

## Forming spiritual directors for the modern world

If you have a capacity to help others find meaning and purpose in their lives, you might consider studying to become a spiritual director in 2023.

Fr Michael Smith SJ, a lecturer in Ignatian spirituality at ACU, said spiritual directors helped people pay attention to the experience of God in their lives.

“The role of a spiritual director is to help others attend to God’s self-communication — that is, any experience of the mysterious Other whom we call God,” Fr Smith said.

For those seeking a deeper connection to God in 2023, or simply needing more direction in their lives, a spiritual director may be able to offer them insight and wisdom. Some people choose to meet their spiritual director monthly, while others are drawn to making the Spiritual Exercises with a spiritual director over a 35-week period or in a silent 30-day retreat.

“Spiritual directors tend to be mature believers who have a deep intimacy with Jesus Christ and whom others seek out for their spiritual insight and discernment,” Fr Smith said.

There is also a growing number of people being formed to become spiritual directors. ACU’s newly revised Master of Spiritual Direction and Graduate Diploma in Spiritual Direction, which are being offered online on Zoom, help aspiring spiritual directors around the world become ethical, self-aware and skilled practitioners in the Ignatian tradition.

Fr Smith said spiritual direction was more than a qualification, and should be seen as a charism, or a gift of the Holy Spirit.

“Students receive confirmation of this gift through other people, with whom they live and work, identifying it and calling for its use,” Fr Smith said.

“ACU’s Master of Spiritual Direction helps students to shape their charism of spiritual direction by means of serious academic learning.”

Course convenor Associate Professor Robyn Horner said ACU’s spiritual direction courses were being offered online after positive learning experiences teaching the courses using Zoom during the COVID lockdowns. It means the courses were now available almost and are committed to the formation of spiritual directors in ethical practice.

“There is a developing attentiveness within the wider Christian community of the need for holistic models of formation for all those involved in leadership,” Associate Professor Horner said.

“Such attentiveness is particularly pointed and urgent in the wake of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, and its published Recommendations where the need for strong and effective emphasis on formation for integral maturity and healthy psychosexual development has been promoted and advocated.”

For more information about ACU’s Spirituality courses [here](#).

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