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TOPIC

**THE PRACTICE OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION ACCORDING TO THE
CHURCH'S TEACHING AS A TOOL TO FOSTER MARIANIST
VOCATIONS IN THE SOCIETY OF MARY IN TOGO SPECIFICALLY
IN KARA**

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Many faithful are looking for spiritual direction in order to grow in their spiritual journey in the Catholic Church. The Teaching of the Church encourages all Christians to attend to Spiritual Direction for their spiritual growth. The church offers many training programs to Christians who want to become spiritual directors. Spiritual Direction is concerned with human relationship with God, helping the person to discover the will of God in one's life, and helping the person to respond to God. Hence, Spiritual Direction has become very important in religious life, especially in the formation houses. It is also practiced with pastoral vocations to help candidates in their vocational discernment. Many people through the ages found their vocations by attending Spiritual Direction. The Society of Mary of Togo, particularly in Kara, also practices Spiritual Direction in its pastoral activities.

Kara is a town of Togo where the Marianists have a large community of Brothers and a recognized school. The Marianist Pastoral Vocation program has a large number of candidates. Most of the Marianist vocations came from there. But today, it is facing a great problem in the lack of vocations. Each year, many youth attend to Marianist vocational activities, but the Marianist pastoral vocation program fails to recruit new vocations.

This study is titled: *“The Practice of Spiritual Direction according to the Church's Teaching as a Tool to Foster Marianist Vocations in the Society of Mary in Togo specifically in Kara.”* The research presents a few studies which have been done in the practice of the Spiritual Direction for the Marianist pastoral program. The research presents an in-depth study of the practice of the Spiritual Direction according to the teaching of the Church. This can help more people to discover their vocations and also to be faithful to their religious commitment. And so,

this study wishes to establish that an effective practice of Spiritual Direction can also help to foster Marianist vocations specifically in Kara. It would like to encourage all the Marianist brothers to reflect on the practice of Spiritual Direction in their pastoral vocations. This will provide the tools of the practice of Spiritual Direction according to the teachings of the Church, and thus will improve the practice of Spiritual Direction in Marianist pastoral vocation in Kara. This study is limited to the practice of Spiritual Direction in the context of the Marianist pastoral vocation in the Society of Mary in Kara.

The study is organized into three chapters. The First Chapter covers the practice of Spiritual Direction according to the church's teachings. The Second Chapter presents the challenges of Spiritual Direction in the Marianist vocations in Kara. The Third chapter represents a reflection on strategies for an effective practice of Spiritual Direction in Marianist pastoral vocations. Finally, there will be a summary, a conclusion along with some recommendations.

CHAPTER ONE: SPIRITUAL DIRECTION ACCORDING TO THE CHURCH'S TEACHINGS

1.1 Introduction

The Church through Christian writers provides us with a wide understanding of Spiritual Direction. It sets before us the adequate tools of practicing Spiritual Direction so that we may be able to lead many Christians to a deeper relationship with the heavenly Father. The church emphasizes the importance of prayer life in Spiritual Direction. It is the key to foster the relationship with God. Praying in Spiritual Direction helps to deal with resistances and discernment on the paths of Christian life. The spiritual dialogue aims to bring down the directee, the spiritual son, into the depths of one's heart, in order to see what is going on in one's thoughts and inclinations. This first part will present a wide definition of the Spiritual direction and its practices following the teachings of the Church.

1.2 Definition of Spiritual Direction

Spiritual Direction is a way to help a person in one's relationship with God. In that sense, Rosage emphasizes a clear, general and simple definition: "Spiritual Direction is a process in which one person (directee) meets regularly with a competent person (director) in order to seek some guidance, reassurance, discernment, and affirmation in developing a deeper, richer relationship with the Lord."¹ 'Direction' is a process which implies specifically listening and supporting one person who needs help. The central point in Spiritual Direction is the relationship between the directee and God. God is always at work in the life of the directee. God is unceasingly

¹ D.E. ROSAGE, *Beginning Spiritual Direction*, 22.

communicating with the directee. He invites the directee to come closer to him, to share his life with Him. Therefore, Spiritual Direction is directly concerned with the directee's actual experiences of his relationship with God.

