



STUDIES

IN
THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

IES

When a Jesuit Counsels Others

Some Practical Guidelines

CHARLES M. SHELTON, S.J.

THE SEMINAR ON JESUIT SPIRITUALITY

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It concerns itself with topics pertaining to the spiritual doctrine and practice of Jesuits, especially United States Jesuits, and communicates the results to the members of the provinces through its publication, *STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS*. This is done in the spirit of Vatican II's recommendation that religious institutes recapture the original inspiration of their founders and adapt it to the circumstances of modern times. The Seminar welcomes reactions or comments in regard to the material that it publishes.

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WHEN A JESUIT COUNSELS OTHERS
Some Practical Guidelines

Charles M. Shelton, S.J.

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Of all things . . .

“Oh, you Jesuits are all intellectuals!” Once in a while a Jesuit may hear this comment, intended perhaps as praise or as blame. However true or false the statement may be, it does raise a question for the hearer: “What is an intellectual?” Don’t worry, the following paragraphs are not going to be a philosophical disquisition; they consist, rather, of a quotation and a brief comment.

Some months ago the Catholic Commission on Intellectual and Cultural Affairs met at Holy Cross College. While addressing that meeting, Sr. Jeanne Knoerle, S.P., a member of the staff of the Lilly Endowment, had this to say:

The primary role of intellectuals is not to know everything. Not to explain everything. Not to answer all the questions. Not even to present careful arguments—though that surely is an important role. The primary role of intellectuals is, out of all they have seen and understood and questioned, *to articulate the questions that will organize and break open the conversation*. In the life of the mind, answers are never as important as questions, since questions order how the subject will be examined. And explanations are never as important as questions, since questions force the reader, not the writer, to answer them. The purpose of the intellectual life is not to answer questions, it is to generate insight in others (to open their eyes, so to speak), to expand everyone’s horizon so that the eye of the mind of all participants is opened and truth, given all the resources available, can be uncovered in whatever way possible.

In this sense, maybe all of us Jesuits, no matter what our academic training may be, or our past or present experiences and activities, are intellectuals. At least I hope so.

Something old and something new. About forty years ago the novel *A Canticle for Leibowitz* by Walter M. Miller Jr. appeared and garnered great acclaim. Some called it science fiction, others a Christian parable for an age distraught by looming nuclear war. I read the book then and reread it just last month. My conclusion was that it had lost none of its power. In its first part, entitled “Fiat Lux,” a congregation of monks in the southwest of the United States, six hundred years after the nuclear war of the twentieth century, tries to preserve the remnants of learning that survived both the war and the “Great Simplification” that followed, in which most of humankind banded together to destroy every vestige of learning and every learned or even literate man or woman, convinced that it was the learned and their works that had brought on the nuclear destruction. For hundreds of years the monks tried to preserve the “Memorabilia” in their abbey and to reconstruct the world from items found or retrieved, such as scraps of books, pieces of transistors, a fragment of a circuit-board blueprint—all in the name of St. Leibowitz, an engineer who, some time ago, during what might be called the Dark Ages, had died a martyr while trying to preserve these vestiges of a higher culture. In the second part of the book, entitled “Fiat Homo,” half a millennium later, the world had been in part reborn to what

resembled a modern version of the Middle Ages. Feudal realms, such as the Empire of Denver and the City-State of Texarkana, and their rulers vie with each other for power. In the meantime, scholars slowly and painstakingly rediscover ancient texts, and then an enterprising monk at the abbey builds the first crude machinery to produce electric light for the first time in a thousand years. The abbey is caught up in the military rivalries and is almost destroyed. Fast forward another five hundred years to “Fiat Voluntas Tua,” and the world has again scaled to the heights of civilization that the twentieth century had earlier attained. An even more devastating nuclear world war was again imminent; the Church was ready to send a starship of colonists to Alpha Centauri, led by monks of the abbey of St. Leibowitz. Again, a nuclear war breaks out and the cycle of mindless destruction begins anew.

As I reread the above paragraph, I realized how arid it was in comparison with the richness of characters, plot, action, spiritual depth, reflection, and even humor in the novel itself. Take up the book and read. It is gripping.

As for something new, just published in this year 2000 by a Spanish Jesuit, Javier Melloni, is a small book of fifty pages or so, *The Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola in the Western Tradition*, trans. Michael Ivens, S.J. (Leominster, U.K.: Gracewing Press). As the author, presently stationed at Manresa in Spain, says in his introduction, “[T]he aim of the [book] is . . . to present [the Exercises] not as an isolated phenomenon, the fruit of personal experience alone, but as resulting also from contact with the preceding spiritual tradition.” The standpoint of the book is not historiographical but interpretative. Its

concern is not to establish the literary genesis of the text, but to consider the sources as foundational layers in the Exercises themselves. Seeing the Exercises in this way we can better understand both their common—or inherited—character and their specific or original character, the light coming from knowledge of the sources enabling us to situate the Exercises within the great tradition of the West, and at the same time to identify the specific features which constitute Ignatius’ own contribution to that tradition.

The several chapters deal with (1) Ignatius’s direct contact with the tradition, (2) the Spiritual School of Fray García de Cisneros, (3) features inherited from the tradition, and (4) the specificity of the Ignatian Exercises. The reader will meet some familiar figures, such as Denys the Areopagite and St. Bonaventure and, of course, García de Cisneros, but also some people whom, I suspect, he may never have heard of before, such as Hugh of Balma, Hendrik Herp, and John Mombaer. They and others appear in an ingenious two-page “Genealogical Tree of the Exercises.” In a few pages, the book demonstrates how tradition vivifies a work that nonetheless goes beyond the tradition, and in so doing becomes itself a life-giving part of the further development of that tradition. This book, too, is well worth the reading.

John W. Padberg, S.J.
Editor

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WHEN A JESUIT COUNSELS OTHERS

Some Practical Guidelines

Setting the Scene

Question: What is the most frequently performed ministry of Jesuits?

- a. planning or presiding at liturgical services
- b. teaching
- c. homilizing
- d. reading issues of *STUDIES*
- e. none of the above

If you chose *d*, you earned the gratitude of the current Assistency Seminar members. Unfortunately, you also chose incorrectly! In all likelihood, the correct answer is *e*. The apostolic enterprise Jesuits most frequently undertake is, simply, conversation (hereafter within these pages referred to as “counsel”). Consider the following scenarios on any typical day in the lives of Jesuits in the United States Assistency.

1. At a Jesuit secondary school located on the East Coast, Bob Watson, a high-school junior, stops by a regent’s classroom after school to chat. His parents’ recent divorce leads Bob to seek a caring, sympathetic ear.

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2. On the West Coast, at the midpoint of a week-long retreat, Sally Hendricks reveals to her Jesuit retreat director her struggle to reconcile God's love with her poor self-image.

3. At a Midwestern Jesuit university, in the midst of conversation regarding departmental matters, a lay professor interrupts his Jesuit colleague and inquires whether before they conclude their meeting the Jesuit might reflect with him about a troubling family situation that occurred over the previous weekend.

4. Going south, at the very moment that the Jesuit professor above listens attentively to his colleague, a Jesuit pastor reflects with a staff member on ways she might enhance her communication with the leaders of several parish-sponsored ministries.

What unites these four situations? All contain instances where conversation with a Jesuit promotes another's emotional and spiritual well-being. Exercising this role is not only a vital resource Jesuits offer the People of God; it also constitutes a major apostolic enterprise of American Jesuits.

Jesuit Counsel and the Need for Guidelines

In light of the above and as a foundation for the discussion that follows, I offer this definition of Jesuit counsel. In a generic sense, yet specific for this article's purpose, Jesuit counsel refers to a focused conversation between a Jesuit and another person in which the Jesuit listens and when appropriate offers constructive comments, reflections, advice, or feedback whose primary purpose is to promote either another's spiritual well-being, his or her emotional functioning, or both.¹ This definition is broad enough to incorporate the major mainstream, conversationally based ministries of Jesuits—spiritual direction and pastoral counseling—yet narrow enough to exclude other ministerial relationships, such as teaching or academic advising.

Several aspects of this work require that we think seriously and reflectively about the counsel we give. For one, a human being's capacity to

¹ I offer this definition of "Jesuit counsel" fully aware that experts have reached no consensus on the meaning of terms such as "spiritual direction," "pastoral counseling," or "counseling." Needless to say, one might rather easily find some examples that don't quite fit the definition suggested. Even so, "counsel" as defined herein casts a net wide enough to include the majority of conversationally based pastoral situations confronting Jesuits.

adapt is one of humanity's greatest strengths. Yet this same adaptability leads people to acquire habitual or set ways of doing things. Over time, a style of behavior or course of action can become so commonplace that we fail to give it much scrutiny. When this tendency to proceed according to a habitual pattern is applied to our counseling, even with the best of intentions we can rather easily slide into a self-complacent mode and become less self-observant than we might otherwise be. Accordingly, over the years many of us might have grown so accustomed to a certain counseling style that we probably haven't taken the time to reassess or think critically about the counsel we provide. Yet because our counsel is so integral to the Jesuit ideal of aiding souls in companionship, we would be wise to spend some time seriously examining it.

A second reason to examine our counsel stems from the growing awareness among mental-health researchers that a major proportion of Americans suffer a mental disorder at some point in their lifetimes.² Thus, I think it safe to say that *on average* (but of course with many individual exceptions) the "typical" student, adult, colleague, directee, or counselee applying to a Jesuit for counsel is more likely to be unsure, confused, troubled, stressed, or impaired than his or her counterpart a quarter century ago. It is important, therefore, that a Jesuit's counsel remain informed, appropriate, and professional.

In addition, as a domain of knowledge, psychology captures the fancy and imagination of many Americans. Browsing through any bookstore, one is struck by the shelf space allotted to books promoting psychological themes, such as determining healthy/dysfunctional relationships, advocating recovery/self-help issues, and fostering personal growth. Given our psychologically minded culture, it stands to reason that many who seek our counsel entertain preconceived notions of how Jesuits should conduct themselves in pastoral situations, or have specific expectations of what should take place during a conference or meeting with a Jesuit. Like others occupying ministerial roles within the Church community, Jesuits are rightly expected to follow professional standards, to possess sufficient self-knowledge, to employ an adequate level of psychological sophistication when ministering to others, and to be held accountable for their actions.

