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Spiritual Fatherhood, Direction and Accompaniment: Mutually Exclusive or Supplementary Terms?

Abstract: In Slovenia and also worldwide the term 'spiritual accompaniment' is becoming ever more popular, and so it often excludes the other two terms: 'spiritual fatherhood' and 'spiritual direction'. In this article the author attempts to analyze meanings of these three terms examining the relevant literature that has had an influence on understanding and usage of them. Rather than understanding them as mutually exclusive he tries to show that they are in fact complementary. In order to do so he first describes the history of each of the terms. Further, he analyses them and depicts the positive role in understanding and implementation of this special form of spiritual assistance and also its possible downsides. In the synthesis he shows how it is best not to use them as mutually exclusive but rather as supplementary terms. This complementary understanding of the three terms will enable the director to help the directee to a fuller understanding of God and the way of following his will.

Key words: spiritual direction, spiritual fatherhood, spiritual accompaniment, characteristics of 'spiritual direction', the terms of 'spiritual direction', the history of 'spiritual direction', the relationship within 'spiritual direction'.

Povzetek: Duhovno očetovstvo, vodstvo in spremljanje: izključujoči ali dopolnjujoči se izrazi?

Na področju Slovenije in tudi drugje po svetu se vedno bolj uveljavlja izraz 'duhovno spremljanje' in pogosto izključuje ostala dva izraza 'duhovno očetovstvo in vodstvo'. V pričujoči razpravi avtor poskuša z analizo pomenov vseh treh izrazov samih in s soočenjem s teološko literaturo na tem področju potrditi tezo, da se ti izrazi pravzaprav ne izključujejo, temveč dopolnjujejo. Zato najprej na kratko opiše zgodovino nastajanja teh izrazov. Nato analizira vse tri izraze ter prikaže tako njihovo pozitivno vlogo v razumevanju in izvajanju te oblike osebne duhovne pomoči in tudi njihove možne pomanjkljivosti. V sintezi pokaže, kako je najbolj prav, da jih ne uporabljamo kot izključujoče se, temveč dopolnjujoče izraze. Takšno dopolnjujoče se razumevanje izrazov usposablja spremljevalca, da lažje pomaga spremljancu k celovitejšemu razumevanju Boga in sprejemanju njegove volje.

Ključne besede: duhovno vodstvo, duhovno očetovstvo, duhovno spremljanje, značilnosti 'duhovnega vodstva', izrazi 'duhovnega vodstva', zgodovina 'duhovnega vodstva', odnos v 'duhovnem vodstvu'.

In our time and space, and also worldwide, the three terms, spiritual direction, spiritual fatherhood/motherhood¹ and spiritual ac-

¹ For clarification, we will only use the term 'spiritual father/fatherhood' and not so much the term 'spiritual mother/motherhood', even though everything that is true of the father is also true of the mother. We will use the same measure in the terms 'spiritual son' in relation to the term 'spiritual daughter'.

companiment, are most often to describe what we commonly understand under the term 'spiritual direction'. In this article I will concentrate on these three expressions in order to reveal different aspects of their meanings. I also intend to determine what the terms themselves can express about this special form of personal spiritual assistance that has been present within the Church from its very beginning.

Slovenian literature (Leskovec 2004, 340; Likar 2005, 15-17; Roblek 2005, 16; Turnšek 1992, 86) prefers the term 'spiritual accompaniment', but it cannot be said that it completely excludes the other two. Many authors use this term interchangeably. So all three terms remain in use (ex. Rendina 2004, 501-502). Some authors, among them André Louf (2001, 49-50), find the term 'spiritual accompaniment' more suitable. If we take our research to the internet, for instance Google, we quickly find that in many languages the use of the term 'spiritual direction' is much more common than the term 'spiritual accompaniment'.² The question arises: Why do some of the authors tend to exclude the term 'spiritual direction' almost completely? Does it really carry such a pejorative connotation? Does it bring such disinclination to the modern man that it is better for it to be abandoned? Is it really better if we take it out of the theological, spiritual and pastoral literature or can we still benefit from its use today, together with the other two, without the fear of harming this form of personal spiritual assistance?