Spiritual Direction as One to One and Face to Face Relationship

Spiritual Direction is not interested with a group of persons. The subject of Spiritual Direction is an individual, a particular person with his or her own experiences. It is directly concerned with the person's actual experience of God. The focus is on individual experience not on ideas. In Spiritual Direction the individual shares with the director one's personal experience with God. The director in turn listens attentively and encourages the directee. The important thing is the religious experience of the directee. How he or she experiences the mysterious work and call of God in his or her own life. Note that, the correspondence through mail and telephone communication is not helpful in Spiritual Direction. Spiritual Direction is about face to face encounter between the directee and the director. The physical and personal presence of the directee is very important in the Spiritual Direction. It reveals more about the present disposition of the directee which helps the director to understand him. Spiritual direction is not listening to the words but also listen to the entire being of the directee, the resonance and the movement of the heart. The director should never impose upon the directee his own experiences. LaPlace said: "Direction can be defined as the help one gives to another to enable him to become himself in his faith."² The Spiritual Direction is a free relationship between the director and the one he directs.

Spiritual Direction as a Dynamic Process

² J. LAPLACE, *Preparing for Spiritual Direction*, 26.

The director has to know where the Holy Spirit is leading the directee in order to guide him on that way. The director must be a competent person that is he must have the required qualities for the spiritual director. The main task of the director is to listen, to motivate, to encourage and guide the directee to foster an intimacy with God. Spiritual Direction requires regular meetings of the directee with the director. The directee needs to have the sustained and continued meetings with the director, not of course, every day. At the beginning it is good to have weekly meetings and progressively monthly meetings are advisable. A constant meeting between the directee and the director is very essential because it will help the directee to grow in his relationship with God. These meetings are not crisis-oriented but growth-oriented: “the objective, purpose, and procedure of Spiritual Direction are always focused on the spiritual growth of the person seeking direction.”³

Spiritual Direction as a Personal Encounter

Spiritual Direction stresses the personal relationship with God of the directee, that is to say, a focus mainly on the prayer: “Another requirement for effective Spiritual Direction is the resolve to spend time regularly, ideally every day, alone with the Lord in prayer.”⁴ Prayer is the best way of growing in a real relationship with God. Prayer is the place where the directee meets his lovely Father who enkindles within him a greater desire to be with him in a listening posture. Putting the accent on the consistent prayer, the director will bring the directee to a more conscious awareness of God’s presence in one’s daily life. And so, the main actor in the process of Spiritual Direction is God, and not the Spiritual Director. The director focuses on the directee’s personal conversation with God. He is aware that God is communicating in various ways to the directee. God already is present and he is actively acting in the life of the directee. Through consistent prayer, the directee

³ D.E. Rosage, *Beginning Spiritual Direction*, 24.

⁴ D.E. Rosage, *Beginning Spiritual Direction*, 36.

becomes able to discern God's will in one's life and to respond to it. Spiritual Direction begins, when the directee desires to open oneself to God.

1.3 Practices of Spiritual Direction

Expectations of the Directee and Director

The directee should be ready to reflect on his relationship with God. The desire is the first quality that is expected from him. The desire to go to Spiritual Direction to work on his relationship with God is very necessary. The directee is someone who wants to move beyond just doing the right things. He should nurture a great desire to come through difficulties in his relationship with God. For this to be done, the directee needs to be open to the director. He does not have to fear to share his religious experiences. There is no need to hide his experiences if really he needs help. The directee must be free to choose the one he wants to direct him. That free choice will help to establish an atmosphere of trust between him two.