Finally, over the past several years a number of cases involving inappropriate behavior of priests and religious have drawn wide media

² Darrel A. Regier, William E. Narrow, Donald S. Rae, Ronald W. Manderscheid, Ben Z. Locke, and Frederick K. Goodwin, "The de Facto US Mental and Addictive Disorders Service System," *Archives of General Psychiatry* 50 (February 1993): 85-94.

coverage. These cases typically involve some type of boundary violation with respect to the vow of chastity. In some instances these behaviors include criminal wrongdoing of a sexual nature (for example, sexual abuse of a child or adolescent, child pornography). At other times they involve taking advantage of someone who is vulnerable (for instance, getting sexually involved with an adult counselee). As General Congregation 34 notes,

Everyone should be aware that any failure in living faithfully the vow of chastity or any ambiguous relationships can afflict others cruelly, both spiritually and psychologically. Besides the issue of serious sin, such behavior can compromise the credibility of the Society within a culture that is skeptical about any fidelity in chastity and seriously injure its apostolic effectiveness.³

As a minimal goal, offering reflections and guidelines on our counseling will enhance awareness of these issues and, we may hope, help to minimize or curtail such pernicious behaviors. The four reasons discussed above might all be subsumed under the theme of *consciousness raising*—on an individual and a corporate level—in a way that allows us to think seriously and critically about the counsel we provide. Jesuits are rightfully proud that they are traditionally regarded as men of “good counsel.” Accordingly, in the pages that follow, we offer sets of questions for reflection whose goal is to enhance self-examination and to foster personal insight aimed at nourishing and sustaining the “good counsel” we provide.

Moreover, the themes addressed in the pages ahead reflect “serious” issues, because we are dealing both with other people’s lives and with God’s working through them. So if I err, I prefer to err by stressing our need for ongoing awareness, critical reflection, and recognition of our limitations. On a positive note, I am encouraged that today so much effort is devoted to helping our men in formation become effective pastoral ministers. In addition, I find heartening and uplifting the enormous goodwill of the corporate Society, and the good intentions and selfless desires of the many Jesuits who so effectively serve both the Church and society at large. Nothing in these pages is intended to demean this overwhelmingly positive contribution. Nonetheless, because we are dealing with people’s lives and because we are all human, it seems reasonable to address issues and concerns directly and honestly when they can reflect on both the Society’s and the individual Jesuit’s integrity.

³ Decree 8, “Chastity in the Society of Jesus,” in *Documents of the Thirty-Fourth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus* (Saint Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1995), no. 258 (p. 124).

Jesuit Spirituality and Our Counsel

Because many seek our counsel and our conversations with them occupy a considerable portion of our time and energy, it is important to reflect upon the counsel we give. A positive way to begin such reflection is by exploring how we might relate spirituality to our counsel. More specifically, our own spiritual tradition provides a helpful springboard for initiating this discussion. Taking this spirituality into account, we might pose a question like this: **What aspects of Jesuit spirituality do I draw upon to nourish and support my role as a Jesuit who counsels others?**

A linkage between our spirituality and our counsel offers several advantages. For one, we are not just men who counsel but *Jesuits who counsel*. Thus, intertwining our spirituality and our counsel, ideally, calls us to reflect consciously on our (deepest) desires, one of which is working together as companions to promote our common mission to serve the People of God. Naturally, fidelity to this desire calls us to continually evaluate the quality of our counsel in terms of intentions and actual practice. To illustrate, we might ask ourselves: Does our counsel reflect living our vowed lives with integrity? Would someone who observed our counsel agree that our words and actions harmonize with the ideals inspiring and guiding Jesuit life?

In addition, on a very practical level, linking our Jesuit spirituality with our counsel will reassure us in the unlikely event that some legal complaint should be brought against us or if public attention should be drawn to our counsel or pastoral efforts (always assuming that no real boundary violation has occurred). Our ability to articulate the spiritual underpinnings and motivations for the counsel we offer not only demonstrates our commitment to sound pastoral practice but also assures others that we are men of personal integrity. In today's litigious and media-driven climate, this witness to a sincere and prudent stance in matters of pastoral care and practice proves invaluable. In light of the above, four themes in Jesuit spirituality can serve as a support and guide for our counsel.

1. **Gratitude.** An underlying premise of Ignatius's worldview was that everything is a gift from the Lord who has showered us with his love. If we experience our lives as "gifts," we are inclined to feel grateful. Moreover, we often sense the desire to give back, to respond generously to others in gratitude for the giftedness the Lord has bestowed upon us.⁴

⁴ As one might expect, our emotional states do influence the degree to which we aid others. See Robert B. Cialdini, Douglas T. Kenrick, and Donald J. Baumann, "Effects

In addition, a sense of gratitude provides a buffer when we experience negative emotions or are overly burdened by stressful events. Most of us at one time or another find ourselves held captive by unresolved anger or paralyzing fear. Of course, events in our lives can legitimately lead us to feel anxious or depressed; but even so, our tendency to dwell on the negative can make our lives more distressing at times than they need be. Gratitude offers a sturdy buffer, cushioning us against the stressful and daily conflicts that over time deplete our psychic energy.

When people come to us in a worried or troubled state, they are often unable to experience gratitude or other positive emotions. Unfortunately, this inability to summon up a conscious sense of gratitude frequently leaves them prisoners of their negative feelings. Certainly, the absence of gratitude does not plunge anyone into a troubled state. Any individual's emotional problems stem from a unique admixture and complex interplay of biological, psychological, and social factors. Nonetheless, the void arising from an absence of gratitude predisposes people to fall prey to the fear, jealousy, doubt, guilt, and anger that trigger emotional distress. Making the **choice** to focus on memories and moments that stimulate grateful feelings makes sense both for us and for those we counsel.

2. **Doing good deeds.** A second aspect of Jesuit spirituality that might serve to guide our counsel is Ignatius's idea that love ought to show itself more in deeds than in words. A client who came to me for therapy had the habit of talking about how he wished to enhance his significant relationships. He once told me, "I've always tried to be open to my friends and attentive to their needs." Unfortunately, his behavior was all too often the exact opposite. Instead of being vulnerable and open with his friends, he was in fact quite controlling in his dealings with them. As I gained his trust, I offered examples from his own life that showed the inconsistency between what he said and what he did. Fortunately, he had the psychological motivation to change, and that spurred him to critically examine the discrepancy between his words and deeds and alter the self-contradiction he had created. Like this man, most people find uncomfortable internal inconsistencies, and such distress provides a wholesome catalyst for change. Ignatius's focus on viewing behavior as the litmus test for living the Gospel fits nicely with self-identity—an evolving yet enduring self-definition that strives to reflect at any one moment a range of consistent and coherent thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. In this light, encouraging people to explore their lives by devising some type of daily examen proves helpful. Furthermore, simply encouraging

people to engage in actions that benefit others, that is, “doing something positive,” can often contribute to altering an emotional state or personal perception. Feelings, personal behaviors, and environment (the context in which we live) are interconnected; and altering one of these factors (for example, by engaging in some type of positive behavior or choosing to think about some motives for gratitude) frequently enhances our other feelings, behaviors, and perceptions.

3. **Awareness of desires.** Ignatius was reputedly a wise director of souls; one focus of his attention was a person’s desires. We exist as a bundle of desires—some intense, some contradictory, some noble, some ignoble. Obviously, the challenge for each of us is to discern our deepest desires and to probe the end to which they are directed. Typically, when people have to make important life decisions, their thoughts and inclinations fail to converge and flow along a single path. Rather, they frequently find themselves tugged in conflicting if not contradictory directions and are left uncertain about their lives and the decisions they must make. Working in a collaborative venture with someone seeking counsel and helping him examine which desires reflect his core values are immensely rewarding. As is so often the case, when one’s deepest desires surface, the motivation to commit oneself to a specific choice or course of action increases.

4. **Where they are.** A final dimension of Jesuit spirituality that we can employ to advantage is Ignatius’s insistence that we minister to people “where they are.” One wise commentator on Ignatius characterized this approach to people as accompanying them through their door and coming back out with them through yours.⁵ This very pastoral way of thinking is especially suited for working with youth. It is crucial for directors to have an understanding of young peoples’ perspectives. Their reading material, their interests, and their sources for meaning all offer critical data that cannot be ignored. Of course, such knowledge is essentially a means to an end. Provided with such information, we can counsel youth in such a way as to offer them loving care and compassionate challenge. Moreover, regardless of whom we serve through our ministries, we must cultivate a compassionate yet objective perspective, a sympathetic understanding of the demands and pressures besetting others and the internal experiences they are seeking to sort out.

⁵ Thomas H. Clancy, S.J., *The Conversational Word of God* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1978), 26–28.

Questions to Ponder

1. As I look back on my years in the Society, how has the spirituality I have come to accept and grown comfortable with informed and influenced my counseling of others?
 2. Being as specific as possible, what aspects of Jesuit spirituality do I find most compatible with and supportive of my ministerial style? my counseling of others?
-

Practicing Jesuit Counsel: Spiritual Direction, Pastoral Counseling, and Therapy

Below we will explore the essential domains of spiritual direction and pastoral counseling. In order to provide greater clarity to the discussion by means of contrast, we introduce a third form of counsel—psychotherapy (hereafter referred to simply as therapy). Whereas most Jesuits at times do some form of pastoral counseling and a significant number of men are spiritual directors, considerably fewer are psychotherapists.⁶ Nonetheless, interjecting therapy into this discussion proves helpful in defining the first two terms. We will first examine spiritual direction and then therapy and pastoral counseling. Given the multiple perspectives and definitions available, the goal of our discussion is not to establish a precise, unassailable meaning for each. Rather, the intent is to set forth the *range* covered by each form of counseling, in order to draw the necessary distinctions contributing to greater self-insight and guidance capability.

