction” and “spiritual accompaniment” interchangeably. I will refer to the process implied here as “spiritual accompaniment”, the one who offers this service as “spiritual director”, and the one who is accompanied as “directee”. It would seem idealistic to think that the spiritual director has no agenda at all. As it will emerge in the following reflection, the director does have an agenda, namely, to help the directees to recognise the presence of God or Jesus in their lives and to foster an intimacy with Him. However, the directors are not as directive about the *outcome* of the accompaniment as they are of the *process*. The directors cannot determine the nature and timing of the directee’s relationship with God. In this context, it may be helpful to recall what St Ignatius of Loyola writes in his annotations that serve as guidelines for offering the Spiritual Exercises. Annotation 15 could be extended to the context of spiritual accompaniment: “So, he who is giving the Exercises should not turn to one side or the other, but standing in the centre like a balance, leave the Creator to act immediately with the creature, the creature with its Creator and Lord” (Fleming, 1996, p.14).

Despite its similarity to some contemporary methods of therapy and counselling in being non-directive, spiritual accompaniment is quite different from counselling, psychotherapy, spiritual conversation, or the Catholic celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation. On the one hand, spiritual accompaniment is not a substitute for any of these possible interventions. On the other hand, it is a one-to-one helping relationship that has God-experience of the directee at the heart of the process. God-experience, for a

Christian, could often take a very precise form as the experience of Jesus Christ. A contemporary definition captures this meaningfully: "Christian spiritual direction, then, [is] help given by one believer to another that enables the latter to pay attention to God's personal communication to him or her, to respond to this personally communicating God, to grow in intimacy with this God, and to live out the consequences of the relationship" (Barry & Connolly, 2009, p.8). Though spiritual accompaniment is different from other caring ministries it carries very similar terms of Code of Conduct. The Association of Spiritual Directors International offers a detailed Code of Conduct in the context of spiritual accompaniment (SDI, 2012). This shows that spiritual accompaniment is also a formal covenantal relationship.

### **A Model of Spiritual Accompaniment**

#### **Box 1: *A simple model of spiritual accompaniment***

##### **Listening**

To allow the person to tell their story that could be related to a particular experience in life and/or prayer.

##### **Noticing the movement**

To pick up the implicit and explicit images, expressions, moments, feelings which seem significant for the person, and to help them identify the movement that underpins their faith story.

##### **Fostering the movement**

To invite the person to see if they identify with the perceived movement, and then to facilitate the process of exploring, valuing and deepening that movement with an openness to the Spirit.

Box 1 presents the structure of a simple model of spiritual accompaniment (Barry & Connolly, 2009). The model proposes three steps in the process of accompaniment: listening, noticing the movement, and deepening the movement. "Movement" is to be understood here as the working of God in the directees that attracts them to God. Each of these three steps calls for some particular skills on the part of the director. I will briefly describe the three steps here; they will be further developed in the next section.

The first step is basic to any one-on-one caring relationship: a set of listening skills. This will include a body posture that is open, relaxed, and which shows empathy towards the directee. It also consists of some relevant verbal feedback that furthers the

narration. As the story is elaborated it is deepened by the considered response of the director who mirrors back expressions and images expressed by the directee. This helps to identify the movement in the heart of the directee. Identifying the movement calls for the spiritual skill of discernment. Once the movement has been picked up, and spontaneously confirmed by the directee, the director gently invites the directee to stay with it, and to deepen it by getting in touch with the feelings that facilitate the perception of the working of God within the individual. Feelings or spiritual emotional states that include consolation and desolation, according to St Ignatius, play an important role in discernment (Toner, 1982; Toner, 1991). One of the ways that St Ignatius discerned his own vocation, from the days of his convalescence after the battle of Pambola to the moment of founding the Society of Jesus and even beyond, was by getting in touch with his own feelings in terms of what he called, "consolation" and "desolation." For instance, as he day-dreamed on his hospital bed about what he would do when he got back to the court and about the ladies there, he felt dysphoric after an initial experience of euphoria. He called this, "desolation." On the other hand, when he meditated on the words of Jesus, he felt challenged but also deeply satisfied. He called this, "consolation." "The General Examen" (Fleming, 1996, p.38) in the Ignatian tradition then is a way of getting in touch with one's inner-movements on a daily basis in terms of consolation and desolation. This becomes a vital instrument in ongoing discernment.

