

Hospitality, The Heart of Spiritual Direction, by Leslie A. Hay

A Report by Sandra Broadus, MDIV, CSD

Leslie Hay explores the multi-dimension practice of Hospitality, within the Spiritual Direction context.

A. Using the Rule of St. Benedict and Scripture, she discovers a new paradigm for hospitality – sacred hospitality. She discovered a “new paradigm...a time-honored, scripturally based tradition that fundamentally means welcoming the mystical presence of God in each person and circumstance...” (p.1)

Hay gives the reader a brief but useful description of the Rule of St. Benedict, as recorded by St. Gregory the Great, Meisel and Mastro, and Terrence Kardong, as it applies to SD

1. Hospitable Environment
2. Hospitable Approach
3. The Centrality of Christ
4. Receiving Guests: A Holistic Process

B. Another Dimension of Hospitality (p.20) is found in the process of Lectio Devina, “just as the early Benedictine monks read aloud and ruminated over a scriptural passage, directees read aloud the text of their own lives, pause, reflect and are guided by the Spirit.” (p.25)

C. Hay suggests that the SD relationship is interdependent, as quoted by Henry Nouwen in *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* p. 66, “Fundamentally, as a director, acting as the host, I welcome directees (strangers) and provide hospitality in the form of “shelter” (space) and “food” (nurturance), so that they can explore God’s presence in their lives. In turn, totally without expectation or design, it is a moment of “numinous reciprocity” when I, as director (now as guest), receive some new awareness for myself from the encounter with the directee, which parallels Abraham’s experience with the three strangers.” (p. 30).

Jesus as Host and Guest: The woman and the alabaster jar, The Last Supper, The Walk to Emmaus

D. Hay suggests the following questions a director needs to ask as their directee knocks on the door (p.54):

- Am I truly accepting?
- Do I create an atmosphere that is warm and free of anxiety?
- Is my heart a spacious womb for another to enter and discover more fully who he or she is?
- Can I let each directee freely explore every avenue without imposing advice or judgement?
- Do I possess the internal space, the emptiness, to listen without prejudice, worry, or expectation?
- Can I receive each directee as a divine presence who reflects some aspect of God’s likeness and image?
- Do I understand that each person is on a unique path and will be transformed in his or her own way, and therefore not according to some pre-set schedule, structure, process, or program?