First, let us explore spiritual direction. In the Christian tradition spiritual direction possesses a rich heritage, yet no definition of this term meets with everyone's approval. Essentially, spiritual direction enables one to plumb more deeply the question, What is my experience of God? or, Where is the Lord leading me now? More broadly, spiritual direction is a relationship in which a director provides support, guidance, and insight regarding the directee's experience of God. More specifically, spiritual direction enables a directee in the circumstances of his or her current life to address the question, What does the Lord ask of me now? Or, even more

⁶ When I speak of Jesuits who are "psychotherapists," I am referring to those men who have successfully gone through the necessary training and examinations that allow them to be licensed or certified by state regulatory agencies as, for example, social workers, psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, licensed personal counselors, and so forth.

basic, Where is God in my life? As such, spiritual direction nourishes the spiritual life by fostering a person's growing appreciation for and understanding of his or her religious experience.

If spirituality is the religious experience at the heart of every religion, spiritual direction can be considered the art of guiding and supporting someone in that experience. More formally, spiritual direction can be defined as an interpersonal relationship that fosters the discovery and nourishment of the transcendent or spiritual aspects of our lives.⁷

To help unravel the meaning of spiritual direction, we might try this exercise. Think of the term "spiritual direction" and free-associate for a minute or so. What words surface as you probe the meaning of spiritual direction? Trying this exercise myself elicited the following words and phrases: dialogue with God, prayer, flow, spiritual or religious experience, reflection, narrative, stories of God, and the question, What is God asking? Though this exercise fails to provide any airtight definition for spiritual direction, it does reveal a scope or range within which spiritual direction operates.

More concretely, spiritual direction focuses on an individual's *religious experience*. During a religious experience one confronts Mystery—the radical otherness that invites surrender. The fruits of such experience are often new layers of meaning and purpose, greater degrees of connection and wholeness, and increased willingness to respond unstintingly in service to other men and women. In essence, religious experience enhances one's capacity for selfless love, which, in the Christian tradition, is modeled on the life and death of Jesus. In sum, religious experience invites, on our part, a willing receptivity. It encourages a tranquil spirit that refrains from the willful "I" and "me" and embraces the connecting and intertwining of self with other meanings. On a personal level, religious experience diminishes the autonomous self and enhances the communal self. It beckons wholeness and purpose, and links one's own experience, if even at first only at an inchoative or tacit level, with the message and life of Jesus.

Yet religious experience is also *human* experience, and one grace-filled joy arising from our humanness is that it is through our senses that we are so often invited to meet Transcendence. A work of beauty, an encounter with nature, an experience of love, a moment of wonder, or the joy of

⁷ Brendan Collins, "The Changing Relationship between Psychology and Contemporary Spiritual Direction," *Pastoral Psychology* 40, no. 5 (1992): 286.

consolation—any or all when transformed by the Lord’s gentle grace—constitute what we might term the “content domain” for spiritual direction.⁸

Having explored the scope of spiritual direction, let us now shift our attention to the meaning of therapy. As is the case with spiritual direction, there is no universally accepted definition. The psychiatrist Jerome Frank provides a helpful starting point. This author states, “Psychotherapy is a planned, emotionally charged, confiding interaction between a trained, socially sanctioned healer and a sufferer.”⁹ Utilizing Frank’s definition, we glean the essential elements of therapy: the relationship of a professional with someone experiencing psychological distress, who over a period of time discloses acutely felt and often painful memories and feeling states for the explicit purpose of resolving the distress or achieving some other acceptable outcome (for example, effective coping skills). Crucial to Frank’s definition is his advocacy of the “demoralization hypothesis” as a significant factor within the therapeutic process. Demoralization occurs when, because of a lack of certain skills or confusion of goals, individuals become persistently unable to master situations and rise to the expectations of others, or when individuals experience continued emotional upset that they cannot adequately understand or alleviate (16).

Having read this description, return for a moment to the free-association exercise, only this time free-associate on the word “therapy.” What words or phrases does this word generate? My list includes the following: dysfunction, problems in living, illness, hurting, negative feelings, suffering, and pain. All in all, though we have not provided any clear-cut definitions, the reader certainly has the sense that the focus and purpose of spiritual direction and therapy differ significantly. Whereas spiritual direction centers more on the *flow of life*, particularly in relation to God’s call, therapy focuses on working through the *problems in life* and the subjective distress such difficulties create.¹⁰

⁸ Other examples might include realizing complexity in oneself, others, or nature; acknowledging the corrupting power of evil; experiencing ourselves as powerless; taking a stance that arises from personal integrity; and savoring a moment of self-insight about ourselves or someone we love. See also John H. Wright, “The Distinctive Quality of Religious Experience,” *Logos* 2 (1981): 85–97; and Frank J. Houdek, “Jesuit Prayer and Jesuit Ministry,” *STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS* 24 (January 1992): 22–31.

⁹ Jerome D. Frank, “Therapeutic Components Shared by All Psychotherapies,” in *The Master Lecture Series: Psychotherapy Research and Behavior Change*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: The American Psychological Association, 1981), 10.

¹⁰ For a more extensive treatment of this distinction and related issues of interest, I refer the reader to a previously published article of mine. See Charles M. Shelton, “Spiritual Direction or Psychotherapy: A Primer for the Perplexed,” in Robert

Distinguishing between these two forms of counsel is critical for both ministerial and ethical reasons. An individual seeking guidance from either a spiritual director or a therapist has specific needs that must be respected. A Jesuit ministering to someone in one of these roles, likewise, must have a clarity that allows him to distinguish between these two forms of counsel. I suspect the distinction between spiritual direction and therapy is clearer, on average, for Jesuits working as licensed mental-health professionals than it is for Jesuits whose ministry includes part- or full-time spiritual direction. Jesuits who provide mental-health care are constantly reminded of their role to function **only** as therapists. A partial list of these “reminders” include their profession’s written code of ethics (for instance, the American Psychological Association’s Code of Ethics), written treatment plans, state licensing regulations, insurance forms, and so on. Jesuit spiritual directors, for the most part, lack such formal reminders.¹¹ In addition, my impression is that many Jesuit spiritual directors, understandably, read books and articles with psychologically related themes. In view of the lack of outside checks and balances along with a false or inflated impression of their own experience regarding psychological issues, some spiritual directors might at times be tempted to blur boundaries and function as a person’s “unofficial” therapist as well as his spiritual director.¹² Conceivably a director might respond to a directee’s personal revelations in a way that steers the conversation toward more therapeutically based goals, not taking the time to reflect also on the legitimate focus of his counsel. When a Jesuit director combines an overly optimistic appraisal of his ability and training with this limited awareness of boundaries, he might slowly and unthinkingly slide into the role of quasi therapist. A Jesuit spiritual director must make every effort to resist any such temptation to take on the role of therapist in dealing with a directee.

Wister, ed., *Psychology, Counseling and the Seminarian* (Washington, D.C.: The National Catholic Educational Association, 1993), 43–66.

¹¹ I certainly wish to acknowledge the impressive strides made in the training of spiritual directors, as demonstrated by the development of spiritual-direction programs, course offerings, and the skill building that arises from supervision and practicums. Even with this growing professionalization, however, spiritual direction “as a profession,” unlike various mental-health professions, lacks government licensing and regulatory agencies to monitor and hold practitioners accountable.

¹² I realize the above statement might be a sensitive issue for some Jesuit spiritual directors. Even so, in the course of conversation with others, I have encountered this phenomenon often enough that, in my opinion, *all* Jesuit spiritual directors should critically reflect on this issue.

What about “pastoral counseling,” the third type of counsel under discussion? I wish to say at the outset that, as in the case of both spiritual direction and therapy, there exists no universally accepted definition. In fact, I suspect that of the three types of counsel under consideration, the nature of pastoral counseling very likely gives rise to the most disagreement. In my view, the scope of pastoral counseling bridges both the disciplines of spiritual direction and of therapy. From the former are derived content areas including a faith context, prayer, and moral struggles. For the sake of clarity, let’s refer to this decidedly spiritual or religious focus as the “pastoral” aspect of pastoral counseling. On the other hand, from the “counseling” dimension of pastoral counseling, we derive themes such as suffering, problems in living, and painful emotions. In sum, when a Jesuit counsels someone pastorally, he is, in effect, helping an individual resolve, bring clarity to, or more fully understand personal struggles and problems (for instance, alcoholism, divorce), especially as such difficulties are encountered while on one’s spiritual or faith journey to discover Mystery more fully or a sense of the Transcendent.¹³ Note that the struggles and problems individuals address in pastoral counseling need not directly bear on their faith or spiritual lives. Moreover, in some instances, pastoral counseling is done with people whose own life-views exclude any explicit faith reference or who consider the very notion of spirituality irrelevant to their lives (for example, an agnostic or alienated teenager). Nonetheless, pastoral counseling has as its ultimate goal enabling an individual to view life’s difficulties and challenges within some context that ideally incorporates a reference to the spiritual life or a faith context, even though in individual cases such a context might never be stated explicitly.¹⁴

Because pastoral counseling focuses on human problems in living, the temptation might arise at times to focus solely on such problems. For secular counseling (therapy) this might well be adequate, but for pastoral counseling there is need to *balance* this concern with the “pastoral” dimension. When pastoral counselors choose to dwell only on this “counseling” aspect, they run the risk of adopting a psychological mind-set in which the subjective self becomes the moral reference point and redemptive suffering is

¹³ See, for example, Barry K. Estadt, “In Pursuit of Freedom: Introductory Comments on Pastoral Psychology,” *Psychology of Religion Newsletter, American Psychological Association, Division 36* 18 (Winter 1993): 1-7.

¹⁴ It is conceivable that in some pastoral situations an individual might request a meeting with a Jesuit in which neither knows at the outset whether the first and subsequent meetings will fall under “spiritual direction” or “pastoral counseling.” In such instances, it is prudent to seek clarity and make explicit the purpose for such meetings.

reduced simply to another problem needing resolution.¹⁵ Our efforts at pastoral counseling must not dilute the Christian message to a merely palatable mixture of psychological themes. When our pastoral counseling goes down the road of seeking only a psychological understanding of the person, then it becomes possible for vital issues such as “grace,” “forgiveness,” and “sin”—the very heart of pastoral care—to be interpreted under a psychological lens to mean “self-actualization,” “reframing,” and “self-esteem issues.” The psychiatrist Robert Coles addresses this problem in such a forthright manner that I quote him at length on this point:

Especially sad and disedifying is the preoccupation of all too many clergy with the dubious blandishments of contemporary psychology and psychiatry. I do not mean to say there is no value in understanding what psychoanalytic studies, and others done in this century by medical and psychological investigators, have to offer any of us who spend time with our fellow human beings—in the home, in school, at work, and certainly, in the various places visited by ministers and priests. The issue is the further step not a few of today’s clergy have taken whereby “pastoral counseling,” for instance, becomes their major ideological absorption and the use of the language of psychology their major source of self-satisfaction. Surely we are in danger of losing our religious faith when the chief satisfaction of our lives consists of endless attribution of psychological nomenclature to all who happen to come our way.¹⁶

In a society where psychological explanations abound, it is helpful to reassess periodically where we place the emphasis in the counsel we provide. In sum, we must ensure balance in our counsel, to be sure that the pastoral component will receive proper attention.