Being a Spiritual Director is not an office in the Church. The task of Spiritual director does not exclusively belong to the priesthood. A lay person, a religious, man or woman can also exercise it. Spiritual Direction is not about a task; it is about being there with someone. The Spiritual Director deals with the person's relationship with God. Therefore, the director should be someone who has a deeper relationship with God. His is a faithful person who believes that God communicates with each individual and wants a relationship with each person. That is why he seeks to help the directee to nurture his relationship with the Supreme Being. For that the director must be a competent person with all required qualities for Spiritual Direction. There are many qualities the Spiritual Director should have to be effective Spiritual Direction.

First of all, the director should be a mature person dealing with people and himself. He is someone who is able to accept and manage strong emotions, anger, crying and fear. He should be able to take initiative in the conversation with directee. He does not have to be in control; he has to be comfortable. The director must also have listening skills. In the process of Spiritual Direction, listening is very important because the role of the director is to clarify what the directee is sharing. The Director makes a feedback to the directee without judging his experience. He should be opened and accept what the directee says. He needs to manifest more interest and more attention to the experiences of the directee. More, Spiritual Director is a person who is able to face challenges. Sometimes, the directee can experience lack of openness, lack of trust, lack of commitment which blocks the process of direction. Then, the director needs to face all those resistances and deal with them. He helps the directee to overcome the obstacles in his spiritual journey in order to strengthen his relationship with God.⁵ Furthermore, the director must be able to convey warmth. The director gives time and reassures the directee that he is present for him; that he has his total attention. Eye contact and a physical leaning forward are good signs of attention. He is very curious to understand how the directee feels and what he is experiencing in the accurate moment. Finally, the director needs to discern to know where God is leading the directee. He must be very committed to prayer seeking to set a closer relationship with God. According to Rosage, “spiritual directors are prayer companions with whom we share what is happening in our prayer. They are friends who help us over the rough spots, especially the discouragement generated by dry, distracted prayer. They affirm the various manifestations of God we experience in prayer. They assist in discovering

⁵ Cf. W.A. BARRY – W.J. CONNOLLY, *The Practice*, 7.

and discerning the will of God as revealed to us in prayer.”⁶ The director discerns the signs of God’s action in the life of the directee.

Prayer Life

The role of spiritual director is to help the directee to recognize the importance of the prayer life. Prayer is not a ritual but a relationship, a connectedness with God. It is a friendship experience in which our soul flows into God and in turn the soul of God flows into us. Resch said that faith ushers us into the exercise of prayer, by placing us into the presence of God. It enlightens our understanding and raises us to God.⁷ Prayer is motivated by our love and desire for God. Therefore, the spiritual direction should focus specifically on prayer life. The director should ask to the directee about how he likes to pray; how he keeps his prayer going and how much he has been aware of God’s presence.

The director enables the directee in the practice of the meditation. The practice of mental prayer (meditation) will center the directee in the life of God and connects his soul to God’s soul. When distracted, the rosary and the litany of Lord are also helpful in the prayer life. The ejaculatory prayers can be very important when we have some difficulty finding a time of our prayer during the day. We have to pray always in order to be on our guard (Cf. Lk. 18:1; Mt. 26:41). Guillerand asserted: “Prayer is the duty of every moment.”⁸ However, the relationship with God does not develop smoothly as we believe.

Resistances

⁶ D.E. Rosage, *Beginning Spiritual Direction*, 51.

⁷ Cf. P.A. RESCH, *The Prayer life of a religious*, 446-447.

⁸ D.A. GUILLERAND, *the Prayer of the Presence of God*, 27.

One of the qualities of the director is capacity to deal with the challenges. The director concentrates his energies on the resistances in order to facilitate the movement of the directee toward God. The directee wants to change but he resists in getting closer to God and moves away from God. There is a conflict within him. He fears to lose himself, his identity. He thinks that God might ask him to give up something as the rich young man in the gospel. He believes that he will be swallowed up in the immensity of God.