While thinking about reasons for opposition against using the term at hand a question arises: Is it not possible that we oppose the term 'spiritual direction' simply because this secularized world fears for its freedom and self-sufficiency, and is ever more reluctant to any form of guidance, may it be spiritual or not? Couldn't this be a positive sign of our subconscious opposition to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, despite the fact that we declare our faith in Him as Christians? Is it at all possible for us to fully live our Christianity without yielding to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and accepting our dependence on Him and His direction?

It is definitely not my intention to exempt the importance of the other two terms. But by analyzing each of their meanings and confronting them with relevant theological literature of the field, I in-

² On February 2nd 2007 the search for separate terms in http://www.google.si/advanced_search gave the following number of hits: *direzione spirituale* (5.040); *accompagnamento spirituale* (2.070); *direction spirituelle* (8.440); *accompagnement spirituel* (5.140); *spiritual direction* (404.000); *spiritual accompaniment* (3.720); *geistliche Leitung* (11.500); *geistliche Begleitung* (5.340); *dirección espiritual* (15.800); *acompañamiento espiritual* (13.400).

tend to disclose whether it's possible to verify the thesis that these terms are not exclusionary but rather supplementary. If this proves to be the case, we should continue using them as supplementary terms.

In order to expose the validity of the thesis as clearly as possible, I will first review the history of the formation of these terms, after which I will analyze each one of them, and thus reveal their possible deficiencies. I will make a synthesis at the end.

1. History of the formation of different terms for 'spiritual direction'

Eastern Christianity soon developed different naming possibilities for individuals offering spiritual assistance to those in need: (spiritual) teacher/disciple; (spiritual) father/son. It is difficult to say that this form of spiritual assistance and its designation was not influenced by the traditions and experiences of the Hellenistic culture that was co-defined by many well-known teachers and their schools of thought, such as Socrates, Plato, Plotinus and others.

Especially the 'Fathers of the Desert' and different monastic communities of that time give us a clear model of a spiritual fatherhood and motherhood (*Apophthegmata partum*, PG 65, 71-440). The term 'spiritual father' soon became recognized in the West as well. In Benedictine abbeys, for example, the abbot was considered to be the spiritual father of the whole monastic community. This role of the abbot was especially restored and emphasized by St. Bernard, who was highly respected as 'the director of the souls' during the 12th Century (Consoli 1981, 30).

The term *spiritual director* (*director spiritus*) was first used by St. Vincent de Paul, when he founded his theological seminary in Paris in 1642. In his book of ordinances, which followed the example of the book of ordinances of St. Charles Borromeo, he used this term for the person that was responsible for the education of individual seminarists and not the whole community. Pope Leo XIII was the first to implement the term *director spiritus* in a Church document; an encyclical *Fin dal principio* in 1902. Beforehand the Holy See had officially used the terms *pater spiritualis* and *magister spiritualis* (Innocent XI, in 1684), *magister pietatis* (Leo XIII in 1894), *praefectus pietatis* (The holy congregation for the regulation of bishops and other prelates, in 1896) (Panizzolo 1999, 475). These were also the terms that were being used at the formation of the final documents of the Second Vatican Council. Eventually the

term *spiritual direction* (*directio spiritualis*) prevailed and hence also *spiritual director* (*director spiritus*) (Platovnjak 2001, 39-135).

After the Council many of the authors have attempted to replace the term 'spiritual direction' with various other terms that would better suit the modern time and its sensitivity for human dignity, such as: dialogue, conversation, help, personal discernment, counseling, accompaniment, etc. The authors often added the adjective 'spiritual'. In the last decades the term 'spiritual accompaniment' has become ever more popular, since the term 'spiritual direction' appears to overemphasize the influence and the leading role of the spiritual director.

The examination of relevant literature reveals the term 'spiritual accompaniment' was first used by Joseph Sudbrack (1981), who of course didn't reject the traditional term 'die geistliche Führung', but only indicated the adequacy of the term 'der geistliche Begleiter'. A thorough overview of the literature on 'spiritual direction' uncovers three main sources for the formation and use of the term 'spiritual accompaniment' among the contemporary authors.