One way we might reinforce this pastoral dimension is to designate specific “domains” for pastoral counseling. In their roles as pastoral counselors, Jesuits help people sort through the complexity and challenges of human living encountered during their faith journeys. These challenges are often best addressed through one of the following three domains: (a) fostering self-insight, (b) articulating values, and (c) developing conscience. Keeping these three domains in mind, I propose that a Jesuit’s pastoral counseling have as primary goals helping others develop self-awareness, articulating religious and personal values, and aiding moral decision making. Thus, when functioning in the role of a pastoral counselor, a Jesuit should put his major focus on helping his counselees achieve greater awareness of who they are, what they

¹⁵ Richard Rohr, “Why Does Psychology Always Win?” *Sojourners* 10 (November 1991): 10–15.

¹⁶ Robert Coles, *Harvard Diary: Reflections on the Sacred and the Secular* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 93.

believe in, and how they make moral decisions. Let's take each domain separately.

1. **Fostering self-insight.** If we are to be open to the Lord's grace, we must continually strive for self-knowledge. What we think and how we feel can exert tremendous influence over how we understand and discern the Lord's call to discipleship. For example, distorted thoughts or acutely painful feelings all too easily preoccupy us, thereby eclipsing a more balanced interpretation of our situation. Anger, lingering guilt, and unresolved hurts absorb psychic energy, blocking more hopeful understandings of our situation or consideration of more adaptive coping strategies. Fertile areas to process with counselees when addressing issues of self-insight might include the following: emotional needs, a current problematic situation, major life influences, effective coping strategies, and significant causes of personal stress. All of us have engaged in the sort of active listening that promotes a sense of care and provides feedback, thereby enabling people to acquire insight about both themselves and their life situations. Addressing the human context and current functioning of a counselee's life makes eminent sense, since the Lord's grace works through who we are at any concrete moment of our existence. Oftentimes a question or some reflective feedback helps orient the counselee to frame a difficult life situation within a faith context. For example, after helping the counselee gain self-knowledge, questions such as, "Have you thought about how this experience has made you a better person?" or, "Where might God be in all of this?" help to ensure that the integrity of the "pastoral" dimension is maintained.

2. **Promoting value awareness.** A basic tenet of counseling is that "the essence of being human is the right and the capacity for self-determination, guided by purposes, values, and options. Out of our free will we can give our lives meaning even in the face of inevitable death."¹⁷ As a Jesuit's counsel aids someone's self-knowledge, the individual often reaches a moment when he or she sees the need to evaluate at greater depth some personal course of action. Some commonplace questions we can explore with the men and women we counsel might be: Who am I becoming? What are my desires? What is truly important in this situation? What are my hopes and dreams? A common theme running through these questions is the notion of significance—what values are most central to counselees at this point in their lives and what can they do, given their circumstances and life situation, to live these values in their daily lives?

3. **Making moral decisions.** It is vital that as pastoral counselors we encourage people to make informed and healthy moral choices. The most

¹⁷ Frank, "Therapeutic Components," 11.

practical way to do this is to help individuals form their consciences.¹⁸ Obviously, conscience involves understanding what one ought to do (and doing it). But we shortchange its richness if we define conscience solely in terms of what we perceive through a cognitive lens. In its fullest meaning, conscience consists in the dynamic interplay of emotion and thought whereby an individual comes to feel a healthy sense of self, develops a growing sensitivity to others, and thinks through and implements well-reasoned moral principles. Conscience, for the Christian, is the guiding light for behavior (see Rom. 13:5, 14:23) as well as the moral source for personhood. However, the goal of developing a fully mature conscience always contends with personal limitations, lack of personal growth, and physical, interpersonal, and social stressors that so often frustrate sound moral decision making, if they do not preclude it entirely. "Pastoral counseling addresses a particular person, with a unique history, in a particular situation."¹⁹ We need not only to encourage healthy and well-thought-out moral decisions on the part of those we counsel, but also to help them discern the human frailty that accompanies all moral decision making. With this in mind, we can help counselees by encouraging them to focus on and be conscious of what specific moral principles they adhere to, how they apply them, and what the consequences of such applications might be. Further, a profitable strategy is to reflect with them on the qualities of a "mature" conscience as well as on the linkage between healthy moral decision making and ongoing critical reflection, continual self-examination, and dialogue with others within the faith community.²⁰

All in all, any attempt to define pastoral counseling proves somewhat elusive. No doubt, most of us have found our roles as pastoral counselors to be at times anything but clear as we aid others struggling with very human problems and personal questions of meaning. Even so, by directing

¹⁸ I have set forth a multidimensional theory of conscience that can be applied to people's everyday lives of work and relationship. See Charles M. Shelton, *Achieving Moral Health* (New York: Crossroad, 2000).

¹⁹ J. Milburn Thompson, "Pastoral Ministry and Moral Theology," *New Theology Review* 4 (February 1991): 54.

²⁰ Of course, to address issues such as "conscience" and "moral decision making" brings up the matter of the Jesuit's own beliefs on a wide variety of issues (for example, sexuality) and the correspondence or lack thereof between the official Church teaching (magisterium) and various other theological viewpoints, exploring whether they are in accord with, in tension with, or at odds with those teachings. Just as the Jesuit invites his counselees to think critically about their moral beliefs, he too must be open to reflect critically on his own moral positions, to converse with others about his stances, and to be willing to be challenged concerning them.

our efforts with counselees toward gaining greater self-awareness, promoting gospel values, and encouraging sound moral decisions, we help to ensure that our counsel reflects a clarity of purpose and that it is carried out with integrity.

In conclusion, we might derive benefit from reflecting briefly on the three forms of counsel discussed above. Spiritual direction's focus is helping a person understand his or her religious experience and relationship with God. Pastoral counseling is directed toward helping people to clarify, make sense of, or find meaning from personal problems in living, especially as these difficulties relate to their faith journeys. Ideally, this purpose is achieved through helping others gain self-knowledge, develop greater awareness of their religious and personal values, and enhance their ability to make authentic moral choices. Therapy (psychotherapy), on the other hand, has as its primary goal helping someone to resolve or cope with significant emotional distress and problematic behaviors that impede or impair one's ability to achieve personal goals and attain the greatest degree possible of human functionality.

Questions to Ponder

1. When I counsel someone pastorally, do I take the time to consider what goals I wish to achieve with the counselee?
2. How do I understand the "pastoral" and "counseling" aspects of pastoral counseling? In what ways have I experienced tension between them as I counsel others? What ways have I used to resolve such tensions?
3. Do I agree with the position that some focus areas (domains) exist which are proper to pastoral counseling? If so, what are the relevant areas or domains that I usually address when counseling someone pastorally? If not, how do I prevent my pastoral counseling from becoming spiritual direction or secular counseling (therapy)?

If the Jesuit participates in an ongoing group-discussion format either through his community or with a group that meets on a regular basis, the following two exercises might prove helpful.

4. Each member of the group takes the time to share pastoral encounters where he has felt the tensions between the "pastoral" and the "counseling" dimensions of his pastoral counseling.

5. Each member of the group gives her own definition of spiritual direction and pastoral counseling. As a group goal, all try to reach a consensus on a definition for these two terms.
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Some Practical Issues regarding Jesuit Counsel

The ministries Jesuits undertake provide numerous opportunities for offering pastoral counseling and spiritual direction. In the course of such counsel as well as through other ministerial relationships, four practical issues commonly surface: (a) the need to set boundaries, (b) the commitment to keep confidences, (c) the necessity at times to make a referral, and (d) the presence of a transference. Each of these issues is explored in more detail below.

A. Setting Boundaries

From my entrance into the novitiate until the day of my ordination a decade later, I don't recall ever hearing the word "boundary." Yet in the last fifteen years this word has become one of a number of common themes addressed in training programs in pastoral ministry. Even the most recent general congregation of the Society made explicit reference to the need for Jesuits to set boundaries when it noted, "It is especially important that those in ministries like spiritual direction, counseling, or therapy keep appropriate 'professional' boundaries."²¹

Normally we do not think about our skin, but more than anything else it provides us with a physical boundary (limit) that not only defines us but also distinguishes us from others. In a similar vein, a boundary, in the context of Jesuit counseling, is best understood as an appropriate limit on the relationship between a Jesuit and a counselee or directee. Respecting boundaries serves a twofold purpose. First, it maintains the integrity of a Jesuit's counsel. Second, it offers protection for both the Jesuit and the person receiving his counsel.

