The Portrait So Far, and What's Next for Your Groups

All three teams have now offered their sense of who we are forming. Rather than sort it all in one evening, here is what I see across the three lists, and a few focused questions for each group to work on before we next meet. Please take these into your small groups.

One question runs under everything below, so carry it through all of it: for each capacity, ask whether it is something we form over the two years, or something a person must already bring to be admitted at all. What we require at entry is often the seed of what we form.

The convergent core

Working independently, the teams reached much of the same ground. Four capacities recur across the lists:

- Being present to reality, and able to accept what is rather than what we wish it to be
- A contemplative, discerning stance
- Ongoing inner formation, self-awareness, and the deepening of one's own life
- Rootedness in the Holy

A great deal of what all three teams wrote, including much of the longest list, folds into these four.

For your group: *Does this feel like the true core? What is missing from it? Is anything here miscategorized?*

The self, in more detail

The inner-formation capacity above holds several distinct things worth naming separately, since they are not the same:

- Monitoring what is moving inside oneself in the moment, during a session
- Standing self-awareness and self-reflection as a way of being
- Recognizing one's own implicit bias and assumptions
- Congruence and authenticity, being the same within and without
- Willingness to be vulnerable and share one's own story
- Attending to one's own self-care, spiritual and personal

For your group: *Are these all part of one capacity, or do some deserve to stand on their own?*

Presence, and to whom

Presence was named toward three different objects, and they may not be the same skill:

- Presence to the directee
- Presence to the Divine
- Presence to oneself

For your group: *Is presence one capacity, or does presence to self, to others, and to the Holy ask different things of us?*

The skills layer

One team named the concrete craft of direction in detail. These are things a director does:

- Recognizing transference and countertransference
- Recognizing and following the directee's energy

- Recognizing movements of spirit in the directee, and, separately, in oneself
- Working with a direction arc, for example, awareness, naming, meaning, discernment, next steps, integration
- Offering evocative and guiding responses while avoiding steering or avoidant ones
- Making good use of silence, and limiting casual conversation in a session
- Knowing when a directee needs professional help, and being willing to refer
- Strong listening and responding

For your group: *Do these belong in the portrait of who a director is, or are they curriculum, what we teach them to do? Which are truly formation, and which are training?*

Supervision

Supervision came up in three distinct forms, worth keeping separate:

- Engaging in regular supervision oneself
- Being a well-prepared and cooperative supervisee
- Being able to provide supervision within a peer group

For your group: *Which of these belong in the portrait, and at what point in a director's development?*

Ethics and the possibility of harm

Named but not yet given a clear home: knowing and adhering to ethical guidelines, and understanding that spiritual injury can result from a director's misguided behavior. This is its own dimension, not quite the same as presence or formation.

For your group: *Does the portrait need an explicit ethical dimension of its own? What belongs in it?*

Two that sit apart

Two things came up that don't fit neatly with the categories above. I am bringing them as questions, not positions.

First, on knowledge across traditions, which is really two questions:

- Knowledge of more than one religious tradition, broad religious literacy
- Knowledge of the direction methods particular traditions have developed, for example Ignatian discernment of spirits, Benedictine receptivity, Quaker silence, Zen unknowing

For your group: *For each: is it a formation goal, curriculum content, or something we expect people to bring? How much does a director actually need?*

Second, on dispositions toward difference. One team named cultural competency with regard to people who have been marginalized, including people of color, people of certain religious traditions, and people who identify as LGBTQ or non-binary, along with respect for the inherent value of all people.

For your group: *Are these capacities we form directly, or do they grow from things we have already named, humility, honoring the directee's experience, and respect for the inherent worth of each person? Sit with it, and bring your group's thinking rather than a verdict.*

This is a working map of three lists, not a decision. Nothing here is settled. Your groups' work is what we will reconcile together.