According to the opinion of Maurizio Costa (2002, 84), the first root of this term can be found in humanistic psychology, especially in Rogers' nondirective therapy. This therapy stresses quite a few positive characteristics that allow a more successful spiritual aid: interpersonal relationship that concentrates on the person that is being accompanied, an nondirective conversation, a respectful attitude towards that person, attentive listening, uncompromising acceptance, empathy and companion's patient waiting, common walk in friendship and mutual support, etc. (Giordani 1998, 420-422).

The second source, according to A. Louf (2001, 49), is in certain protestant milieus where the term once represented a 'service of hearing and accompanying of the dying'. Just as accompanying the dying opens the gates to the new life, so the spiritual accompaniment in a similar way opens the gates into new life for the accompanied person. It helps them to be born again to a new, truer self.

The third source is assumed to be the pastoral of the clerical vocational training that emphasizes the importance of 'personal accompaniment' during the time of vocational discernment and maturing. In order to stress the particularity of approaching the people that are on the path of choosing their calling and profession, some started to use the term 'spiritual accompaniment' (Sarte García 1993, and others).

2. Spiritual father/fatherhood: to grow from the father's intimate relationship with God and from his spiritual experience

As said before, the term 'spiritual father' is the oldest and most frequently used throughout the history of Christian spirituality and also the most biblical as well.

The terms spiritual father/fatherhood and spiritual son give us an immediate perspective of the depth of the relationship that is being formed between the spiritual father and his son. They also illustrate the resemblance to the close family relationships. These terms put relationships first, because it is only through our relationships with the others (the Other), that we can fully become men (of God). This is how they give us the answer to our most inner human need – the need for relationship. The relationship is at the core of our triune God and also at the core of every human, created according to God's image (Genesis 1:27). For our spiritual and personal growth we need a relationship that is full of safety, acceptance and generous and sacrificial love. And this is exactly what a spiritual son can find in a relationship with his spiritual father.

The term father/mother doesn't only remind us of our parents here on earth, but also of God, that is our Father and Mother at the same time. Fatherhood is a participation at the only fatherhood of our God, who gives birth through all eternity and who never abandons his sons and never leaves His relationship with them (Isaiah 49:15; Psalm 27:10). God is not just the Father, but also the Mother (Isaiah 66:13; Hosea 11.4, Jeremiah 31:3.20; John 1:18). Every spiritual father is able to effectuate his mission only by the power of participation in the fatherhood of God, who bears His sons and nurtures them through a deep personal relationship they have with Him.

The term 'spiritual father' reminds also of St. Paul and his apostolic service: 'Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.' (1 Corinthians 4:15, NIV). Of course, this mission doesn't end by birth, but it spreads through and embraces the whole life (Galatians 4:19). As a part of his spiritual fatherhood we can also observe spiritual motherhood (1 Thessalonians 2:7) that is not at all in contrast with Jesus' admonition (Matthew 23:9; Mark 10:29-30). His spiritual fatherhood reflects the motherhood of mother Mary and the Church. This motherhood is, as Lucio Casto (2004, 125) accentuates, a »mysterious bearing of Christ in the hearts of people; it is a mysterious cooperation with the Holy Spirit in bringing the light of Christ to the people«.

The Church fathers (Clement of Alexandria, St. Irenaeus) also emphasize that a spiritual father participates in the one and only fatherhood of God that continuously gives birth to new life by the sacraments and spiritual education. Someone can only be a 'spiritual' father because he is indwelt by the Holy Spirit and acts under his influence. The peak of understanding the motherhood of God and Jesus can be found in the middle ages as a part of the Benedictine and Cistercian tradition. Everyone that has, according to St. Bernard, the ministry of direction, has to have not only the fatherly, but also and most of all the motherly qualities: affection, compassion, tenderness, protection, nursing (Olivera 2006, 401-402).

Summarizing biblical texts and Church fathers and teachers we can say, that (a) spiritual father doesn't only give his spiritual son advice, or offer him help with resolving some of the problems he might have with his conscience, but far more. Spiritual father »gives birth to the souls for Christ or gives birth of Christ in the souls that are entrusted to him« (Casto 2004, 126), as he individually feeds them with the appropriate Word of God, and discerning what is happening in their inner being. To some extent spiritual father is in power and authority, that the Church received from Jesus Christ, a partaker of a motherly role of the Church, as he accepts its responsibility for education and inner growth of his spiritual son, so that he could become »mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ« (Ephesians 4:13, NIV).