Our counsel requires appropriate boundary setting primarily because, for the most part, when people come to us they have a *need*. When

²¹ No. 254 (p. 123).

others approach us with specific needs, certain implications become clear. First, their need makes them vulnerable. Second, as a consequence of this need, the Jesuit has a certain “power” in the relationship. Third, this “need/power” dynamic creates a power imbalance. A Jesuit might exercise his power in any number of ways. For example, he can make a suggestion or apply a specific skill or expertise he has acquired through his training. Or, to give other examples, a Jesuit administrator can make decisions on budgetary matters, hiring choices, or personnel decisions, while a Jesuit pastor has influence in matters pertaining to parishioners’ sacramental life or parish-staffing issues. Power is also evident through the exercise of the priestly office, for example, offering the sacrament of reconciliation or working with a troubled spouse on an annulment. Finally, though we have grown so accustomed to its place in our self-identity that we usually do not consider its influence, merely writing “S.J.” after our name can be viewed as a display of power. From a psychological perspective, and increasingly from a legal one, simply *being* a seminarian, a priest, or a member of a religious order confers a status that might be construed as having power vis-à-vis another person.²²

Of course, the issue is not power per se. Rather, the issue is how a Jesuit uses such power in his counsel of others. Generally speaking, a boundary violation occurs when a counseling Jesuit acts in ways serving to satisfy his need rather than the need of the person seeking his assistance. I believe that, as a whole, when engaged in counseling others, members of the Society, mindful of their personal integrity and commitment to the vowed life, maintain appropriate boundaries. But because boundary violations can range from the seemingly innocuous and subtle to the quite overt and explicit, a short list of examples might be helpful. Thus, focusing on all the counseling situations in which a Jesuit might find himself, we can suggest these possible boundary violations: (a) manipulating someone we counsel to ask us certain questions so that we can display our knowledge, (b) encouraging counselees to divulge more of their personal lives than is necessary, (c) shaping the conversation in such a way that we encourage dependence on the part of a counselee, (d) suggesting topics or specific responses that gratify

²² This statement might come as a surprise when we reflect on our involvement in some counseling situations. At times we might even have felt we were being held hostage psychologically by someone we were trying to help in our role as spiritual director or pastoral counselor. For example, most Jesuits can recall instances when the sheer personality, manipulation, or actions of the person they were counseling made them feel anything but powerful or equal in the counseling situation! Even so, the social and official status we have as religious, by virtue of the fiduciary trust such a role entails, makes us seem like men possessing power even in these encounters.

us rather than aid the directee, (e) volunteering inappropriate self-disclosures that make us the focus of attention, and (f) engaging in inappropriate physical contact with the person receiving our counsel.

GC 34 acknowledges the gravity of boundary violations when it bids Jesuits to be “professional” in their conduct as priests and religious. A footnote in decree 8 elaborates what being such a “professional” entails.

A “professional” relationship implies much more than a merely contractual or even business relationship in that, unlike these latter, it is conducted not between equals but between two *unequal* parties, one of whom (the professional) has expertise and experience in the relevant area, while the other (the client) is ignorant in this area and requires access to professional skills and acumen. The professional to this degree is, quite legitimately, in a position of power and authority. To act “professionally” involves not only making one’s expertise available but also not abusing the power relationship to manipulate the client. It requires objectivity, impartiality, sensitivity, and delicacy both in making the expertise available and in empowering the client to pursue his or her interest, rather than inducing in the client a dependence on the professional.²³

How might boundary violations be avoided? During my years of clinical work with priests, seminarians, and religious, I have found one of the most consistent characteristics of boundary violators is their inability to satisfy their needs in healthy and appropriate ways. Most people do find ways to meet their needs; but the crucial question is, Are these needs fulfilled in “appropriate” ways that encourage a happy, healthy, and productive apostolic and human way of living? Because we are human, we might have moments or periods in our lives when, because of the “needy” state in which we find ourselves, we are drawn into some foolish action or inadvertently stumble into some minor boundary violation. The true boundary violator, on the other hand, displays through his counsel a consistent pattern of using those for whom he provides pastoral care in ways that primarily satisfy his own needs. More often than not, a combination of such factors as previous life history, temperament, limited self-insight, poor decision making, impaired interpersonal relationships, and difficult living conditions draws a boundary violator into a life of dysfunction and results in a subtle, if not overt, manipulation of others. Such individuals manifest more than a tolerable level of dysfunction, and their boundary violations are symptoms of significant life issues and human impairment, as well as wrongful means for satisfying personal needs.

²³ No. 253, n. 25 (p. 122), emphasis added.

Related to the above, some men who violate boundaries live in community situations that are less than ideal. I raise this issue simply to point out that, although each Jesuit must take responsibility for his actions and be accountable for them, there is no denying that the quality of his living situation supports and sustains either appropriate or inappropriate behaviors. A married man experiencing marital problems is a vulnerable human being who might be tempted to engage in inappropriate behavior as a way of assuaging the negative feelings he harbors toward his spouse. A Jesuit who feels upset with or unappreciated by his community likewise might be tempted to violate boundaries, in part to ease the negative feelings of hurt, disappointment, or anger he experiences in community life. In other words, unless a Jesuit *feels* rooted in his community and bonded to his brothers, the lure to violate a boundary might, at times, surface. Moreover, GC 34 implicitly acknowledges the temptation to perpetrate boundary violations when it explicitly recognizes brotherly support as an important aid to leading a chaste life. "Further, chastity is a shared responsibility of all Jesuits to safeguard seriously and to further through their mutual fraternal support and friendships as well as through the aid they offer superiors in their care for their companions and for the Society."²⁴

In addition to the above discussion of the more typical types of boundary violations, the advent of computer technology and increasingly sophisticated forms of cyber-space communications creates the opportunity for a different type of boundary violation, this one spawned by the inappropriate use of technology. It is estimated that by the year 2002, nearly 43 percent of American households will be online (compared to 8.6 percent in 1996) and the total number of Internet users will number 85 million Americans (compared to 12.5 million in 1996).²⁵ Given this rapid rise, it is safe to assume that e-mails, Web sites, chat rooms, and even virtual reality will undoubtedly become more and more a part of Jesuit life in the years ahead. Obviously, such enhanced technology affords increased opportunities for Jesuits to communicate with one another and aids them to gather and disseminate needed information. Yet the allure of online communication poses several dangers. Communicating online feels anonymous and often venturesome. The temptation might exist to experiment with or "try on" a new and daring "self." Lacking face-to-face encounters that convey disapproving facial gestures or voice tone, the interaction taking place online "feels"

²⁴ No. 266 (p. 127).

²⁵ Statistics are from the U.S. Department of Commerce and cited in American Psychological Association, "What Makes a Successful Cyber-Student?" *APA Monitor* 31 (April 2000): 11.

safe, secure, and secret and, as a consequence, might stimulate fantasy reflected through increasingly provocative statements and questions to someone "out there." "The online world lacks the checks on self that shape and constrain behavior in the offline world."²⁶ Accordingly, it is not unreasonable to conclude that a person's distressed or needy emotional state might prod him to seek false comfort and support through online communication, or use such technology (for example, chat rooms) as a way to distract himself from acknowledging and coping in a healthy manner with emotional problems demanding to be addressed. In addition, for millions of people Internet usage has become a significant source for sexual information, communication, exploration, and stimulation.²⁷ Moreover, a majority of Internet users are well-educated males.²⁸ A growing number of mental-health professionals—though acknowledging the multiple benefits Internet usage provides—view the Internet as capable of creating opportunities for problem behaviors, compulsive usage, and even addiction; thus every Jesuit must scrutinize "how" he uses such valuable yet enticing technology.²⁹ This scrutiny includes examining (a) the amount of time he spends on the Internet, (b) the content of his online communication, (c) the individuals with whom he communicates, and (d) the type of information he seek online. Needless to say, the aura of anonymity that accompanies online communication is a false security. Messages sent and Web sites hit are traceable. Considering all these factors, Jesuits, like all mature ministers of the Gospel, are rightly expected to use online communication in ways that are prudent, appropriate, and professional.

Against this background, we can list self-awareness and ongoing reflection as the essential steps for maintaining boundaries. The reader might find it helpful to draw upon his or her own personal experience and use a *case-study* approach here. To offer one example, a Jesuit might call to mind a person he counseled while exercising his role as a spiritual director or pastoral counselor. As he thinks about his interactions with this directee or counselee, he might reflect on any of the questions below that might gener-

²⁶ Bridget Murray, "A Mirror on the Self," *APA Monitor* 31 (April 2000): 17.

²⁷ See Alvin Cooper, Coralie R. Scherer, Sylvain C. Boies, and Barry L. Gordon, "Sexuality on the Internet: From Sexual Exploration to Pathological Expression," *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice* 30 (1999): 154–64.

²⁸ American Psychological Association, "Psychologist's Work and Dreams Led to the Rise of the Internet," *APA Monitor* 31 (April 2000): 10.

²⁹ Tori DeAngelis, "Is Internet Addiction Real?" *APA Monitor* 31 (April 2000): 24–26.

ate an insight or self-knowledge regarding his role as a “Jesuit of good counsel.”³⁰

1. Given that fostering greater self-awareness is a worthy goal toward which I can strive, I might gently probe my motives and desires and ask the question, What “reasons” come to mind that help me to understand “why” I counseled this person?
2. What did I learn about myself from this relationship?
3. In offering counsel to this person, was I tempted to self-disclose “more about me” than is normally appropriate?³¹
4. Did I find myself sexually attracted to this person? If so, what appropriate measures did I use to handle these feelings?

In addition to the case-study approach used above, it is often helpful to take the time to periodically reflect more generally on the counseling I do, on my own life situation, and the extent to which I allow for “self-care,” which has as its goal, ultimately, more effective ministerial service to the People of God. In this regard, some of the following questions might prove beneficial.

5. If I made a list of the “needs” I have in my life, what would I write down? Do I have healthy ways to meet these needs?³² Can I name the personal needs that are met when I offer counsel to others?
6. What does it mean for me to say I live a “healthy life?”³³
7. Am I able to place necessary “limits” on the counsel I do (for example, number of people, length of conferences, times of day,

³⁰ These questions and statements are based on personal reflections regarding my clinical and pastoral work as well as discussions with colleagues in both fields.

³¹ This question is not meant to say that we should *never* self-disclose. The important point to keep in mind is that when a Jesuit counsels someone, he is there for the person seeking his assistance and not the other way around. Generally speaking, a Jesuit’s self-disclosure should have as its purpose to aid the person seeking counsel.

³² Obviously, unless we are masochists we do counsel others because of a naturally occurring and grace-filled “need” to help others. From this perspective, it is hardly inappropriate if we feel some sense of satisfaction or pride in providing help for others. Nonetheless, our personal motivations must be probed carefully, because excessive self-gratification and power trips always lurk as possible motivations. To say this another way, rarely are our motivations totally pure or singular in purpose; as a consequence, we must scrutinize our consciousness and be willing to admit that a darker side might be clouding our intentions.

³³ For healthy characteristics of Jesuit living, see Charles M. Shelton, “Reflections on the Mental Health of Jesuits,” *STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS* 23 (September 1991): 9–15.

frequency of sessions)? Am I able, if the situation demands, to question whether I should be the one offering this person counsel?

