

# **ĐỒNG HÀNH THIÊN LIÊN**

## **Ngày thu 2**

# ÔN LẠI

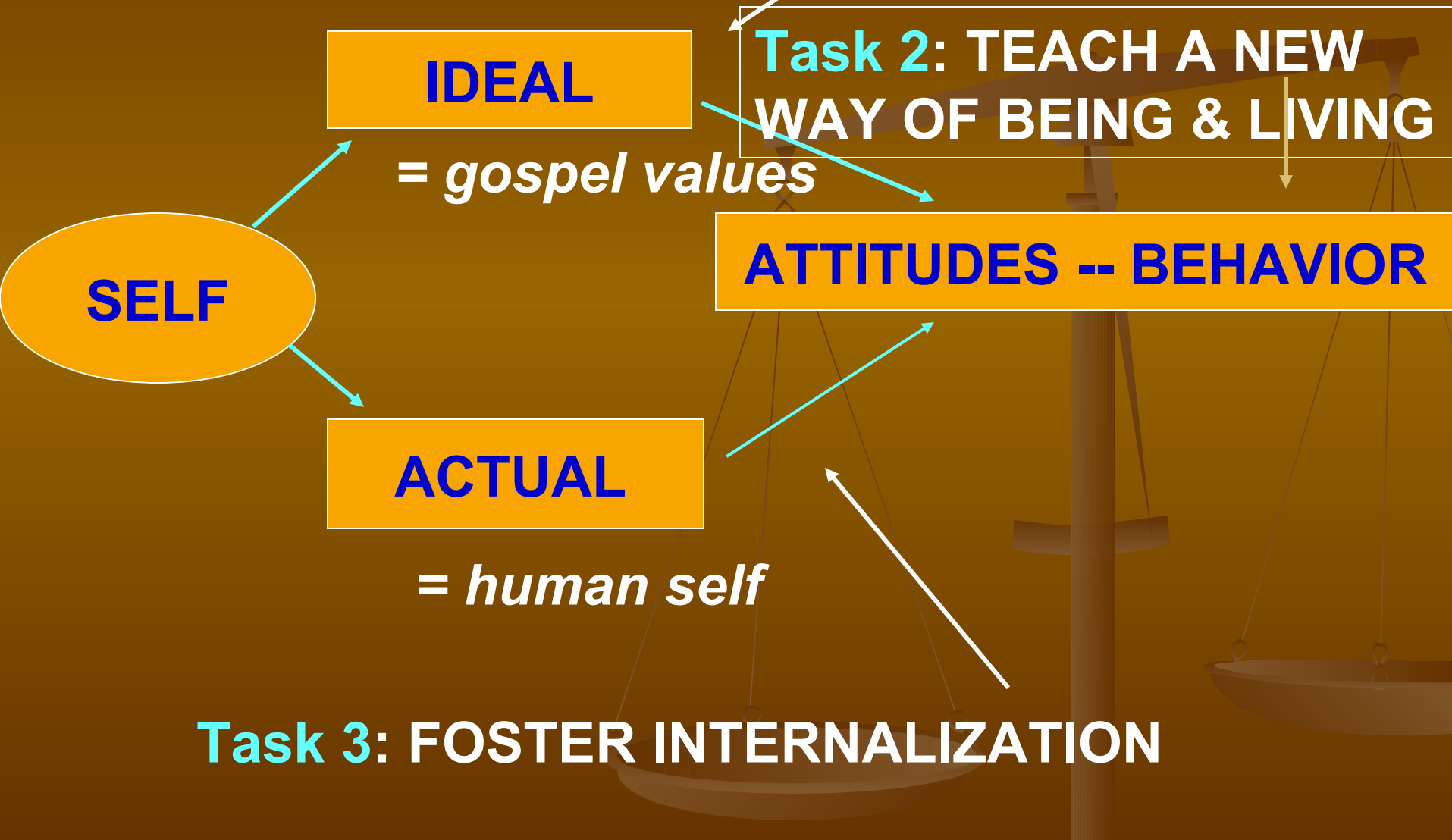
- **What is Spiritual Direction?**
- **5 models of Spiritual Direction:**
  - *Institutionalized* (within formation)
  - *Interpersonal Relationship* (friendship)
  - *Charismatic* (one in 1,000!)
  - *Sacramental* (within the sacrament of penance)
  - *Incarnational* (nhap the: today...)

