

**William A Barry and William J. Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, rev. and updated ed. (New York: Harper One, 2009), 224 pp.**

When it was published in 1982, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction* was groundbreaking. It was based on more than a decade of experience in the training of spiritual directors at the Center for Religious Development in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and their unique preparation and setting. The authors, Jesuits William Barry and William Connolly, produced a book that quickly became a classic and is still well worth reading. What it brings home continues to be important—perhaps more so than ever: spiritual direction, at its best, is about accompanying seekers in their unique relationships with God; spiritual direction is essentially contemplative listening, whatever else it may be on occasion; supervision is key to the development of good spiritual directors; and transference and counter transference occur in particular forms within the spiritual direction relationship.

However, even classics eventually become dated. In this “revised and expanded” edition, the original work is still there almost paragraph by paragraph. The language for God has become inclusive (at least where the authors speak in their own voice; directees still often speak of God with the masculine pronoun). There is more awareness that spiritual direction now regularly takes place outside Catholic or even Christian contexts. But perhaps because of its classic status, the authors missed an opportunity to do a more radical updating even while preserving their original ideas. The examples still reflect a Catholic assumptive world. The case dialogues still have a preponderance of male professionals (directors or supervisors), though the ministry itself has shifted towards a preponderance of female professional persons. For those who teach with this book, the revised and updated version will be more palatable to your students. For those who do not teach it and who can tolerate the non-inclusive language, your old copy has everything in it you need.

Elizabeth Liebert  
San Francisco Theological Seminary  
San Anselmo, California