8. Am I as aware as I might be of multiple relationships (relating to someone through two or more roles) that currently exist in my life or might occur in the future?³⁴
9. In terms of the apostolic commitments I have, how do I respond to the twin pressures of declining manpower and aging? In light of these “pressures,” do I find myself feeling, at times, “burned out”? Do I detect in myself the temptation in my apostolic work simply to try “to do more” as the manpower shortage grows more acute? In light of the theme of the three previous questions, how do I “feel” about the statement of GC 34 that a Jesuit “must avoid a style of life and of work that puts him under excessive affective stress or that necessitates a continual suppression of his own feelings and leads eventually to affective regression, ‘burnout,’ or some kind of psychic disturbance”?³⁵
10. Do I have both trusted and knowledgeable Jesuit and lay friends in whom I can confide and from whom I can seek advice?
11. Is my use of online communication both appropriate and professional? Do I spend an excessive amount of time on the Internet? Am I willing to question whether I use the Internet to some degree as a way to avoid dialogue and interaction in community with my Jesuit brothers?

B. Confidentiality

Though the most recent general congregation does not refer to the issue of confidentiality, it most certainly is implied in the congregation’s statement that “Jesuits should embody in their ministry and in their lives an

³⁴ Nothing is inherently wrong in having some multiple relationships; moreover, in ministerial settings such relationships frequently cannot be avoided. For example, a Jesuit pastor might relate to some parishioners through a variety of roles; for instance, pastor, friend, fellow finance-committee member, spiritual director, and so on. Generally speaking, multiple relationships have the *potential* for complicating or undermining ministerial effectiveness. On a practical level, when multiple relationships are benign or cannot be avoided, then several precautions might be considered: (a) try to anticipate future role conflicts and discuss them with the person beforehand, (b) go over your concerns with a trusted colleague, (c) suggest another person who might be able to aid the person in specific areas.

³⁵ No. 260 (p. 125f.).

unequivocal 'professional' conduct (*modestia*) that manifests their commitments as priests and as religious."³⁶ In a Jesuit's ministry the issue of confidentiality is a challenging one. Some professions (for instance, psychology) are able to rely upon a professional organization (for example, the American Psychological Association) to set forth specific ethical guidelines for their members regarding professional conduct in general and confidentiality in particular. Most Jesuits who counsel, on the other hand, with the exception of the confessional seal, have no such set of guidelines on which to rely.³⁷ To be sure, a Jesuit's common sense and ethical sensitivity serve to protect the confidences of others. Nonetheless, a number of factors converge to make it at times a challenge to preserve confidences.

To take one example, every Jesuit knows that many pastoral situations are complex and that at times the input of others might prove beneficial. In addition, the well-intentioned inquiries from brother Jesuits and the structure of community life itself might tempt the Jesuit to share information. We might be puzzled by our counselee's actions and desire to seek input and clarity from a trusted Jesuit friend with whom we live. In such instances, our inquiry is an attempt to gather information shedding light on a behavior that perplexes us. We could imagine ourselves, for example, sitting down in the recreation room one night, or over coffee in the dining room, and seeking our friend's feedback in the sincere belief that soliciting such input is for the good of the person we counsel. Yet we would be wise to keep several things in mind that bear upon any disclosures we might make.

Members of the Society are by and large sensitive men who find significant satisfaction through their Jesuit friendships. The numerous interlocking connections that any given Jesuit maintains and nurtures through his Jesuit friendships provide him with solace, support, information, challenge, and contentment. Granted this interconnecting, multilayered social system of friendship, it seems natural for a Jesuit to seek out one or another Jesuit friend or confidant.

³⁶ No. 253 (p. 122).

³⁷ I am well aware that organizations of pastoral counselors and spiritual directors exist which have formulated ethical codes. However, the vast majority of Jesuits do not belong to such organizations (and hence are not bound by their norms). Furthermore, as noted previously, such organizations—unlike most professional mental-health associations—lack governmental regulatory agencies or state-association branches that can enforce codes, monitor their members, and apply appropriate sanctions at the state level.

Yet it is also reasonable to conclude that the Jesuit who receives the confidence of his friend also has his own social system of brotherly support that spans more than a single community, apostolate, and geographic area; and depending on his own inclination, temperament, or situation, he might conceivably share a portion of the previously disclosed information with one of his friends. Thus, from the standpoint of his everyday friendships, unless a Jesuit keeps to himself *every* confidence shared with him, he can never guarantee that information will not be disclosed to a third party! Moreover, the social structure in which Jesuits live encourages a casual atmosphere, as rightly it should, since a man's community is his home. But in the midst of a relaxed, informal living situation in community, a Jesuit understandably might unintentionally let down his guard. Further, community life itself is a group-living experience; thus, the possibility always exists that the Jesuit's conversation with a trusted brother might unintentionally be overheard by others within the community.

Obviously, it is healthy that Jesuits have other Jesuits not only with whom they can confide personal concerns but also from whom they can seek pastoral advice and guidance. To *feel* both a personal and a professional bond with the brothers with whom a Jesuit lives and works is both healthy and natural. Furthermore, some Jesuits, because of their position within the apostolate, their expertise, or their inviting and open personality, are privy to and carry about with them a considerable surcharge of "heavy" information. Quite naturally, to maintain adequate emotional and spiritual health, such men need brother Jesuits in whom they can confide. In sum, the confidences entrusted to us deserve to be safeguarded. At the same time, to live healthy lives both as human beings and as companions to one another, we must avail of opportunities to receive from and provide feedback to at least one or several of our brothers—depending on the issue—about the concerns, worries, and problems that vex us, be they of a personal or professional nature.

In light of this, how a Jesuit personally resolves issues of confidentiality arising from his counseling of others does not lend itself to any perfectly scripted norms. Obviously, maintaining confidentiality forbids certain behaviors, such as engaging in gossip, disclosing someone's identity, or becoming overly inquisitive about privileged matters. But like so many life situations involving ethical sensitivity, complex problems, and human beings who are both noble and frail, it is far easier to delineate what not to say or do than to set down what is the right course of action to follow.

Nonetheless, because holding (and bearing) *confidences with integrity* ushers us so close to the core of what it means to live as holy and honorable men, it should prove helpful to reflect on this issue and challenge ourselves,

both individually and communally, to realize more perfectly the very holiness and honor for which we strive. The challenge to hold and bear confidences has applications on both our spiritual and our human lives. Regarding the former, a Jesuit's struggle to maintain confidences might at times call him through faith to utter a grace-filled prayer for courage, fortitude, and trust. At the same time, being only human, a Jesuit holding confidences might have to starkly confront the demands his own integrity places on him as he wrestles with the temptation to relax his self-control (and unnecessarily disclose to others) or to reject the humble stance proper to his Jesuit vocation (and share information in order to gain attention). With this rightful theme in mind—the call to live holy and honorable lives—we might reflect on the following statements.

1. Implicit in the confidence I hold is the *respect* I have for those who disclose their problems to me. Accordingly, it might be helpful to ask myself periodically how my actions and behaviors respect those who have trusted me with their confidences. If it seems helpful, I might consider ways to incorporate this theme of “respect for counselees and directees” into my daily examen.

2. When we judge a pastoral or counseling matter to be of such gravity that prudence requires us to seek the advice of or feedback from someone, we should take special care to uphold the twofold goal of sharing only what is necessary and maintaining confidentiality regarding the person's identity.

3. When we are tired, when overly stressed, when attempting to cope with significant apostolic pressures, or when weighed down by a plethora of confidential information, prudence dictates that we attempt to impose some limit on the events we attend, the people we deal with, or the situations we encounter. At a minimum, prior to some occasions we might profit from developing some type of “game plan” allowing us to (a) deflect certain questions with a standard response, (b) minimize our presence at an event, or (c) exit discreetly from a situation or avoid it altogether. Moreover, when we are more than normally tired, stressed, or emotionally upset, we can be tempted to yield to the all-too-human reactions that such troubled states induce. Under such conditions we are more prone to overlook the needs of others, to miss information or social cues to which we are typically attentive, and to say things we might later regret or wish had gone unsaid. The good of our personal and apostolic integrity demands that we take the personal initiatives available to us, invite the support and challenge of friends, and enlist the aid of superiors, so that thus aided we can create for ourselves as happy, healthy, and productive an apostolic life as is realistically possible.

4. Our counsel, our position within the apostolate or the Society, or simply the numerous relationships we have formed can sometimes place us in a situation where we hold confidential information that is so “heavy” that it is simply “hard,” psychologically burdensome, to keep it to ourselves. In such instances, we must be especially prudent as to what subject matter we discuss and to whom we disclose information. Along with a healthy friendship with a Jesuit we trust deeply, a knowledgeable spiritual director or supervisor whom we see regularly is a critically important support when the weight of confidences becomes especially hard to bear.

5. It is myopic to view holding confidences with integrity as just a matter of concern for the individual Jesuit. As the above points reveal, we do need to enlist social support from others. However, we need to expand beyond one-on-one relationships to the very environment in which we live. A community might profit (depending on its size) from having a community-wide or small-group discussion on the “climate” of the community in regard to issues touching on confidentiality. This could include one or more of the following topics:

a. The “quality” of daily conversation. Helpful questions here might be: How do I describe the “quality” of the daily conversations in our community? What do I think should become a part of or cease to be part of everyday house conversations? If I had to describe what I desire to be the “ideal” conversations in the everyday life of this community, what would I say? What might this “ideal” conversation include? What might it exclude?

b. Respect for others. Helpful questions here might be: Are our everyday conversations respectful of community members? of our colleagues? of those we minister to? What can we incorporate into our conversation that is supportive of and helps invigorate our individual and communal apostolic efforts?

c. Awareness of boundaries. Helpful questions here might be: Does everyday conversation lead to undue speculation or gossip about brother Jesuits? colleagues? people to whom we minister? What “criteria” could we discuss and agree upon that might then serve to guide house conversations and discussions?

