

## SECTION IV

### SPIRITUAL PRACTICES IN FORMATION AND SUPERVISION



In *Practicing our Faith*, Dorothy C. Bass invited a number of authors to reflect on such ordinary activities as hospitality, honoring the body, singing, discerning, forgiving, healing, and many more.<sup>1</sup> She called them ‘practices’ and suggested that practices are concrete acts done together with others that address fundamental human needs. In ordinary ways, practices weave patterns of living into a life tapestry with many threads strong enough to order, support, shelter, and sustain. Practices are a significant dimension of both formation and supervision because they engage the senses, enlisting the body to orient the soul. These practices are also dangerous to both body **and** soul in parts of the world where people have limited freedom to practice what they believe.

Practices of faith are explored in three different ways in the following essays. Martha Stortz reports on her experiences of pilgrimage and explores the implications of that practice in “Pilgrimage and Formation for Ministry.” She invites us to think about pilgrimage as a particular kind of journey that a) uses intentional dislocation b) for the purposes of transformation c) to allow the body to mentor the soul. Although Stortz writes out of her experience as a Christian pilgrim, this creative and evocative essay will be beneficial for individuals from any religion that commends pilgrimage as an important spiritual practice.

Pilgrimage appears in three essays in this volume. In the work of pastoral supervision, David W. Alexander uses co-pilgrimage as a metaphor to emphasize the liberating power of mutuality in both therapeutic and supervisory relationships. Martha E. Stortz is quite clear: pilgrimage is more than a metaphor: it is a formative practice for disciples who are always ‘on the way’. In an earlier essay on “Relational Spiritual Formation,” Steven J. Sandage and Mary L. Jensen identify the symptoms of anxiety and stress related to ‘questing’, particularly for those with low tolerance of ambiguity or a high need for closure. Their relational orientation to spiritual formation seeks to balance “the stability of dwelling within spiritual commitments and the open process of spiritual seeking and questing.” Relationality, mutuality, and Stortz’s companions on the pilgrim way all point to the communal dimension of spirituality.

In reflecting on his years as an active supervisor in the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, David R. Jenkins makes a strong case for considering ascetical theology alongside pastoral theology as a resource for pastoral supervision. In the light of the current interest in spirituality, he argues that ascetical theology is an appropriate resource for clinical pastoral supervision because of its emphasis on the interior life of soul/spirit as we seek to form religious leaders who “live wisely within the rhythmic cyclical realities of life” as they incarnate the love of God.

Beyond individual formation and supervision, spiritual practices are increasingly a part of seminary education. In the previous section, Steven J. Sandage and Mary L. Jensen report on research of Bethel Seminary’s program in spiritual formation. In this section, Valerie Lesniak has written about the remarkably integrated model of spiritual formation at the School of Theology and Ministry of Seattle University. The integration of spiritual formation with academic education is a critical step in preparing women and men of integrity—whole and undivided—who have the courage needed to be future religious leaders. Here is Stephen L. Carter again about what could be regarded as a goal of spiritual formation: “Integrity, after all, is a kind of wholeness, and most religions teach that God calls us to an undivided life in accordance with divine command.”<sup>2</sup> There is general agreement that the future of religious communities depends in part on forming religious leaders for whom integrity and authenticity are like breathing. Learning that we are all pilgrims is one way to form that kind of breathing.

#### NOTES

1. Dorothy C. Bass, ed. *Practicing Our Faith*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: John C. Wiley & Sons, 2010).
2. Stephen L. Carter, “Becoming People of Integrity,” *Christian Century* 113, no. 9 (March 13, 1996): 298.

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