It is possible that at a given session of spiritual accompaniment there might be more than one movement in the directee, but it is important to focus. How does the person want to value the movement and respond to the God who moves them from within? At times there may be a counter-movement (Silf, 1998, pp.74-75; Toner, 1991). In the parlance of St Ignatius, it is a movement away from God. It may be marked by a sense of desolation. If the spiritual director is experienced enough it may be possible to deal with this in a growth promoting manner. If the spiritual director is not comfortable it may be wiser to invite the directee to focus on the movement rather than on the counter-movement. However, often an apparent sense of desolation could be a moment of grace (Selvam, 2006, p.76). For instance, a difficulty in praying could be a gentle invitation from God to look at a past hurt and move towards offering forgiveness, or to look at a past guilt and move towards seeking forgiveness. It may simply be an invitation to surrender. Similarly, an experience of loss – death, departure, and transition – could potentially draw a person to God. In short, experiences of apparent negative affective states do not necessarily imply a counter-movement.

In a profound sense of respect for the process that God carries out in every person, spiritual accompaniment avoids giving into the temptation of using it for problem solving, or friendly correction, and even for spiritual instruction. In the early sessions, nevertheless, there might be some need to clarify what actually is spiritual accompaniment, to give instructions on methods of prayer, and to discuss some healthy images of God. These instructions may be particularly necessary for young people, who might lack the ability – often only the vocabulary – to articulate their experience of God. For best results and to honour the integrity of the process of spiritual accompaniment, whenever possible, these instructions could be given in the form of handouts or in workshops outside the spiritual accompaniment sessions. In any case, if the need arises, these instructions could be carried out briefly within a session, while also being aware that teaching per se may not be part of spiritual accompaniment. Encouraging intellectual discussion within the sessions might act as an escape route for some directees who have difficulty with the emotional processing of God-experience. The sections below will offer some suggestions on how directees could be accompanied in exploring the emotional content of their God-experience. In concluding the session a way forward may be sought by considering the use of a method of prayer, or the use of a particular text from the Bible for prayer. During the continued prayer moments between sessions of spiritual accompaniment, the directee is invited to stay with the movement and deepen it, always being open to the God who moves the individual. Now, how can this model be used in the context of youth ministry? Using the three steps in the proposed model as the outline for the remaining part of the article, I will illustrate some specific skills envisaged in the practice of this model of spiritual accompaniment within youth ministry.

### **Listening: Expression of Christian Compassion**

*Karen is a 22-year-old teacher, trained to deal with children with special needs. She comes in for spiritual accompaniment. She speaks about her struggle at work. She trained to take up this job because she had "a deep compassion for children with special needs." Of late, she feels, she has lost her "compassion." Sometimes she thinks she takes her work too seriously. She says she is not given due acknowledgement for the difficult work she does. She feels increasingly tired. Some children tend to be violent and she is afraid "she might lose her patience with them."*

In a counselling context, the counsellor might explore the situation more and help her see different possibilities that she is



not able to see at the moment. In a therapeutic context, depending on the theoretical framework of the therapy, the therapist might want to explore with very tactful questions the origin of the fear of losing her patience. The therapist might support Karen to arrive at a process of thinking and behaving that makes her function well in her working environment. Much like some post-modern techniques of therapy (White & Epston, 1990) spiritual accompaniment is non-directive, and does not attempt to solve problems. Where spiritual accompaniment differs from techniques of therapy is in its focus on God. To begin with, a spiritual director would stay with Karen in her anguish rather than give her ready-made solutions. Giving solutions to the problem is being paternalistic. Staying with her in her anguish is compassion. From this position of safety, spiritual accompaniment will attempt to explore what God is like for Karen, and what that feels like for her.