To properly understand 'spiritual fatherhood' we must consider Jesus' words when he asks of his relatives: »Who are my mother and my brothers? ...Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother« (Mark 3:33; 33:35, NIV). As we can see, Jesus doesn't mention the father. He clearly tells us that he only has one Father, who is in heaven, and there is no earthly father that could replace Him. But he honors His disciples very much allowing them to be not only His brothers and sisters, but also His mothers.

The expression 'spiritual father' also clearly states, that the relationship between father and son is not the relationship of two 'equals'. Spiritual son doesn't seek his spiritual father in order to find his equal (that would only be friendship, then), but because he wants to grow spiritually beside him. He wants to receive from him not only teachings and rules, but »life« in God and with God. Spiritual father can transfer such an experience to him only in case he lives a deeper relationship with God than his son and has a deeper spiritual experience in his life and in the Church history. Spiritual son thus becomes a partaker of the »intimacy his spiritual father has with his God« (Pinter 2005, 50) and spiritual experience he receives from

such a relationship. At the same time he becomes a partaker of his fellowship with the Church, its teaching and tradition (Rupnik, 1995, 93).

The expression 'spiritual son' also tells us that the style of spiritual accompaniment is closer to the dynamics of the family, than the dynamics of school, because it transfers life and not only teachings and rules.

The expression 'spiritual father/fatherhood' also has some shady sides to it. The implementation of such a relationship can cause the following problems.

Today, the expression 'spiritual father/fatherhood' is questionable due to the crisis of the father figure that was still firmly present in the 1960s of the 20th century and is more or less felt even today. Contemporary man rejects every authority that was traditionally connected with a father. He jealously clings to his own freedom and is ready to acknowledge and accept only the authority of his conscience (Savagnone 2000, 13).

If we look at role of spiritual father as a replication of family relationships it is dangerous that he would be given the authority of both the father and the mother. Such an understanding can lead to thinking, that spiritual son must be dependently obedient to his spiritual father.

It would also be dangerous if spiritual father would assume the role of God the Father and would expect that his spiritual son would have similar relationship with him as God's Son had with His Father. So, in their relationship they need to be constantly aware of the fact, that in their relationship to God, the father, they are both brothers and children of the same Father.

The expression 'spiritual father' can also lead to an incorrect understanding of a 'spiritual direction', because many tend to understand 'spiritual fatherhood' as pure God's gift, a charisma that is very rare and cannot be learned or imitated. On the other side, some tend to understand this gift is entrusted to every priest through his priestly ordination which makes him become a spiritual father to everyone, that he consecrates through partaking of the sacraments, up-brings and moulds by preaching and teaching and spiritually leads to the fullness of life. So, the first aspect of 'spiritual direction' is too narrow and the second too wide. Literally speaking, the »spiritual father« is »only one« (Louf 2000, 55), but we can have more »spiritual directors or companions«, that have a gift of accompaniment, and are at the same time skilled and ready for such a ministry. So, the priest through his priestly ordination cannot automatically become a good 'spiritual father'.

3. Spiritual direction: accepting the direction of the Holy Spirit

The expression 'spiritual direction' points to a great tradition of personal spiritual help, that has always brought »many precious fruits« (PDV 40) into the life of the Church as, Pope John Paul II emphasized.³