Another cause of such resistances is his self-God image. We developed a particular self-image of God from all the authorities in our childhood. We have within us an inner policeman that set up barriers in our spiritual progress: “Many people have an image that prevents them from expressing mean, angry, jealousy, resentful, or sexual feelings to God. They will therefore resist any process that threatens to evoke such reactions in prayer.”⁹ The self-other images that the directee developed can also affect one’s relationship with the director. That means that the source of the resistance is not only laying on the directee’s relationship with God but also, his relationship with the director.

As the focus of the director is to improve the relationship between the directee and God, he should react to the resistances. The director must recognize the presence of the countermovement in the life of the directee. The directee needs encouragement to accept the resistances and to work at these. The directee must notice all that happens in his or her relationship with God. The best way to address the resistances is to let them to develop before confronting them. It is very important to give more time and to be patient. The director must be sure that there is trust between him and directee before any confrontation with the resistances. If there is no trust,

⁹ W.A. BARRY – W.J. CONNOLLY, *the Practice of Spiritual Direction*, 89.

this work of confrontation will be experienced by the directee as a humiliation or an attack¹⁰. The director should not be selfish, focused on his interest but he should be sensitive to the needs of the directee. However, when a person goes to Spiritual Direction it is not just to overcome the resistance but also to discern the will of God in one's life. The Spiritual Direction should help the person to discern what God desires for her. Facing the resistances will assist in the work of discernment.

Discernment

In spiritual direction the goal is to seek discernment of how the Holy Spirit is leading in one's own particular life. As Phillip helped the eunuch to understand the Scriptures and to make his own decision to be baptized, the director also helps the directee to discern God's desire. Discerning the will of God will strengthen his relationship with God. In the Dictionary of Spirituality, we read: "the end of Spiritual Direction is to aid a person to know the plan of God for his life and to put into practice daily the resources which God has given for the realization of this plan." Discernment helps the directee to know whether a given inspiration or movement is from God, from the devil, or from oneself. It helps to know whether his decision or his action is good or bad. In other words, discernment helps to make good decisions and to do the right things. A good discernment will lead the directee to act under the guidance of the Spirit of God. First of all, the directee needs to notice his experiences and be able to distinguish them. He needs to compare the good experiences (joy, peace, consolation...) from the bad ones (sadness, dislike of prayer...). It requires a good understanding of those experiences by questioning them. After understanding and judging good and bad, he needs to choose or to make a decision. They will sustain him and

¹⁰ Cf. W.A. BARRY – W.J. CONNOLLY, *the Practice of Spiritual Direction*, 93.

foster his relationship with God. As we have already seen, prayer will help the directee in decision-making. Commitment to a consistent prayer is the best way to discern the will of God in one's life.

1.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, in the light of the Church's teachings, we understand that Spiritual Direction is an important aid to someone in need to be closer to God. The focus of Spiritual Direction is mainly the person's relationship to God. In that sense, Spiritual Direction requires competent people, well-trained and experienced. Only a competent director can lead souls to the way of perfection. A well-practiced Spiritual direction will help people to overcome resistances and to discern with the help of the Holy Spirit the will of God in their lives. The practice of the Spiritual Direction as described by the Church raises many questions about the manner it is practiced in the Marianist pastoral vocation in Kara. Thus, it is important to analyze now the challenges of the Spiritual Direction in Marianist pastoral vocation activities in Kara.

CHAPTER TWO: CHALLENGES OF THE SPIRITUAL DIRECTION IN MARIANIST PASTORAL VOCATIONS IN KARA

2.1 Introduction

The Marianist pastoral vocation in Kara is based not only on the Marianist vocations but also on the Spiritual Direction. It encourages all Marianist Brothers to take care of the Spiritual Direction of candidates. However, we encounter many challenges of Spiritual Direction in Marianist pastoral vocation. The Brothers seem to ignore the practice of Spiritual Direction in the vocational Direction. In this second part, we are going to present Marianist vocation and the practice of Spiritual Direction in Marianist pastoral vocation by pointing out the challenges.