Not all directees might be able to narrate their story as coherently as Karen has done. Particularly younger people might give a brief summary of their problem, assume that the director understands them, and ask for advice. Asking advice could be an expression of power-play in a context where the young directee sees the director as mature in age and as an expert in life and faith. Spiritual accompanying becomes life-giving if the director resists the temptation to take advantage of the position of power to act paternalistically and provide some good advice. An information-based session might tend to keep out of the scene God who continues to work in the young person. On the other hand, when a young person concludes the brief account of their situation with a request for advice, it is wise to invite them to deepen their narrative. Some of the traditional skills in active listening become useful in facilitating the narration of the story. When a speaker is able to articulate their issue well, very little intervention is needed, except silence and some meaningful questions. In what follows, I list some of the techniques in active listening and point out how they could be used in the context of spiritual accompaniment. I also demonstrate the skills with examples drawn from the narrative of Karen.

**Body-language.** The way the director is seated and conducts him/herself could express openness, serenity and a sense of being grounded and settled. Simple non-verbal expressions of empathy, interest and presence might prompt the directee to continue their story even after some silence.

**Mirroring.** One expression of being with the speaker is to mirror their body language and key verbal expressions that suggest the underlying themes of the narrator's story. For best results, this has to be done spontaneously and even unconsciously. Mirroring is very effective when the speaker's last sentence or phrase summarises



what they have said previously at length, and the listener just repeats that last phrase. This would invite the speaker to stay with that or explore it deeper. In the narrative of Karen, mirroring her last phrase could take the focus on a different tangent. It might focus on fear that features in the last phrase rather than on compassion that has been repeated in her narrative. So verbal mirroring may not be the best option here, but if at all it is used then the listener could be saying something like: "You trained because of compassion for children...."

**Summarising.** When the narration has been reasonably long, it is useful to provide a summary of the story as heard by the listener. Paraphrasing might have to be used listing the key themes. This has to be very provisional and open to correction by the speaker. The timing of the summary is crucial. Often when the speaker is about to conclude one part of their story they might give an unconscious signal to the listener through an inviting eye-contact. In the story of Karen, there are two themes that could be picked up: compassion and fear of losing her patience. In giving feedback to Karen, it might be important to offer a summary that includes these two themes using her own phrases. And this does not need to be followed up by a question. Karen might just prefer to say something more about one of the themes, or begin to integrate the two themes in her narrative.

**Reflecting.** This is yet another way of giving a summary that includes some tentative interpretation of feelings that the listener might have picked up. This helps to identify what seems important to the speaker. In the case of Karen, reflection might focus on compassion and fear.

**Silence.** Sometimes it is wiser not to rush in with any verbal intervention during the pauses. Silence facilitates a contemplative atmosphere that is so important in the context of spiritual accompaniment. Silence would invite the speaker to pay attention to their inner processes during the session, and thus be open to the working of God.

**Questions.** When the director perceives that the narration is more or less complete, in an attempt to take the process to a deeper level some questions may be asked. Questions are not to be raised out of mere curiosity. On the contrary, they target the emerging theme that is perceived by the director to be significant for the directee. A rule of thumb could be to spend the first half of the session in just listening to the directee's story and helping to explore the story through mirroring, summarising, reflecting and silence. Minimal questioning might be needed in the second half of the session in order to deepen the movement. For effective outcome questions need to be simple rather than requiring multiple answers,

and open rather than closed. It is interesting to note that in the story of Karen there is no mention of God, but there are spiritual terms like compassion. The questions might just explore this theme, or invite her to see where God is in her story.