In Slovenian language the word 'direction' is gerund of 'to lead'. It primarily means: »to go before someone or with someone with a purpose, that one reaches the certain goal« (SSKJ). From grammatical point of view we see this as expressing a form of help, by which one (the director) goes before or with the other (directee), to help him reach a certain place. This place is characterized by the adjective 'spiritual', which in Christianity means 'life in Christ's Spirit' or 'unity with Him', which has as a goal: fullness of life in Christ. This aspect is further described with another meaning of this verb: »to work in such a way that something is moving in certain direction« (SSKJ). Therefore Spiritual direction points us, leads us and accompanies us towards a certain goal, gives us a direction. We don't just go anywhere, in particular direction for which the director through his experience believes to be the right one. Let's observe this meaning of the term 'spiritual direction' with Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini (1984, 22): »It is ancient, traditional and it points the direction of the way; points to the straight line that ought to be followed. This expression understands Christianity as walking, by which the way could also be missed, and by which we need help in order to be able to walk in the right direction – so that we wouldn't lose the right way.« This term is also similarly understood by Amando Cencini (2005, 45): »Spiritual direction primarily means a *direction*, that must first be imprinted in one's life, so that the person would not float blinded in the fog of our confusions and indetermination, so that we would have the courage to achieve a specific choice. This should be done in the direction, that should be 'spiritual' and can be imprinted by the Spirit, alone.« The task of spiritual direction is to help a person discover the direction and goal of his/her life and help him/her to achieve it.

According to William A. Barry and William J. Connolly (1986, 11), »direction«⁴ implies that »the person who seeks direction is going

³ In his speeches and documents he usually used this particular term. By March 25th 1992, so by the time of PDV, he had only used the term »spiritual accompaniment« four times, and »spiritual direction« about 80 times. (Platovnjak 2001, 154, op. 52).

⁴ The Slovenian translation of the book *The Practice of Spiritual Direction* translates the term 'spiritual direction' with 'spiritual accompaniment' (Barry and Con-

somewhere, and wants to talk to someone on the way. It implies, too, that the talk will not be causal and aimless, but apt to help him find his way«. Both writers are positive, that this expression is still the best although it might lead to some misunderstanding.

The expression 'spiritual direction' also tells us, that the main concern of this form of help are not external actions, but internal life, »a heart«, personal nucleus, and that in this kind of help the »Lord's Spirit« is included (11). This presupposes the activity of the Spirit existing in every Christian, including the person seeking spiritual direction. The spiritual direction makes it possible the directee to fully surrender to the direction of the Holy Spirit.

We cannot deny that the term spiritual direction carries some negative aspects that are often emphasized by those, who want to remove the expression from use. First of all, the term cannot be found in the Bible.

The term 'spiritual' also stirs an unnatural, artificial sensation that reminds us, as it is clearly stated by Barry and Connolly, of an »preoccupation with introspection« (10), stating that one observes his own emotions and morality instead of entering the reality of the world bringing with him the values of God's Kingdom. It can also remind us of a religious system, in which individuals receive exact orders, how they should live, and also of »a spiritualism and an authoritarianism« (10) that would need to be totally rejected by a healthy psychology and theology.

The expression 'directee', is somewhat inconvenient. It is derived from the expression 'spiritual direction', thus: director and directee. This can give an impression that the director is in charge of everything. He decides about: the direction, content, conclusions, action etc. Such experience – being directed – is very strange for contemporary man, because it implies a rejection of personal responsibility and acceptance of the authority of the director. As this is not acceptable and possible in any kind of interpersonal relationship – it would actually destroy it and invalidate it in its essence. It is even less acceptable in the context of spiritual direction, which is being done on the grounds of faith, where only the Holy Spirit is supposed to lead and encourage a person to accept his/her personal responsibility, and where the so called 'spiritual director' is only the deacon of the Holy Spirit.

The terms 'director' and 'directee' might make us begin to think that within the relationship of spiritual direction one is being active

nolly 2006, 6), which has been justified with the fact that the authors talk about nondirective accompaniment. Even today, some 20 years later, Barry continues to use the term »spiritual direction« because he finds it the most appropriate (Barry 2005).

and also directive, while the other is merely being passive and obedient. Because of the common connection between the spiritual direction and the sacrament of confession it's dangerous that the authority of the confessor, who is also the director, might shift to him personally and it then appear that the directee needs to be obedient to him as he has to be obedient to the confessor. The confessor has the actual authority to lay on penitence, to give judgment and act on behalf of the person of Christ completely, in the power of the sacrament of the holy order. But the spiritual director doesn't have any authority, nor is he allowed to demand or impose anything. He is only allowed to be the councilor (Costa 2002, 56). Given the fact that also lay people can be spiritual directors a mix up can occur that could lead into the error of judgment namely, that the directee owes the vow of obedience to the spiritual director.