2.2 Marianist Pastoral Vocations in Kara

Marianist Vocation

Marianist pastoral vocation is concerned with Marianist vocation and all others vocations existing in the Church. The vocation comes from the Latin word “vocare” which means *calling*. In this sense, we understand that vocation is a call, a call of God. It is God who calls persons from different backgrounds and enkindles them for a specific mission in the Church. As all other vocations, the Marianist vocation is a call and a gift granted by God to the Church. The Marianist Rule of Life in its article two states: “In calling us to be Marianist, God asks us to follow in a special way Jesus Christ, Son of God, become Son of Mary for the Salvation of all. Our goal is to be transformed into his likeness and to work for the coming of his Kingdom” (RL, 2). The aim of Marianist vocation is imitation of Christ as a Son of Mary. Then the Marianist pastoral vocation aims to make Christ visible in this world full of indifference. It seeks to generate Marianist

vocations in all aspects of the human activity through education, in order to bring many Christians to the perfection of charity.

Characteristics of Marianist Vocation

Marianist vocation is characterized by mixed composition. Becoming Marianist, we are called to be priest or lay religious forming a single family and striving for the fullness of charity by consecrating ourselves to God through the profession of vows and placing ourselves to the service of the Church (RL, 1). Other aspects of Marianist vocation are faith and community dimensions rooted in Baptism. The Marianist charism is the gift of faith. As our Founder, God has granted us the gift of faith to share with others. Then our mission is to educate in faith through schools, spiritual centers, parishes... according to the setup of each Unit. The vision of Marianist vocation is to become men of faith and form communities of faith. Moreover, Marianist vocation stresses the alliance with Virgin Mary. The Marianist accepts Mary as a mediator, special gift of God. Through this alliance, we aim to help her in her mission of bringing all men to Jesus. She is the one who will form us in the likeness of his Son Jesus Christ (Constitution of 1839, art. 5).

Thus, Marianist pastoral vocation seeks to promote Marianist vocation in all aspects. It strives to make known and loved the Marianist vocation. In the Directory of the Marianists of Togo, it states: "At the regional level, the assistant for zeal organizes around himself or a sufficiently free religious, a nucleus entrusts questions of vocations ministry. Periodically this group stimulates community and religious to indulge in this ministry. It organizes activities intended to make known the Marianist charism: camp vocations, visit of the aspirants, visit of parishes, schools or institutes" (Directory, 91). As all life is vocation, Marianist pastoral vocation tries also to promote all other vocations, such as, marriage and other religious life in the Church.

However, Marianist pastoral vocation in Kara is facing a big problem of vocation. A good number of youth attend to Marianist pastoral vocation but only one or two finally decide to become Marianist.

2.3 Spiritual Direction in Marianist Pastoral Vocation in Kara

Praying

Prayer is a fundamental element of the Marianist pastoral vocation. It responds to the express call of Christ: “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (Mt 9:37-38). Prayer is an expression of faith and hope in the divine merciful love. We know and we trust that if we surrender ourselves to God, he will provide us with vocations. For example, a prayer is formulated for Marianist vocations and every day brothers recite it.

Marianist pastoral vocation gives importance to the personal and common prayer. All candidates are initiated to personal prayer and meditation in order to let Christ be the center of their lives: “It has been set down as a principle that it is impossible for anyone to rise to religious perfection without mental prayer, and that the more a religious devotes himself to this exercise, the nearer he approaches his goal, which is conformity to Christ...Mental prayer is at once the common and the unique source of all virtues (Constitution of 1839, art. 34). Furthermore, the special attention given to the liturgy in prayer nourishes within us and our candidates the spirit of faith.

