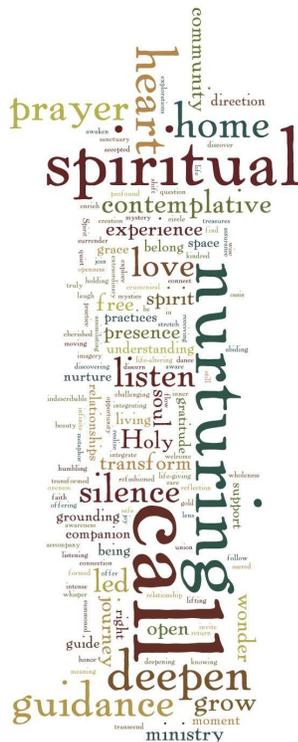


## What is Group Spiritual Companionship?

Group Spiritual Companionship is a practice where people gather monthly to assist in one another's growing awareness that God is actively operating in their lives. Often, we suffer from self-sufficiency- the belief that we are doing just fine. But as we all know that generally is not the case. Spiritual masters say that if your life does not contain trials, you're not growing. As individual members share, the group assists them in discernment by helping each other see God's active presence through gentle questioning, insights and comments. One becomes aware of God's ways in one's own life by hearing how God is operating in the lives of other group members.



## What are meetings like?

The pattern of meetings is rhythmic; silence, sharing, silence, response, silence. Meetings are generally ninety minutes long and currently gather on Sunday mornings from 8:30 till 10:00 AM. Depending on the group's conscience, some groups take the summer off due to vacation conflicts. Sessions begin with silence. The leader will then invite someone to share a thought or feeling they are living. Everyone shares something initially. This is followed by silence/journaling. Next, a member will share a difficulty or experience more deeply. Each member listens prayerfully avoiding advice. Group Spiritual Companionship is not therapy. Once completed, silence is observed allowing God to enter the group's experience.

Sharing or questions and support that have risen in silence follow which is again followed by silence where group members pray silently for one another. Sharing, silence, response and silence is repeated until all members have been heard.

Finally, a gathering of graces comprises the final reflection on the time together. It is not a time to dissect or evaluate the time together but a quest for noticing how God has guided the group prayerfully.

## What Should I Expect?

To prepare oneself, to commit oneself to Group Spiritual Companionship, participants must be willing to share their personal faith journey and respect the journey of others. They must be willing to enter a relationship with others that is built on trust, prayerful listening and compassionate responses. New members are encouraged to attend three meetings before commitment.



## How Do Groups Get Started?

Groups form dynamically – one might be invited to join an existing group of members or to form the membership of a new group. The dynamics operate best with four or five group members where diversity and anonymity enriches the collective wisdom.

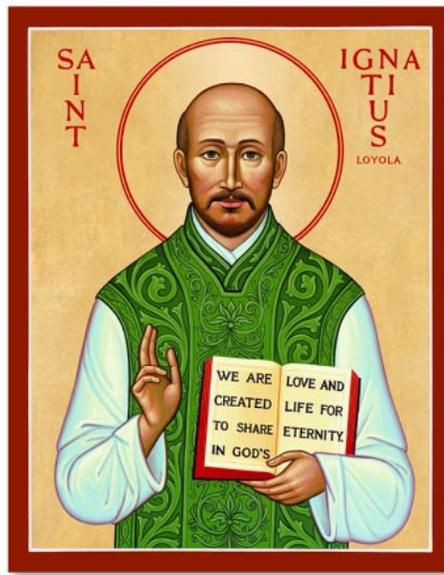
***What are the results of participation?***

Over a period of time, participants discover through hindsight and reflection subtle changes as a result of these gatherings. Edges soften; patience grows, there is an increase in confidence and trust among members and particularly with God. Love for God increases and love of others rises in importance.



***How is Group Spiritual Companionship like Individual Spiritual Direction?***

In both forms all participants have a deep sense of searching for God and desiring to know how God is present in the individual situation of one's life. In both formats there is an understanding that one cannot do this work alone. There is a unique experience of honesty.



To speak to a Spiritual Director about individual or group direction, praying the 19th Annotation of St. Ignatius, or directed private retreats

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**GROUP SPIRITUAL COMPANIONSHIP**



For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them."

*MT 18:20*