C. Making Referrals

In some instances, when we offer others our counsel, we find that an individual’s issue or problem requires the assistance of a mental-health professional. Though making a referral does not obviate the need for pastoral care, it is also important to recognize that appropriate pastoral care requires us to acknowledge the limits of our competence; for the essential

goal of pastoral care is always what most ensures the “good” of the person. As noted earlier in our discussion, emotional problems are increasingly a part of many Americans’ lives. Thus, Jesuits who counsel are likely to periodically encounter individuals needing a referral. As a starting point, every Jesuit pastoral counselor and spiritual director must know his limits. An essential question every Jesuit must ask himself is, Do I approach my counseling session with a sense of humility? “Humility carries with it an open-mindedness, a willingness to admit mistakes and seek advice, and a desire to learn.”³⁸ Having an attitude of healthy humility when we counsel has two dimensions, the first of which is adequate self-knowledge. Thus, for example, each of us needs to consider whether he possesses the necessary self-honesty to hold in check a tendency such as compulsive care giving. I recall a Jesuit once stating in the course of a meeting that he enjoyed working with people who had relationship problems. What the Jesuit failed to recognize was that many of his own relationships were in turmoil and that his own failure to set boundaries led to entangled relationships, compulsive care giving, and poor judgment. My sense of this Jesuit was that he needed his counselees more than they needed him. His need to rescue people was a way to assuage and distract himself from his own conflicted state. Others became more and more aware of this, but the Jesuit remained for the most part oblivious to the consequences of his actions. When the counsel we offer others originates from our own acutely felt needs, frequently we are not as self-aware or as alert to the effects of our actions as we might otherwise be.

A second dimension of healthy humility involves a twofold recognition. First, a Jesuit with self-knowledge can recognize the limits of his own skill level and expertise. Secondly, taking into account both the strengths and the limitations of his own abilities and training, the Jesuit ought to have some understanding of the behaviors or emotional states that he should refer to a mental-health professional. The vagaries, complexities, and diversity of human actions and internal psychological states being what they are, no list of behaviors is likely to be exhaustive. Moreover, we should remind ourselves that people frequently choose to seek our counsel precisely because of who we are and what we represent—men whose mature pastoral judgments foster good counsel. As a consequence, we should not be quick to make referrals or defer to other professionals when people bring us their the problems or dilemmas. Even so, it would not be amiss here to offer some short descriptions of behaviors and emotional states that might, in some

³⁸ June Price Tangney, “Humility: Theoretical Perspectives, Empirical Findings, and Directions for Future Research,” *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* 19 (Spring 2000): 72.

instances, lead a Jesuit pastoral counselor or spiritual director to consider a referral to a licensed mental-health professional.

1. **Problems with interpersonal relationships.** The person consistently displays behaviors that disrupt the development and growth of healthy interpersonal relationships. Examples of these behaviors include a history of excessively controlling one's relationships or becoming too dependent upon others.

2. **Deficient interpersonal skills.** An individual's behavior demonstrates significant deficiency in interpersonal skills; this in turn frustrates or undermines friendship or team endeavors. She fails, for example, to be sensitive to the feelings of others in discussions, to perceive social situations accurately, or to anticipate future actions that would promote friendship.

3. **Self-esteem issues.** Experiences of shame or crippling self-esteem issues so burden some people that they experience chronic dissatisfaction. A wide range of behaviors can reflect this distressing state. Examples include overcompensating, compulsiveness, rigidity, chronic negative self-evaluations, unresolved and lingering guilt feelings, and crippling inhibitions.

4. **Impairing negative mood states.** Some mood states (for example, depression, anxiety) are so disabling that they impede everyday functioning and derail the pursuit of a happy and productive life. Surprisingly, even with the wide publicity surrounding various mental-health issues, the majority of individuals suffering from depression are not being treated; and many fail to recognize the debilitating nature of their own depression. The paralysis fueled by anxiety likewise has a stranglehold on many, drowning them in needless fears and excessive worries.

5. **Distorted self-impressions.** Some individuals' perceptions of self are woefully distorted. They harbor unrealistic aspirations, evaluate their abilities and talents uncritically, and are too preoccupied with their own self-promotion. Such individuals typically display narcissistic aspects or traits: they feel a sense of entitlement and find it difficult to express genuine empathy toward or understanding of other people's perspectives.

6. **Impulse problems.** An increasing number of those coming to us display impulse problems. Such impulsiveness increases at-risk behaviors that endanger the risk taker as well as others. Some examples include a history of sexual acting out, a chronic problem with emotionally explosive outbursts, or compulsive gambling.

7. **Substance abuse.** The abuse of and dependence on substances (for instance, alcohol) create problems for an individual, those he loves, and society as a whole. The psychological and medical problems associated with addictions combine to destroy families, friendships, and lives.

8. **Diffuse identity and developmental immaturity.** Some experience profound difficulty in constructing a healthy sense of identity. They suffer ongoing confusion and find their lives drifting with no clear sense of purpose. Such individuals reflect a lack of self-direction and life goals. They shy away from following through on significant life decisions; frequently they cannot even make such decisions. Their diffuse identity states lead to behaviors that are, developmentally speaking, often immature. These individuals are often described as “needy” in their relationships and ineffective in reaching decisions.

9. **Arrested development.** Some individuals find persistent difficulty in letting go of previous hurts, particularly those involving painful family issues. They lack the psychological wherewithal to resolve lingering hurts originating from their families and appear to be held hostage by unnegotiated or unresolved issues with parents or siblings. In such individuals, family gatherings and subsequent interactions frequently trigger emotional upset and knee-jerk responses. Individuals who fit under this description usually fail to acquire proper boundary settings with other family members.

In addition to the specific types of behaviors just described, another way a Jesuit can address the advisability of referral is by reflecting on another series of questions. To optimize the results obtained from this list, a Jesuit might take a moment and recall a specific counselee or directee, past or present.

1. As I think about this person can I identify specific behaviors that cause me concern?
2. Am I able to clarify for myself exactly how I view the problem adversely influencing this person’s capacity to live a happy, healthy, and whole life? If it is appropriate to do so, am I able to share my concerns with the counselee or directee?
3. Is the problem getting worse? If so, what *observable* behaviors or emotional displays lead me to this conclusion?
4. What resources (for example, social-support networks, positive self-image) can this person draw upon to counteract the problematic behaviors or feelings troubling him? A rule of thumb here is that the fewer resources the individual has, the more likely it is that problems will surface and prove impairing.³⁹

³⁹ Usually when considering whether to make a referral, we focus exclusively on the problems the counselee or directee is having. Though understandable, such an approach is incomplete. Two people undergoing a similar stressful situation will more than likely respond differently if one has a number of positive attributes and resources at his or

5. How much psychological discomfort or distress is this person experiencing?
6. If they are available, do comments and observations of others confirm my concerns?
7. If the person does not seek professional consultation, what are my concerns or fears for this directee or counselee during the next six months or a year from now? Or, how will she be functioning in six months or a year from now if no outside consultation is sought? Sometimes it might prove helpful to pose this question directly to the counselee, to elicit a response, and then provide feedback to her answer. If appropriate, I might share my own response to this question.
8. How is this counselee or directee similar or dissimilar to others I have counseled over the years whose experiences or problems present notable resemblances?
9. Has this person experienced and successfully resolved the issues that impaired his maturity; for example, has he cultivated a firm sense of identity, a healthy sense of intimacy, acting in ways that suggest the desire to be generative? Does this person appear to lag seriously behind his peers in regard to these developmental tasks?
10. If I believe it pastorally prudent to describe a person's behavior (but not the person's identity) to a Jesuit friend, does his response confirm my own impressions and concerns?

Usually no single response to any one question conclusively speaks the need for mental-health consultation. However, if we find ourselves responding to a number of these questions in ways reflecting growing concern for a counselee or directee, then we should seriously consider making a referral.

To conclude, we must point out that referring someone to a mental-health professional does not mean we abandon the person (though it might "feel" as if this were the case), nor should referral, to reaffirm what was said above, diminish the Jesuit's pastoral outreach. We might refer someone and still see her for spiritual direction or periodically touch base with her regarding some pastoral matters. The most prudent course is to tailor our

her disposal and the other is lacking such assets. A list of some "assets" might include healthy relationships, a positive outlook, problem-solving skills, self-insight, financial resources, time, and good health.

pastoral efforts on a case-by-case basis, our guiding principle always being what is “best” for the directee or counselee.⁴⁰

D. Transference

Anyone reading in the area of pastoral counseling or spiritual direction inevitably comes upon the word “transference.” Indeed, GC 34, after specifically affirming the need for boundary setting, states that a Jesuit should be “aware of the possibility of affective transference and countertransference, and resistant to confusing such ministerial relationships with those of intimate friendship.”⁴¹ In view of the specific context of our discussion, transference might generally be defined as displacing onto a Jesuit counselor or director feelings or unresolved conflicts that had originally been experienced during one’s childhood years. The result is that the person experiencing the transference unconsciously relates to the Jesuit, not as a counselor or director in the present, but as a stand-in for a significant figure who in the past aroused conflict, hurt, disappointment, or some other strongly felt emotion (such as anger). A few examples might be helpful. This counselee agrees to every suggestion her counselor offers her and develops a dependency upon him. In the presence of this newly perceived authority figure, she might be reenacting a mode of conduct that she had developed years ago in relation to her own mother. Another example might be a directee who responds passive-aggressively to his Jesuit spiritual director just as he did to his own father.

But, more important for our purposes, a Jesuit might also develop a transference onto someone he counsels (technically called a countertransference). Thus, a spiritual director who holds a self-inflated view of himself might have his needs met by an all-too-compliant directee as he continues to use his directee like many others in his life. Or the relationship the Jesuit develops with a student he counsels, for example, might mask feelings of fatherhood for this young adult (and he finds himself becoming protective of the student), or reminds him of his own youth (and he seeks perhaps to rescue the student), or triggers in him feelings of longing for the younger brother he never had (and he goes out of his way to be friendly with the student). In each of these instances, countertransference leads the Jesuit

⁴⁰ It is beyond the scope of this paper to detail the mechanics of the referral process. Minimally, however, every spiritual director or pastoral counselor should be aware of the mental-health resources available in his area and have a list of agencies and mental-health professionals whom he trusts and feels comfortable with when referring a directee or counselee.