However, the experiences show that many of the brothers focus on the familial situation of the directee more than his inner experiences. They do not give sufficient time to prayer life in Spiritual Direction. They waste more time talking about studies, instead of exchanging about

prayer. They ignore the importance of the resistances in Spiritual Direction. They do not take initiative to confront the resistances in the prayer life of the candidates.

Accompanying

In the Directory of Region of Togo (art. 93), it is confirmed that we are all accompaniers of vocations. Marianist pastoral vocation works for the accompaniment of all those who attend to Marianist vocation activities. Accompanying people is very important because some have received a call from God but they do not know how to respond to it. All Brothers strive to help Christians who believe they are called to learn to respond to it. They help them to remain attentive and faithful to God. Marianist accompaniment seeks to clarify what the candidate perceives in his relationship with God. One who receives a call needs a wise person to enlighten him along the journey. Then Marianist pastoral agent helps the candidate to see clearly what God wants him to do.

Marianist pastoral vocation helps the candidate to recognize that vocation is not only a personal matter but also, requires the approval of the Church. Only the Church has the ability to approve whether one is called or not. The Superiors have received that power of decision from the Church to confirm a call. The pastoral agents encourage candidates to accept, through dialogue and listening, the personal challenges that arise from that call (conversions, maturation, decisions, commitments...). The accompaniment is done through community, vocational groups, associations and movements, vocational camps and retreats. All those meetings are very important for the vocation ministry.

However, many meetings are not well organized. The candidates and directors have meetings but they ones are not regular and constant. The great issue is that most of brothers are not interested in Spiritual Direction. It is clear, they are not engaged in vocation ministry. They

are involved in ministries other than Marianist pastoral vocation. They do not sacrifice time for Spiritual direction. Also Spiritual direction is not well practiced sometimes because of lack of skills and experience in the matter. Some pass their time to talk without listening to the Directee. The times of meetings become the occasions to give some work to the directee. The candidates also are not interested to the meetings. More often, they come once or twice and after that they give up because there is no motivation.

Discerning

In Marianist pastoral vocation, the practice of discernment is interested in part to external criteria. Those criteria are based on the candidate's attitude, sociability, stability, coherence, transparency, and life situations. They are mainly concerned with his sense of responsibility in the context of: sports, manual activity, group living, pastoral (contact with the sick and the poor, etc.). The Marianist pastoral vocation manages all those occasions in order to facilitate the discernment. All those external criteria help to know more the candidate and help also the candidate to know himself.

Marianist discernment is also based upon internal criteria that is, inner experiences of the candidate with God. The Marianist pastoral agent encourages the person in his prayer life, in listening to God's communication, in the frequent participation to the sacraments and his active involvement in the pastoral activities of his Parish. Discernment helps the candidate to understand what is going on in his relationship with God. It seeks to see in the life of the candidate, if there is a vocation to consecrated life, religious life and to Marianist religious life. Those three aspects are

very important in the discernment. It is important to be attentive to the Christian life of the candidate, to his relationship to Christ and Mary¹¹.

However, the candidates are not well informed about the importance of Spiritual Direction in the process of vocational discernment. Some attend to spiritual Direction only during vocational camps. That practice brings the problem of openness and trust of the directee toward the director who is imposed to him. On the other hand those who are used to attend to Spiritual Direction and have chosen a brother to direct them are not totally committed. They do not show the desire for it and lack openness during the meetings. Therefore, they resist sharing their personal experiences. The matter is that they fear to be known in who they are.

2.4 Conclusion

Therefore, it follows that the Spiritual Direction is not very well practiced in the Marianist pastoral vocation in Kara. We saw that the Marianist candidates are not sufficiently encouraged to participate to Spiritual Direction. Almost all of the candidates are not instructed in what is expected of them in the frame of Spiritual Direction. This will lead to the lack of Marianist vocations. A candidate may be called to the Marianist life but if there is no sustained spiritual direction, he will fail to respond to that call. However, we are convinced that if the brothers are able to improve their practices of Spiritual Direction, following the teachings of the Church, they could very much promote the Marianist vocations in Kara. In this sense, the next chapter will give some solutions for an effective Spiritual Direction in Marianist vocation ministry.