# ÔN LẠI

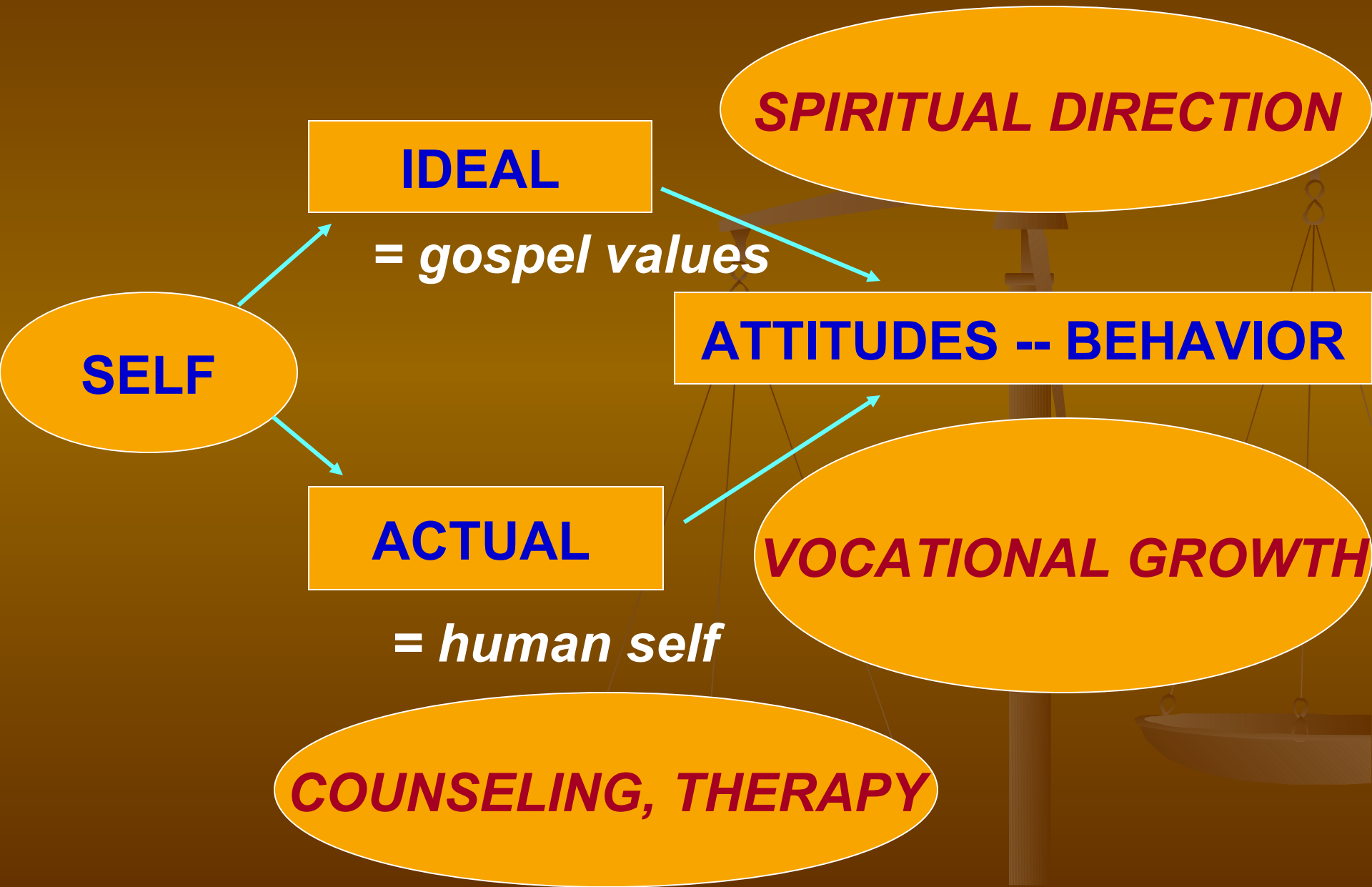
- **What is a “religious experience”?**
- **Place of Spiritual Direction in formation.**