The expression 'spiritual direction' can cause suspicion that some form of paternalism or maternalism is being exercised in spiritual assistance, that it's founded on a mechanistic and deterministic understanding of the spiritual life. An extremely moralistic view of spirituality in which Christ merely plays a role of ethical and moral worth and value can be seen in the background. As I. M. Rupnik (1989, 105-106) states, this kind of view holds a presupposition that spiritual direction is only a training in virtues and ascetic practice; strengthening of the will, moralising, shaping someone according to some preexistent model, posing a threat of psychologizing etc. It seems to suffice that if the director has the necessary knowledge, however, he understates the meaning of personal needs of the directee and his/her spiritual gifts. In the process of spiritual direction the director should also mind his own gifts and graces provided to him by the Holy Spirit.

The term 'spiritual direction' could have an institutional connotation being part of the formation of the priests and other consecrated individuals. In this context a constant tension is felt about the unified form of formation and the free choice of selecting one's own spiritual director. Unfortunately the latter demand isn't always taken into consideration, and often priests and consecrated persons have a negative experience of spiritual direction (Platovnjak 2002, 587) which creates certain prejudices towards the term 'spiritual direction'.

4. Spiritual accompaniment: to be together and to grow together

As we have already established earlier, the expression 'spiritual accompaniment' is of a younger origin. It's most definitely a valid term, for the verbal noun 'accompany' underlines the idea of a way,

of walking, and of gradualism, which are all essential elements of spiritual direction.

The word 'accompaniment' originates from the verb »to accompany« and holds a meaning of »walking, going somewhere with someone, especially because of a companionship and protection« (SSKJ). In this case the director accompanies the directee by with his wisdom and knowledge walking with the directee »into the same direction« (Louf 2001, 49). The accompanist is neither in front of him nor behind him, but helps him carry the burden of the walk itself by calling his attention to the dangers and by eliminating them together with him. The term shows a close, almost brotherly, and friendly relationship between the two, for they are sharing the »bread« (Cencini 2003, 63) of life together. The term helps them form a relationship in which the accompanied person feels to be accompanied in an unobtrusive fashion. In this deep interpersonal relationship of attentive listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit who speaks to the depths of their hearts as they are »growing together« (Savagnone 2000, 103). The growth of one of them demands and stimulates growth of the other.

So the term 'accompanist' is also good as much as it point to shows the 'non-directiveness' of form of spiritual assistance. Accompaniment realizes that every life's journey is unique and that we all have our own itinerary of following Christ and therefore doesn't force on any experience or model but is simply watchful of the path that is being uncovered in the life of the accompanied person. It also helps him convalescence, embrace and uncover the rest of the journey, leaving him with a complete freedom of choice (Savagnone 1994, 45).

Nevertheless, the very term can cause some misunderstandings with regards to this spiritual help. If the priest's accompanying role is overemphasized, a danger might arise that his help becomes somewhat too passive or unhealthily indifferent, and that he forgets that he is called to be an instrument of the Holy Spirit at all times.

The Holy Spirit on the other hand sometimes takes an active, sometimes a passive role in the life of the accompanied person. This role of the Holy Spirit is being revealed to us by God's pedagogy, apparent through the Bible and uncovered within the history of salvation. God as the leader of His people and the individuals doesn't only accompany them (being with them), he often actively intervenes with their lives as well (Martini 1987, 25, 59).

Because the term roots in Rogers' nondirective therapy, it is dangerous that the spiritual accompanist confuses his role with that of a therapist (Costa 2004, 247). He therefore forgets that the nature of his accompaniment is not based on an interpersonal relationship,

but on the relationship with God, who is also actively present in the accompanied person and who guides and leads this person and gives him/her the desire to develop a genuine personal relationship with him. Spiritual accompaniment isn't supposed to be mainly a sort of psychological aid, like counseling or some form of psychotherapy, but is always, as A. Cencini (2004, 47) clearly states, »accompaniment in the Spirit« and direction toward Him.

This term is also closely connected to the pastoral of the spiritual vocational training, which often results in a very »narrow« (Costa 2004, 247) understanding of the spiritual direction. So, its role is often seen only as a part of the search for personal calling and choice of the profession. Once the basic life choices are made, the need for such assistance falls away.