¹¹ Cf. Curia Generalizia Dei Marianisti, *Fostering New Vocations*, 33.

CHAPTER THREE : SOLUTIONS FOR AN EFFECTIVE SPIRITUAL DIRECTION **IN MARIANIST PASTORAL VOCATION IN KARA**

3.1 Introduction

The solutions proposed in this chapter are not exhaustive. These are in fact the approaches of solutions for a good Marianist pastoral vocation. Formal spiritual direction normally starts after the candidate has joined the postulancy or it may begin in novitiate. However, a vocation which has not had time to become solidly rooted before undertaking the trajectory of formation can be lastingly weakened. In the Directory of Marianist of Togo, it states that all Brothers are the accompaniers of Marianist vocations. They are call to participate actively to the formation of the youth postulants, novices and temporary profess. Therefore, the reliable solution would be to offer to formatters and also to all Brothers quality training on the practice Spiritual Direction. In addition to that, there should be regular meetings with the candidates.

3.2 Training on the Practice of Spiritual Direction

Spiritual direction is meeting with a trained and experienced director to reflect on how God is present and active in my life right now, and how God might be calling me into deeper relationship. Being a spiritual director requires a long process of training. Today, many programs of training on the practices of the Spiritual Direction are proposed to those who want to become Spiritual Directors. For an effective Spiritual direction, Brothers, especially formatters are formed and trained in the practice of Spiritual Direction following the teaching of the Church. St. Teresa states that a good spiritual director should be learned, prudent, and experienced. St. John of the Cross also maintains that a director should be learned, prudent, and experienced, and he places great emphasis on experience. The learning of a spiritual director should be extensive. In addition

to having a profound knowledge of dogmatic theology, without which he would be exposed to error in regard to matters of faith, the spiritual director should have a thorough knowledge of ascetical and mystical theology. He should know, for example, the theological doctrine concerning Christian perfection, especially regarding such questions as the essence of perfection, the obligation to strive for perfection, the obstacles to perfection, the types of purgation, and the means of positive growth in virtue. He should have a detailed knowledge of the grades of prayer, the trials God usually sends to souls as they advance from the lower to the higher degrees of prayer, and the illusions and assaults of the devil that souls may encounter¹².

In addition to training, the experiences of the brothers from their spiritual lives and from their observations and directions of others are very important for a good Spiritual Direction. As mentioned in Catechism of the Catholic Church: “According to Saint John of Cross: (...) “In addition to being learned and discreet, a director should be experienced. . . . If the spiritual director has no experience of the spiritual life, he will be incapable of leading into it the souls whom God is calling to it, and he will not even understand them”” (CCC, 2690). As regards the personal experience of the director, if it is a question of the guidance of the candidates with fewer resistances, he needs little experiences. If it is a question of candidates who are facing big resistances in their spiritual journey, he needs to have more experiences in the matter. However, personal experience alone is not sufficient to make a spiritual director as competent as he ought to be. There are many different ways by which the Holy Spirit can lead souls to the summit of sanctity. It would be a serious mistake for a director to attempt to lead all the candidates along the same path and to impose on them his own personal experiences. The spiritual director should never ignore that he is merely an instrument in the hands of the Holy Spirit and that his work must be

¹² Cf. P. MADRID, *“Important qualities”*.

entirely subjected to the Holy Spirit: “It is clear therefore that, in the supremely wise arrangement of God, sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others. Working together, each in its own way, under the action of the one Holy Spirit, they all contribute effectively to the salvation of souls (CCC, #95).

