

Suzanne M. Coyle, *Uncovering Spiritual Narratives: Using Story in Pastoral Care and Ministry* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 120 pp.

Suzanne Coyle has produced an engaging, brief book on uncovering and using spiritual narratives in pastoral care and ministry. This is hardly a new subject, as spiritual stories/narratives have existed since the dawn of spirituality and religion—and the author is quite aware of this history as well as of contemporary writings (e. g., by Herbert Anderson and Donald Capps) on the importance of stories in pastoral care.

In the earlier pages of Coyle's book, she sets a foundation for understanding narratives and their use in pastoral care. At times I had the feeling I was reading a synopsis of her PhD dissertation, which seemed to follow the format of identifying the author and his or her position and outlining the ways Coyle incorporates or rejects his or her approach. One three-sentence paragraph hardly seems germane when she states that listening skills taught in CPE are limited to the spoken word and then proceeds to declare, "Unfortunately, learning to listen involves attending to the words, body position, and voice of another" (p. 37). If her CPE experience equated listening to just the words spoken, that is unfortunate. My experience, after forty years of supervision, has been one of hearing CPE supervisors repeatedly emphasizing that ninety to ninety-five percent of communication is nonverbal.

Two significant themes are well developed: her immersion in understanding narrative therapy and then her integrating it with liberation theology. My first awareness of narrative therapy came in the 1980s when a colleague at the Ackerman Family Therapy Institute, Olga Silverstein, shared her excitement over recent writings of Michael White of Australia and a new approach to family therapy known as narrative therapy. Coyle received training in the narrative therapy approach at the Dulwich Centre in Adelaide. The author's goal of integrating liberation theology in pastoral care is laudable and overdue. This is also where her book comes to life, as she shares pastor/parishioner verbatims and her immersion conferences in the hills of West Virginia attended by individuals from more affluent urban settings. One caveat I would give after reading her verbatims is the danger of uncovering narratives through a canned set of questions devoid of empathy.

Seward Hiltner, Coyle's graduate advisor until his death, repeatedly emphasized that a writer must first identify his or her audience. Coyle has a wealth of pastoral experience, clinical training, and graduate education. She could produce an excellent and valued handbook for pastors that would

illustrate the use of narrative therapy in parish life as well as enrich and educate parishioners through cultural immersion workshops. If she does so, I look forward to reading it.

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