The term also indicates an equal, symmetrical relationship, but the relationship within the true spiritual direction is always »asymmetrical« (Cencini 2004, 47). The accompanist and the person that is being accompanied are never on the same level, as friends. One accompanies and the other is being accompanied; one of them is the older brother in faith and in following Christ, while the other is still searching. Even though they are both brothers in Christ and God's children before the Heavenly Father, one of them has been called to ease the way toward growth in relationship with God of the other. Even Frank Janin (2004, 242-244) who is very keen to emphasize the positive qualities of this term clearly states that it has its limitations, for it exaggerates in its stimulation of interpersonal closeness, which can do a lot of harm.

Finally this term is limited by its breadth, for it is used in many different forms of spiritual assistance to groups and individuals. We can see that some authors add the word »personal« to the term in order to emphasize that they actually talk of 'spiritual direction' (for example *Movimento impegno e testimonianza 'Madre dell'eucaristia'*).

4. Supplementary, not exclusionary terms

Surely the term 'spiritual accompaniment' is the least intrusive and speaks best to the heart of today's man. At the side of spiritual accompanist the accompanied person can clearly feel that he is not alone on the path the spiritual walk and that even more than the spiritual accompanist, Emmanuel, who is 'God with us' accompanies him. With the help of his accompanist he is slowly starting to get to know God Jesus Christ, a God that is like a friend to him. But the relationship with God isn't supposed to stop at a mere brotherly or friendly level, and here the term 'spiritual father' invites the accom-

panied person to overcome his unhealthy rejection of his earthly fatherly image and his authority thus entering into a relationship that will help him heal authority related insecurities. The spiritual accompaniment in which the accompanist is present as a »spiritual father« will become a loving and a safe relationship that enables the spiritual son to reject and accept Fathers love without fear to be rejected. Such solid and safe relationship with the spiritual father, is the key to »staying in the relationship« with God. It enables the spiritual son to persist the trials till the end and realizing through different rejections that he is truly loved (Pinter 2005, 58).

In 'spiritual direction' that the directee is being directed into an even deeper relationship with God, which doesn't only desire to be our Brother, Friend, a Fellow traveler and our Father, Mercy and Safety, but is also our Lord and Master.

This term stimulates the directee into a complete surrender to the 'guidance of the Spirit'. Instead of desperately cling to his own freedom he is able to 'die' to his 'false' freedom and become a child of God (Galatians 5:1). The basic task of 'spiritual' direction is to help to ease building the relationship with the Triune God and making it possible for the accompanied person to fully surrender to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The relationship between the spiritual director and the person that is being accompanied has to be in harmony with the existing relationship and the Holy Spirit, who is the only true Spiritual director. The so called human spiritual 'director' has only the role of a catalyst (and initiator and the pointer) who is supposed to simplify and reestablish the personal relationship between the directee and the Holy Spirit, who already exist among them without being able to fully step into him (Costa 2002,79).

When we consider 'spiritual direction' from the psychological, sociological and phenomenological point of view, we can see the leading position of the director and the submission and passivity of the directee. The reason for such a viewpoint is the conviction that is especially popular in today's culture which rejects any form of authority. G. Savagnone (2000, 15) describes this as a conviction that »any form of asymmetry involves a certain amount of authoritarianism«. But if we consider the phenomenon from the theological, ecclesiological and anthropological viewpoint it gets a whole new meaning. If the Holy Spirit has the complete priority, than both the director and the directee are called to listen to him and be obedient to his guidance. The precedence the Holy Spirit in 'spiritual direction', which is especially emphasized by this term, enables two basic principles - the principle of brotherhood (accompaniment) and fatherhood (authority and guidance) to simultaneously coexist. It is

the Holy Spirit that includes both principles and »mutually harmonizes them« (Savagnone 2000, 35).⁵ The second principle prevents the relationship from being diluted to mere friendly confidentiality. The first helps the second from going astray into any form of paternalism, authoritarianism and directivism.

