

Throughout 2017 I have been involved in the Siloam Program at Heart of Life Spirituality Centre, Box Hill, Victoria. The program has been specifically arranged to help those interested in the ministry of spiritual direction so that they can become familiar with the ministry and to develop the personal and professional skills needed to exercise the ministry competently, professionally and pastorally.

The program at Siloam has been developed to provide a full range of practical and theoretical opportunities. For example, this semester the academic courses have included Discernment, Human Experience of God, Professional Standards and Ethics, and Stories and Images. There has also been a lot of emphasis given to the practice of spiritual direction.

Each week participants in the program are involved in intense practicum sessions (in a triad and large group) under the guidance of two expert supervisors. The practicum sessions can be very challenging and sometimes difficult as they endeavour to allow the 'director' to depth his or her own experience at a personal and emotional level. As confronting as it is at times, it is a necessary and very helpful part of the program.

In addition to the classes and practicum sessions, throughout the course each participant had to present a number of Case Studies, be involved in tutorials, write verbatims of spiritual direction encounters, undergo personal spiritual direction, provide spiritual direction, and attend three full weekend retreats.

As I reflect over the past ten months of the course I realise that the major benefit of the program has been in the area of personal formation. It has had a significantly positive effect on my life. This in turn has facilitated the development of very good practical skills. I believe the Siloam Program has been outstanding in the way it has helped me to develop the specialised skills required for good spiritual direction. It has been a very sound way to facilitate the development of spiritual directors academically, pastorally, personally and spiritually.

Having completed the program, I feel ready and keen to get to work! It has helped me to walk a very significant spiritual journey, a journey that has led me closer to God, and now invites me to accompany others on their own journey. I would heartily recommend the Siloam Program to anyone who is interested in gaining qualifications in this significant ministry.