This stage of listening in spiritual accompaniment is a tangible and meaningful expression of Christian compassion on the part of the director. This is also seen in the approach of Jesus himself on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24: 13-24). It calls for humility (putting away the expertise), patience (even when the story is not forthcoming), and deep respect for the individual (avoiding judgements and classifications).

### **Noticing the movement: Where is God in this?**

*Joe is a second year undergraduate student at a university campus. He has already had two sessions with the same spiritual director. In the previous sessions he had expressed some interest in considering a vocation to a religious order in the Catholic Church. In the present session he describes at some length that he is not able to pray. He feels stuck. He vaguely mentions that he is in a relationship. He is wondering what is actually happening to his faith life.*

When Joe goes into silence and gazes at the director with a look of expectation, the director could make an intervention. Some less helpful approaches would be:

- To share the director's own personal struggles with prayer particularly when he or she was at the age of Joe, and to encourage him that it will pass. This approach assumes that Joe is growing up exactly in the same way as the director grew up. More importantly, it takes for granted that God works in the life of Joe exactly as He works in the life of the director.
- To explore in further depth what Joe mentioned in passing about his new relationship. This might just be a way of satisfying the curiosity of the director about intimate stories of others! It might be wiser to patiently wait to see if the issue of the relationship would come up again in this session, or may be in the subsequent sessions. If it is important to him, it would come up. In any case, the issue of the relationship is important in the context of the spiritual accompaniment only insofar as it affects Joe's own relationship with God and the role it plays in providing significance to Joe's life.
- To focus on his vocation, to become preachy and point out that if

someone has to be strong in their vocation they have to be good at prayer. Plainly put, preaching is not the task of the spiritual director.

- To start straightaway teaching Joe some effective methods of prayer. This intervention could be useful after exploring the struggle that he has in prayer. So it may not be the right intervention at this point.

On the other hand, a possible life-giving question at this point could be one of the following: "Have you had a conversation with God about this?" or, "How is God reacting to this?" or simply, "How does God see you, Joe?"

As in the case of Karen, a fruitful moment of spiritual accompaniment could help Joe respond to the presence of God in his daily life, even though his life might include some load of troubles! To proceed further with the session with Joe there could be the following hypothetical dialogue. At this stage in the session "God-questions" and "feeling-questions" are generously used! This could lead the session through identifying the movement of God in Joe, to helping him stay with it. Here is a hypothetical conversation:

*Director:* Would it be possible to have a conversation with God about your inability to pray?

*Joe:* (Cynically) Well, it could be a possibility. (Silence) I could try.

*Director:* Would you like to try *now*? What might you tell Him?

*Joe:* (Silence) God, I am just stuck in prayer. You know how much I love to pray...!

*Director:* (Silence) How is God replying to it?

*Joe:* He is laughing at it.

*Director:* Laughing?

*Joe:* He is laughing at my simplicity.

*Director:* He is laughing at your simplicity. (Silence) How does that feel for you?

At this point Joe might go to another level of perceiving his relationship with God, even if he does not have the vocabulary to describe his feelings! So the director waits in silence.

If we have a meta-look at the process underpinning this conversation, actually the director has taught Joe a method of praying without actually lecturing about it! Joe is probably picking up a conviction that he could communicate with God anywhere and in any way. This is a meaningful outcome of spiritual

accompaniment that is centred on the relationship between the directee and God. In this way, spiritual accompaniment could potentially facilitate the awareness of the presence of God/Jesus for the young person, and invite them to open themselves to an intimate relationship with God.

### **Fostering the Movement:**

#### **Towards an authentic meeting with Jesus Christ**

*Janet is a 24 year old city girl. For nearly two years she has been in a relationship with an older man via the internet. He lives abroad. They had also discussed the prospects of getting married, though they have not met each other. In the last two months the communication has been strained. He blames her for not taking the risk of going out to meet him. Two days ago she wrote to him a disappointing email, and he replied calling it quits. She finds it difficult to say good-bye. She feels she still loves him. Yesterday, during lunch break she "was led into a church" in her city. Displayed behind the lectern in the church was the response to the psalm from that day's liturgy: "God is close to the broken-hearted."*

There are two themes emerging here: the break-up and the experience of God. The experience of God is bordering on awareness that God is tangibly present in her life even at this difficult time. How could the session proceed from here? Though we cannot predict how Janet might take forward this conversation, on the part of the director it is important to recognise the movement and to foster it.