3.3 Regular Spiritual Direction of the Candidates

An effective Spiritual Direction requires regular and constant meetings between the candidate and the director. Merton affirmed: “Spiritual Direction is the continuous process of formation and guidance in which a Christian is led and encouraged in his or her special vocation. By faithful correspondence to the graces of the Holy Spirit, he may attain to the particular end of his vocation and to union with God.”¹³ Spiritual Directors should plan with the candidate the day of their meetings. The program of meetings should be respected by both the directee and the director. It is important to set a program which arranges as well for the director and the directee. A well-planned and respected program will help the directee to grow progressively in his relationship with God. Therefore, Brothers have the heavy task of informing the candidates of the importance of spiritual direction. They must instruct them as to what is expected of them in the Spiritual direction. Brothers are not expected to force them to attend to Spiritual Direction. What is expected to them is to let the candidate understand the importance of Spiritual Direction in their vocational journey. If the candidates are well-informed about Spiritual Direction, they will desire it and they will be committed to these meetings. It is good to take opportunity during the meetings such as vocational camps to inform them on the practice of Spiritual Direction.

¹³ T. MERTON, *Spiritual Direction and Meditation*, 5.

The brothers should motivate the candidates to attend to Spiritual Direction. Many candidates who attend to vocational activities need to be encouraged. The director should be committed to Spiritual direction. He should avoid wasting much time on the discussions which have nothing to do with the matter at hand. The spiritual director is not only called upon to give instructions and to solve difficulties, but also required to be a true educator who makes a positive contribution to the spiritual formation of the soul under his direction. Sometimes the best possible way of contributing to this formation is by means of encouragement and stimulation. To this end, the director should endeavor to infuse in the candidate a healthy optimism founded on confidence in God and distrust of self. Candidates must be made to realize that they are individually called to perfection and that they can attain it if they are faithful to the graces God gives them. If they fail or become discouraged, the director should lift them up and make them see that discouragement at their failure is more harmful. Frequently there is nothing that so animates a candidate as to be received with kindness and understanding when he expects to be censured and scolded by the director¹⁴.

3.4 Conclusion

The training of Brothers on the practice of spiritual direction will give them more skills and experiences to help candidates in their discernment. The candidates need to be instructed on the importance of the Spiritual Direction. They should be motivated and encouraged to choose spiritual directors according to their desires. With an effective Spiritual Direction, Marianist pastoral vocation can bear more Marianist vocations in Kara.

¹⁴ Cf. P. Madrid, *“Important qualities”*.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The Church teaches us that Spiritual direction is a spiritual journey in which the Holy Spirit, through a competent director, brings us to a closer relationship with God. The aim of the Spiritual Direction is to improve the prayer life of the directee. The Director should be a faithful and prayerful person who recognizes the permanent action of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Directee. For a successful Spiritual Direction, the directee as well as the director should be very committed. A good Spiritual Direction will help the directee to overcome his resistances and to discern what God desire for him. It will help the directee to come out with good actions for the Glory of God which is the goal of Christian perfection.

In the light of all that proceeds, we pointed out many challenges of Spiritual Direction in the Marianist pastoral vocation in Kara. We observed a lack of prayer life, a lack of competence, lack of regular meetings, and the problem of discernment in Spiritual Direction. However, for an effective Spiritual Direction, Marianist Brothers need to improve the way they practice Spiritual Direction following the guidelines of the Church. As all Marianists are accompaniers, they need to attend to full training programs on the practice of Spiritual Direction. They must also organize regular Spiritual Direction of the candidates. Instruction and motivation of the candidates are very importance for their participation to Spiritual Direction. A continued and sustained Spiritual Direction of the candidates in the Marianist pastoral vocation in Kara, to diminish the problem of a lack of vocations. In other ways, an effective Spiritual direction can foster Marianist vocations in Kara. All Marianist communities must improve their practice of Spiritual Direction as a way to generate vocations to the religious life.

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