How is God calling me to journey through life?

Spiritual direction can be the answer to this and other questions. Father Matthew Linn shares

Jared Ng

As we are about to begin the interview, Father Matthew Linn quickly realises he forgot his hearing aid. "Can't hear a word without them," he quips.

At the ripe old age of 76, the spirited Jesuit still retains a sense of wittiness to go along with the wisdom accumulated over the many years. This combination of wit and wisdom is perhaps the reason why people all over the world look forward to his inputs on spiritual direction at symposiums and retreats.

For 30 years, Fr Matthew has been travelling across the globe to conduct talks and sessions on what spiritual direction is and its significance. He also teaches and trains spiritual directors.

Jesuit Father Matthew Linn says it is all the more imperative for people to seek spiritual direction in a world that moves so fast.

"Spiritual direction is finding how God is calling you to journey through life, to help you give and receive more love and life," he said plainly, and the easiest way to reflect about this is through two questions: What am I grateful for? What am I not so grateful for?

"It's a process of discerning whether you are listening to God or whether you're off the journey and need to get back on track."

Today in the world where everything moves so fast, it is all the more imperative for people to seek spiritual direction.

"They just run and run without reflecting on their life. They have experience after experience without digesting these experiences." Fr Matthew stressed that "an experienced person isn't one who has a lot of experiences but is one who has learned from the experiences he's had."

Again, reflection is key.

"Ask yourself: 'How is this experience giving me life? How is it not?' If you don't want to have a reflective life, you don't need spiritual direction. If you want to reflect on where your life is going, how it can go better, and where you can be filled with life and love, then you should find somebody to talk to."

Although spiritual direction can be a way of evangelising, it should not be the goal or aim, said Fr Matthew.

"Spiritual direction looks at how God is already talking to them, and how they can reflect deeper in how God is working in them."

Spiritual directors do not try to convert anybody, they try to hear what God is saying to that person and how that person can grow deeper.

Fr Matthew was also quick to distinguish between spiritual direction and therapy.

"Therapy focuses on knitting together the person ... the integration of the human person. Spiritual direction assumes that a lot of that has already happened, and what the person wants to do is to give himself or herself to something bigger."

This is the seventh time Fr Matthew has come to Singapore to give talks on spiritual direction. Although he says he can never get used to the heat (he lives in Minnesota, one of the coldest states in the US), he admitted to his love for durians, which is why we probably have not seen the last of this witty Jesuit. □

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The places and personnel that provide spiritual direction in Singapore are:

1. Cenacle Sisters
   T: 97223148/65652895
   E: cenaclemissionsingapore@gmail.com
2. Centre for Ignatian Spirituality & Counselling
   T: 64676072
   E: cisc2664@gmail.com
3. A Franciscan Missionaries of the Divine Motherhood Sister
   T: 93825913
   E: flofmdm@yahoo.com.sg
4. FMM House of Prayer
   T: 64742526
   E: fmmhp@yahoo.com
5. Good Shepherd Oasis
   T: 81823603
   E: ldt@gsosingapore.org
6. An Infant Jesus Sister
   T: 96274320
   E: celij08@gmail.com
7. Lifesprings Canossian Spirituality Centre
   T: 64662178
   E: lifsprng@singnet.com.sg
8. Life Direction Singapore
   T: 91010747
   E: sp.direction.sg@gmail.com
9. Montfort Centre
   T: 67695711
   E: enquiries@montfortcentre.org
10. San Damiano Spirituality Centre
    T: 65619284
    E: enquiries@sandamiano.sg

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