*Director: (Mirror) "God is close to the broken-hearted."*

*Janet: Yes, God is close to the broken-hearted. I could not explain why I went into the church. I was just led into it. And it was as if that message was just for me. I was really frustrated with that guy – I was broken!*

*Director: (Slows down the pace of the session; allows Janet to complete her sentences; gives plenty of silence; mirrors back key phrases) "The message was just for you."*

*Janet: Actually, the moment I saw that word 'broken-hearted', I said, that's me. And that message is for me. And I dwelled in the comfort that it gave me. And as I sat there, I contemplated it, and I asked, isn't then God close to the others whose hearts aren't "broken"? (Silence). Well, the answer I came up with is, God isn't closer or farther, rather it is our brokenness that makes him appear that way. In*

my misery and brokenness I feel God closer than I would have if I was not so.

*Director:* (Some silence) What is it like for you, Janet?

*Janet:* (Long silence. Eyes are swelling up with tears). God is close to me.

*Director:* (Nods).

*Janet:* (After more silence): Maybe it is like when a heart is broken into a million pieces, each piece reflects God, and this is more than a single heart reflecting God. I guess brokenness makes us more open to God, for when I have lost everything, I am empty and that's when I can be filled.

*Director:* (Some silence) What does that feel like for you, Janet?

*Janet:* Challenging.... but comforting!

The simple model of spiritual accompaniment sees the goal of accompaniment as building an intimacy with God and/or Jesus. This intimacy would include an integration of life and faith, and a possible expression in reaching out to others. These aspects are presupposed by the phrase: "an authentic meeting with Jesus Christ." For this reason, it is also meaningful to integrate spiritual accompaniment and vocational discernment. In all the three stories above – of Karen, Joe and Janet – there is an element of vocational discernment. For Karen it is her continued work with the children with special needs, for Joe his religious vocation, and for Janet her marriage. Nonetheless, there needs to be a caveat here that the spiritual director is not totally absorbed with the vocational commitment of the directee. The focus is the intimacy with Christ, and the vocational commitment could be a consequence of that authentic meeting with Christ. In other words, the goal of youth ministry is holiness. This holiness is a fruit of the meaningful response of the young person to the action of the Spirit within them. In this sense of response, holiness also implies a process of transformation, growth and becoming. While talking about the "path of illumination," the sixteenth century Spanish mystic, John of the Cross says, "God supernaturally and secretly teaches the soul and, in a way unknown to it, raises it up in virtues and gifts" (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez, 1979, p. 205).

In a similar vein, one's relationship with God is not merely a matter of some information about God. "Spiritual direction is not simply a doctrinal consultation" (Vatican, 2011, no. 69). The simple model of spiritual accompaniment does not impose a particular belief or dogma on the directee. Using the parlance of contemporary models of counselling and therapy, the simple model can be said

to be “client-centred.” Similar to the Wedge Model, spiritual accompaniment that we have explored here compassionately accompanies young people by finding them where they are, by being present to them, and by fostering the working of God in them. It has at its heart the relationship between the directee and God. Hence the spiritual director could remain the unknown companion on the road to Emmaus. In this sense, this model is very contemporary in its approach. It is non-threatening, it has no meta-narratives, and it is positively post-modern (Mabry, 2003). Therefore, I suggest, this model could be attractive to modern youth and valuable within the context of contemporary youth ministry. In summary, this type of spiritual accompaniment enables young people to move from prayer to a continuous and intimate awareness of the presence of God, thus making youth ministry truly contemplative (Yaconelli, 2006).

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