⁴¹ No. 254 (p. 123).

piritual director or pastoral counselor to respond, not so much to what the person seeking help and guidance requires, but rather to what satisfies the Jesuit's unacknowledged motivations and needs. As a consequence, countertransference steers the Jesuit erroneously to conclude that his pastoral care is helping someone when in fact his actions are to a significant degree satisfying his own needs, while possibly having little relevance to the actual problems being discussed.⁴²

The above discussion simply points out that we Jesuits, like everyone else, are human and subject to the mistakes, shortcomings, and problems which accompany anyone who attempts to care in some way for another human being. I doubt that we can state unequivocally that we have never had or never will have a countertransference reaction toward someone we counsel. Supporting this statement, research into psychotherapy and counseling views countertransference reactions as a common and potentially disruptive factor that adversely influences the relationship between therapist and client.⁴³ I suspect any counsel we give that involves meaningful and ongoing contact with another person has the potential of triggering a countertransference reaction within us. For the Jesuit the key point is to deal honestly and prudently with it when it does arise in our ministerial relationships and to employ whatever corrective measures are necessary to resolve it. Finally, we should keep in mind that although countertransference reactions most certainly can undermine the counsel we provide, they might also, if handled and responded to appropriately, aid us toward personal insight, greater self-knowledge, and interior freedom.

Here are some questions developed to help probe and understand our own actions and reactions to those we counsel. Again, a personal case-study approach might be profitable: recall to mind a specific directee or counselee and apply the following questions to that relationship.

1. When providing counsel to this person, do I behave differently or have certain feelings that are not typical of what I usually feel when counseling others?

⁴² Of course, it is conceivable that a Jesuit's countertransference significantly helps a counselee or directee, while assuaging the Jesuit's internal needs or conflict. The two are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In such instances, however, the Jesuit needs a self-awareness that allows for careful and continuing discernment of his motives to ensure that the good of the counselee or directee predominates. In such situations, a prudent response also requires the Jesuit to seek input from knowledgeable and competent others.

⁴³ David C. Mohr, "Negative Outcome in Psychotherapy: A Critical Review," *Clinical Psychology: Research and Practice* 2 (Spring 1995): 14f.

2. Do I find myself thinking excessively about this person in comparison to others I counsel?
3. When counseling this person, do I find myself feeling stirred up or having feelings that make me uncomfortable?
4. Do I find myself having overly positive or negative feelings toward this person and wondering why I feel so strongly?
5. After this person leaves, do I frequently find myself wondering why I said this or that?
6. Does this person's manner, physical features, life situation, or behavior remind me of someone from my earlier life (including myself)?
7. Do I find this person easily provoking me for no apparent reason?

If I counsel people on a regular basis and have one or more counsees or directees about whom I responded positively to a number of the questions listed above, I might consider the possibility that I have developed or am developing a countertransference.

Despite what I have just said, I wish to allay excessive and unwarranted scrutiny. Obviously, at times we might be worried and think about a person for good reason (for example, he is depressed, she is unemployed). Someone might present a difficult personality whose angry outbursts or passive-aggressive style drains us psychically. Naturally, we might find talking with this person uncomfortable and experience ourselves feeling or responding to him in ways that are untypical. We might even find ourselves saying things just to conclude a conversation or get the vexatious counselee to leave our office! Nonetheless, if we find ourselves answering in the affirmative to several of the above questions, we should pause at least to consider that a countertransference might have developed. Awareness of countertransference is vital for ministerial integrity. Failure to be sensitive to these issues admits the possibility that even though our intentions are noble, our responses, instead of providing adequate and appropriate pastoral care, might primarily be a means for meeting our own needs. Sadly, in some instances, serious harm might ensue if the counselee or directee fails to receive appropriate counsel.

The following points might alert us to our countertransference reactions and assist us in dealing with them.

1. Try to make time for the daily examen, as well as some moments for periodic critical self-reflection.
2. Occasionally take some time to evaluate boundaries and how they are maintained.

3. Make a point of relying on others, such as a spiritual director and several close friends, to ensure a periodic “reality check” of personal reactions with the people one counsels.

4. If necessary, consider undergoing personal therapy to help sort out motivating triggers and issues that might generate countertransferences. If this statement arouses uncomfortable feelings, recall that the “reason” for such therapy is not only to gain insight but also to be more apostolically effective and to uphold one’s primary goal in counseling, to help the person seeking counsel.

5. When providing pastoral care to others, take the necessary steps to ensure adequate self-care. Burned-out and needy Jesuits are more prone to develop countertransference reactions.

Conclusion

I hope that this article’s primary purpose has been achieved by this time: raising our *consciousness* around issues and concerns that bear directly on the counsel we provide. Yet even as we foster self-awareness, we should keep a certain reality in mind. No Jesuit would deny that on this very day a number of Jesuits’ counseling sessions may fail to reach a level of apostolic effectiveness that those men desired or hoped to achieve. I ask you, however, to consider another and more telling fact. The total accumulated instances of a single day’s less-than-ideal counsel are insignificant in comparison to the countless acts of compassionate listening, sound feedback, insightful advice, and loving challenge that flow directly from Jesuits’ good-hearted (and intended) counsel. In other words, during any twenty-four-hour period the emotional and spiritual support we offer God’s people is as uplifting as it is significant. On any given day, I suspect, the “difference” our counsel makes in assisting people to live healthy spiritual and emotional lives is staggering, and it is a reality that often goes unheralded, even unnoticed. From the perspective of humility, this is probably as it should be. Yet the failure of such bountiful goodness to garner attention does *not* mean that it should be ignored. Every Jesuit should be rightfully proud of the truly noble and fruitful apostolic richness that stems from the counsel we give and of the heritage to which we are contributing. The hope is that what is offered in these pages will motivate every Jesuit to a renewed commitment to focus both joyfully and reflectively on his own unique role in sustaining the Society’s reputation as a group of prayerful and discerning men who provide “good counsel.”

Finally, though our emphasis has for the most part been on the individual Jesuit's role as a provider of good counsel, we must repeat that we are not just men who counsel, but *Jesuits* who counsel. So we conclude our remarks with some thoughts on how our counsel relates to the apostolic mission of the entire Society. Whenever the Society of Jesus, through a provincial, missions a Jesuit to a specific apostolic assignment, several assumptions are implicit. For one, the man being sent by virtue of his integrity is expected to be willing to do his best to advance his new apostolic mission. At the same time, such missioning is a public statement made by the Society that the apostolic work to which the Jesuit has been assigned has ramifications for the wider mission of the Society and can be of benefit for the People of God. But in the context of the counsel we have discussed within these pages, another assumption needs stating. When a Jesuit is missioned, the Society of Jesus, through the man's provincial, declares to Church authorities, the wider Church community, and society in general that reasonable efforts (which always operate within the confines of human frailty and fallibility, and always demand openness and cooperation from the missioned Jesuit) have been undertaken to assure that the missioned Jesuit can be trusted with the People of God. It is the Society's desire, even when confronted with this human frailty, which is always unpredictable, that the missioned Jesuit's response will be one that prudently and selflessly reflects gospel values and mature pastoral judgment. This is not to say that the missioned Jesuit is without faults or ministers flawlessly—such a view is unrealistic. But it does express the Society's belief and hopes that the missioned Jesuit, after examining his heart, probing his desires, and confronting his personal limitations, will strive to respond to others through his thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in a manner that attempts, even at heroic personal sacrifice and costs, if necessary, to maintain and ensure that such trust is never compromised. At the same time, the Society relies, indeed, depends upon, the individual Jesuit's open communication with superiors, so that they can implement whatever interventions or personal steps might be necessary to foster the man's ability to uphold such trust.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ On a personal and respectful note and in order to make the points offered in this paragraph of the Conclusion as concrete and practical as possible, I recommend that every provincial as well as all province consultors and provincial staff members, when deliberating how best to mission their men, discuss and answer the following questions prior to every Jesuit's public missioning: (1) Is this man at least adequate for the assignment to which he has been missioned? (2) Hoping that this man has been open with his superiors and having taken reasonable steps to assess his suitability (relying, of course, on the always potentially fallible feedback and input from others), do we believe that this man can be trusted with the welfare of those he is missioned to serve? (3) Given an affirmative answer to (1) and (2), yet always recognizing the ever-present potential for

Moreover, upon reflection, we can conclude that every time a provincial missions a man, the Society's own integrity is at stake. Or, to state it from a positive perspective, every time the Jesuit is found trustworthy by those to whom he provides pastoral care, the Society's integrity is strengthened and its very purpose—the aid of souls in companionship—more fully realized. Yet, given human frailty and our almost endless capacity for self-deception, every time a Jesuit is missioned there is always at least a *potential* risk that such trust to some degree will be compromised. May this essay remind every reader that his counsel of others *always* requires a true humility that views his own and the Society's integrity as ever fragile and inextricably linked. Whenever a Jesuit acknowledges and lives with integrity, in accord with this truth, by his humble stance he reaffirms his conviction that aiding souls in companionship truly makes for a wonderful life.

human error, can we have the reasonable expectation that he will carry out his ministry with *integrity*, striving to the best of his ability to serve the welfare and concerns of those to whom he is missioned? I certainly acknowledge that the Society goes to great efforts to implement the above goals. However, at times—our own humanness coupled with very real factors such as losing focus in discussions, lacking sufficient data, yielding to time pressures, coping with jammed schedules and shrinking manpower pools, succumbing to personal or group frailty or self-deception (“group think”), and so on—deliberations concerning a Jesuit's missioning might not always be what they could be. Thus, I offer the above questions simply as a way to raise and sharpen awareness among the Society's leadership of issues and concerns that are essential for the long-term viability of the Society of Jesus in its corporate presence of service both to the Church and to the common good of society at large.



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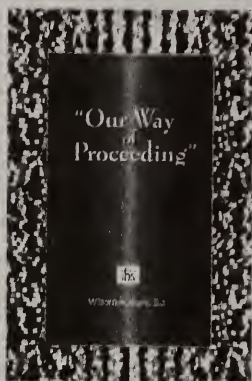
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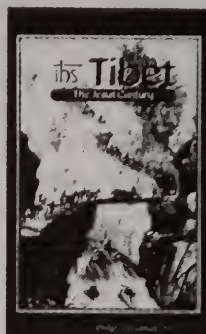


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