# WHAT ARE WE TO DO IN FORMATION?

**Task 1: DEEPEN THE VALUES OF CHRIST**

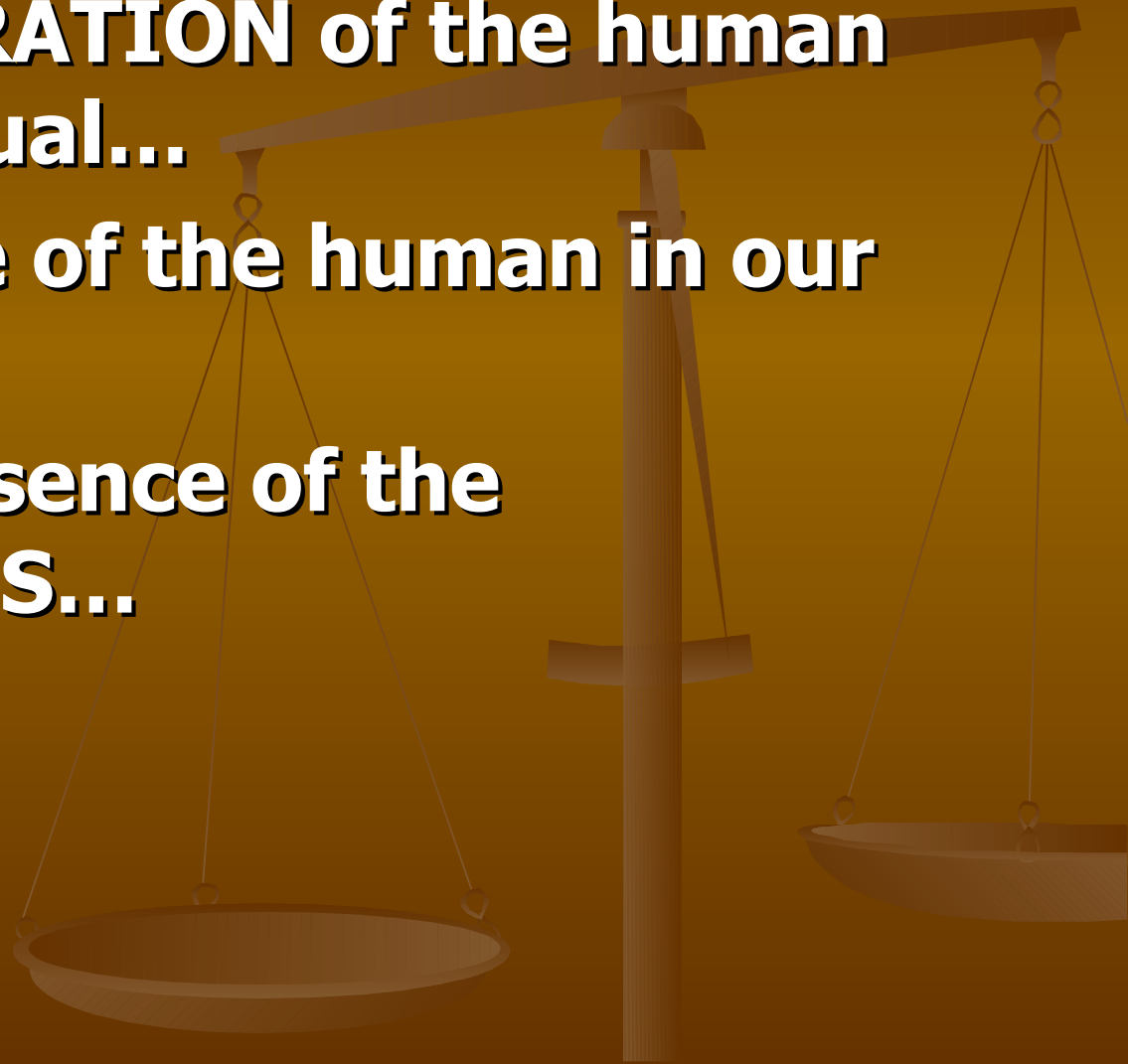


# VARIOUS TYPES OF INTERVENTION



# A few words...

- about **INTEGRATION** of the human and the spiritual...
- about the role of the human in our spiritual life
- about the presence of the **UNCONSCIOUS**...





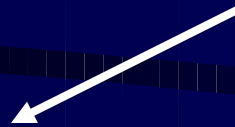
## PERCEPTION

- from OUTSIDE
- from WITHIN



## MEMORY

- Factual
- Emotional



## APPRAISAL

- As OK? Like...
- Or not OK? Dislike...



## EMOTION

= movement toward

= movement away



## BODILY CHANGES


due to hormonal  
secretions

All this happens in 0.5" BELOW CONSCIOUSNESS



# And then, **WHAT HAPPENS?**

- **The PASSAGE TO AWARENESS is the way of maturity and freedom...**
- **Here is, in brief, what it involves...**



**AWARENESS:** ah, something is happening!

And **IDENTIFICATION:** naming

**UNDERSTANDING:**

- What is the cause (or trigger)?
- What is the deeper root?

**DECISION:** what to do?

**ACCEPTANCE**

- accepting other
- faith...

