Regardless of whether we describe ourselves as Spiritual Directors, Companions, Guides, or some other designation, all authentic practitioners of our calling share common elements, some of which we previously discussed here: [https://www.sdicompanions.org/docs/media/listen/14-2/14-2-listen-2020-04.pdf](https://www.sdicompanions.org/docs/media/listen/14-2/14-2-listen-2020-04.pdf).

In this context we often say things like: “spiritual direction is not going to a bar with some friends, and discussing God over a few drinks.” By which we mean that it is not an occasional trifle, but a serious, determined commitment and undertaking. Given the intention we place on it, this invites further reflection on what characterizes the relationship we have with our directees, companionees, or those we guide, or walk alongside.

In some sense, our relationships are ones of “radical companioning,” that is even beyond the type of intimacy that one finds between lovers, or a mother and her child, or other sorts of more recognizable “intimacy,” no matter how profound these can be.

“Our relationship is truly ‘radical’ because our communion will stop at nothing until we remember that we are spiritually authentic only beyond ourselves.”

continued on next page
We are not “co-” or “inter-” anything, but rather so tightly bound as to be inseparable. There is no “me” and “thee” here, there is no “other.” And we have no choice in the matter, regardless of what we may choose to think or believe.

Radical companionship is primordial and eternal, in that it recognizes that we are never separate from one another, but forever bound, and inextricably entwined. It is even beyond such catchy concepts as “interdependent,” and reflects a closeness with God and the Universe beyond simple transactions and interactions. So much so that we are not “co-“ or “inter-“ anything, but rather so tightly bound as to be inseparable. There is no “me” and “thee” here, there is no “other.” And we have no choice in the matter, regardless of what we may choose to think or believe.

We can’t help being one. We just are.

So, the challenge is the recognition, or more precisely the “remembering” of true radical intimacy. An intimacy even beyond itself. Which reveals a companionship beyond our ability to describe it with these blunt instruments we call words. And while we can certainly intellectualize it, as I am doing right now, it really is remembered only through experience and faith. And reborn of profound, contemplative ungrounding.

When companion and companioned look into each other, we recognize mirror images, and those images snap back together, as Matt Whitney’s beautifully evocative illustration invokes.

Our relationship is truly “radical” because our communion will stop at nothing until we remember that we are spiritually authentic only beyond ourselves. As we literally disappear and manifest into the essence of God and the Universe. An essence that does not dissipate, that does not waver, and that does not break or fragment, but always remains incorruptible, beyond life and death itself.

In it, perspective, insight and wisdom reside, and not the stuff of fairytales, but the transcendent impermanent, and the unbound wholeness of the Eternal.

Then, in a flash, divine intimacy. The mystic journey. Our lives flash before our eyes in an instant, and not just ours, but everyone’s. So that we can truly swallow stars, and imbibe the entire Universe.

That is true commitment. That is radical. And that it what spiritual companionship really entails.

Rev. SeiFu
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How does one capture the moment when light begins to fade deep in the canyon while high overhead the sky still speaks of sunlight? ...when the sweet tang of tamarack becomes the headiest perfume you’ll ever know? ...when river song calls to a yearning deep inside you to follow an unknown road? ...when grace falls like rain out of a clear blue sky? The sublime impossibility steeps me in this one breathless moment.

Sue Magrath is a spiritual director, writer, poet, and retreat leader. She is the author of Healing the Ravaged Soul: Tending the Spiritual Wounds of Child Sexual Abuse. Sue lives and works in north central Washington state.
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Chiaroscuro
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Michelangelo

When you see
You know.

In Malta I saw
The Beheading of the Baptist
Leaned in so far
I got a warning -
Electronic barrier
Yellow card

Bathed in light
A brutal darkness is enacted
John in life
In death

I have never tried
To paint

What I can do
is words

To be spoken aloud

I will paint with words
Bring out the light and dark-
Chiaroscuro

Brian Fahy is a former priest and a former mediator for separating parents in child related issues. He writes poetry every day.
We WELCOME your feedback on any aspect of this issue of LISTEN, or on SDI as a whole. Please send your comments to LISTEN@SDIWORLD.ORG
Tao Te Ching - Lao Tzu - chapter 50

Between birth and death,
Three in ten are following life,
Three in ten are following death,
And people just passing from birth to death also number three in ten.
Why is this so?
Because they live their lives on the gross level.

They who know how to live can walk abroad
Without fear of rhinoceros or tiger.
They will not be wounded in battle.
For in them rhinoceroses can find no place to thrust their horn,
Tigers can find no place to use their claws,
And weapons no place to pierce.
Why is this so? Because they have no place for death to enter.

(translation by Gia-fu Feng, Jane English. Adapted by Rev. SeiFu)
Listen is an outreach publication of SDI - The Home of Spiritual Companionship. When you visit the SDI website at www.sdicompanions.org, you can learn about retreats, programs, conferences, and other educational events related to spiritual companionship. You can read descriptions of the spiritual direction relationship from a variety of spiritual traditions, and discover excellent questions to ask yourself and any potential spiritual directors you choose to interview. To locate a spiritual director or companion, go online to Find a Spiritual Companion Guide. More than 6,000 spiritual directors are listed at www.sdicompanions.org.