The term 'spiritual direction' clearly points that the task of the accompanist that is not mere companionship, but also pointing the way out of today's contemporary labyrinth of daily activities, into the fullness of life, into salvation and culture of love and life. Of course this doesn't mean he needs to show only one way to the accompanied person, but the variety of possible choices. According to directee's life story and the signs of the Spirit, he helps him choose the path God's Spirit is calling him on and that corresponds most deeply with his inner desires and the will of God. It is most important for the accompanist to help the accompanied person identify the experience of God's leadership in his life, especially in times of prayer, by helping him recognize what touched him in the deepest inner being. It's only when he is able to see and express his experiences of prayer and his daily following of Christ, he can begin to discern and uncover God's plan for his life and freely, consciously and responsibly respond to it.

Conclusion

We have seen that all three terms – spiritual fatherhood/father, direction, and accompaniment – are valid and that every one of them points to some important aspects of this form of personal assistance. None of them can completely encompass the full meaning of this spiritual help. But if we are to adopt these terms as supplementary, we can avoid many misunderstandings and confusion.

We can see that the term 'spiritual direction' is truly rich in its content and that it clearly points to the purpose of Christian way of living, that is, yielding to the purpose of »God's Spirit« (Romans 8:14) as His children. Once we unify with Christ and accept the fact that we can't do anything and are able to do only the things he does and that Father does through him (John 5:19; 15:5).

⁵ Interestingly, G. Savagnone completely rejects the term 'spiritual direction' on one side and sees only negative meanings of it – authoritarianism and directionism, but on the other side he also finds that in spiritual accompaniment the brotherhood/friendship principle shouldn't be prevalent, because it would prevent the accompanied person from growing. In order for him to grow the principle of fatherhood and authority should also be present. So it's obvious that he also acknowledges the need for characteristics that are being manifested through the terms 'spiritual direction' and 'spiritual fatherhood', of course in harmony with the principle of brotherhood/friendship, that are contained in the term 'spiritual accompaniment'.

The fact that God is our Lord and Master, and that we are merely His »unworthy servants« (Luke 17:10), doesn't exclude the fact that he is also our Friend (John 15:15), Brother, Father (John 20:17) and that we are His friends, brothers and collaborators, beloved adopted children (Ephesians 1:15) and His children.

We are called to a gradual understanding of the entire likeness of the triune God and of all that he is for us and all that we are for him. This is a progressive path, just like the revelation of God through the history of Christianity has been progressive. Until His death, Jesus did everything he could in order to hide his Messianic identity (Gospel according to Mark); he fully proclaimed his title, when it was absolutely clear that the Messiah is God's suffering servant, and that it's impossible to be His disciple, if we are not prepared to step into the Passover mystery with Him. Full acceptance of the path of affliction and death was the most difficult thing for the Apostles and it is also the most difficult thing to do for us.

I believe it is similar with the acceptance of the term 'spiritual direction'. It seems to be too harsh, inhuman, old-fashioned, and insensible for today's understanding of freedom and human dignity. But it becomes clear from the arguments stated above, what it means to be Jesus' disciple and to receive his freedom. But this doesn't mean that we are not allowed to take the same kind of detour that Jesus took, so that his disciples could fully understand the meaning of his identity as the 'Messiah'.

So we are fully justified to use the term 'spiritual accompaniment', realizing it doesn't express everything we would like to express with the term spiritual direction. Finally, even if we are to call it with the term 'spiritual direction', it is much better for us to use the term 'accompanist' for the leader and the person who is being accompanied ('accompanee').

In the spirit of Ignatian spiritual exercises we could also name the 'director' as 'the one that is giving spiritual direction' and the person that is asking for spiritual direction 'the one receiving spiritual direction'. In any case the accompanied person begins to search for his spiritual director and father as he progresses in his spiritual life and personally experiences the need for a firm hand of support in facing different obstacles.

It is unrealistic to suppose that only the exchange of the terms 'spiritual director' and 'spiritual accompanist' will automatically change the attitude of the spiritual direction. The 'director' can certainly leave the choice of the title to the accompanied person in order to help him establish a trustworthy and secure relationship and through that further develop a personal relationship with the Triune

God in obedience to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is much more important for the spiritual director to grow in his own spiritual life, which will make him a better director, then to insist to be called by a particular title of preference.

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