

When looking for a good spiritual director, it is standard practice to interview the potential spiritual director first. The idea is not to weed out those who are going to challenge you or disagree with you. No, the idea is find one who holds and practices the Catholic faith (as taught by the Church) and is able to actually help you grow in holiness.

Ask the following questions politely. There is no need to be offensive or defensive. You are not an Inquisitor. You are not hunting heresy. If it turns out that the potential spiritual director is some kind of New-Age kook, you are obligated to keep that assessment to yourself. *The obligation to confidentiality binds both the director and the directee.*

A few cautions up front:

1. Do not be impressed with spiritual director's who have credentials in spiritual direction. Most spiritual direction programs in the U.S. teach their students amateur forms of guru-ism and occult gibberish.
2. Do not be impressed by titles like "Father," "Sister," "Brother," or "Doctor." Anyone holding any of these titles can be dodgy.
3. Do not be impressed by celebrity or ecclesial status. Abbot Father Dr. Alfred Boniface Schultz of the St. Labyrinth Bene/Dominican Monastery, author of 46 books on meditation and a noted national speaker, can be as big a 'moon-bat' as anyone.
4. Do not be impressed by the potential spiritual director's personal piety, orthodox theology, solid publishing record with the best Catholic houses, or his/her reputation for brilliant spiritual direction. Every director/directee relationship is different. What works for you, might not work for me. And being a good spiritual director takes more than unwavering allegiance to the Magisterium.
5. Do not be impressed by a potential spiritual director's willingness, even eagerness, to take you on as a directee. In fact, I would

interpret any sort of "salesmanship" on the part of the spiritual director as creepy and immediately disqualify him/her.

Questions to ask a potential Spiritual Director (with the qualification that he/she may say, " *None of your business*"):

- Tell me about your spiritual life, your daily spiritual routine, your prayer life.
- What are your strengths as a Spiritual Director? Weaknesses?
- Tell me about your experience as a spiritual director. How many years? What sorts of directees?
- How would you describe your relationship to the Church? The local bishop? The Holy Father?
- What do you think of commonly used spiritual direction tools like the Enneagram, labyrinth?
- What do you think of personal devotions like the rosary, novenas, litanies, stations of the cross, etc.?
- What authors/books do you regularly read and recommend?
- Have you had any spiritual direction training? Where and what kind?
- What's your understanding of the sacraments? (Especially Mass, confession, marriage, Holy Orders)
- How do you understand the relationship between God and creation?
- How do you understand holiness, goodness, morality, sin, etc.?
- Do you use fasting or other sorts of penance in your direction?
- My biggest spiritual difficulty is X. How would begin to approach this problem?

-- My greatest spiritual gift is X. How would you direct me to use this gift?

-- Generally speaking, from what sources do you pull from for inspiration as a spiritual director?

Keep in mind that you are being interviewed as well. I have turned down potential directees because I didn't have the particular gifts to deal with their challenges. I have also been "fired" as a spiritual director for being too theologically orthodox and for being "too hard."

Do you want someone who will "kick butt and take names"?

▶ *Or someone who will be more of a gentle listener, a guide?*

Do you want someone who will function as a teacher, a model?

▶ *Or someone who will sympathize but challenge nonetheless?*

Do you want someone who maintains an emotional distance and directs you?

▶ *Or someone who will "get in there with you" and fight?*

▶ *Or do you want someone versatile enough to shift among those as needed?*

You really have to know yourself before choosing a spiritual director. But you also have to be open to change and growth. I find it very difficult to get a good spiritual director because I need a "kick butt and take names" kind of director. I need someone who can look me in the eye and tell me how full of crap I am. Not many of those around these days... sigh...