# What are we to do now?

- **Person of the Spiritual Director:**
  - qualities, competence, training...
- **“Distortions”:** transference and countertransference
- **“Boundaries”:** some ethical guidelines

# QUALITIES OF A SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR

- First: **WHAT IS S/HE SUPPOSED TO DO?**
  - to help another person **SEEK** and **FIND** God
  - In one's experience--in **PRAYER** and in **LIFE**
- Remember the **tasks outlined by Keegan?**
  - pay attention to God as He reveals himself
  - recognize my reactions

# Tasks of the Spiritual Director

- Two main things in the process:
  1. **A CONTEMPLATIVE ATTITUDE:**
    - **Receptive:** allow God to speak, to touch, to reveal...
  2. **A DISCERNING ATTITUDE:**
    - **Active:** is this from truly from God? Where does it lead me for my life?

# Role of the director

- The focus is always the **experience of the directee**, where God reveals Himself
- Therefore, the Director should:
  - **LISTEN!**
  - **TRUST** THAT GOD IS REVEALING HIMSELF to this person
  - and **LET GOD LEAD THE DANCE!**

# Some qualities...

- Here are some qualities (among many...):
  - **Deep faith in God's desire to communicate** with His people, to relate personally with each one
  - **Personal experience** of God's communication
  - yet with the **awareness that my own experience is limited**
    - and with a certain knowledge of the many ways that God has of revealing

# Few more qualities...

- **Commitment to help the Directee and to protect confidentiality**
- **Openness and flexibility** coming from one's rich experience of life,
  - yet at the same time a firm sense of **Christian wisdom** (with values in the right place).



# Another quality...

- **Enough self-confidence!**
  - Why such *human* quality?
  - So that the Director will not use the Directee for his/her own needs
  - and will not be afraid of anything arising in the context of direction
  - Because there are all kinds of directees, and they have all kinds of problems!

**One important question:  
“PRIOR EXPERIENCE”?**

**HOW MUCH DO I NEED  
TO HAVE BEEN IN THE SHOES  
OF ANOTHER PERSON  
IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND  
AND BE ABLE TO HELP?**

# Because...

- **A broad experience of life is important**
- **but we are all limited and it is impossible to have gone through all possible human experiences!**
- **What is the purpose of a “prior experience”?**

# Is it really to know what it feels like...

- To have a heart attack?
- To have a spouse and ten children?
- To have a direct revelation from God?
- To have a terminal cancer?
- To belong to the other gender?
- ***This is impossible! Very few people could help***

# CĂN BẢN LÀ...

hai câu hỏi:

- *Have I been able to **LEARN** from the particular experiences of my own life?*
- *Do I **RESPECT** other people and their own personal experiences, and am I able to **LISTEN** to them?*

# **How can I become a better Spiritual Director?**

## **Five ways: (from training program)**

- 1. Personal experience of God and prayer**
- 2. Personal experience of Spiritual Direction**
- 3. Study—of scripture, of spirituality, of discernment**
- 4. Sharing faith and prayer with others**
- 5. Supervision**

# **DISTURBANCES**

## **in Spiritual Direction**

- **Problem:** emergence of feelings toward the Spiritual Director...
  - Whether **positive**: trust, admiration, dependency...
  - Or **negative**: fear, anger, mistrust...
- These are often called **TRANSFERENCE**
- They may help or hinder the process of direction (formation).

# What is “transference”?

- Distortion (most often unconscious) in the perception of another person
- coming from one’s childhood and past experiences
- either ***positive***: love, idealization
- or ***negative***: anger, fear



# Is this rare or frequent?

## ■ **How frequent is it?**

- Very frequent, to some degree since every new person we meet is perceived according to past experiences

## ■ **Where does this happen?**

- EVERYWHERE!
- For example, with superiors, or with one's formator or spiritual director, or with friends...

# Why in Spiritual Direction?

- It should **NOT** happen in SD since the focus is on God and the spiritual life!
  - But it is a **human encounter** between two human beings...
  - and also because it is also a situation of **self-revelation** and **"intimacy"**

# Is it ***BAD, NEUROTIC?***

- No, transference is a normal human response
- However, a feeling of transference can be called “immature” because it implies some distortion of reality
- And there are cases where transference can be neurotic—when it gets deep, intense, difficult to manage, disruptive...

# How to recognize transference?

- Some possible indicators:
  - ***Intensity*** of feelings:
    - Excessive admiration...
    - Very strong anger...
  - ***Inappropriateness***: they are out of proportion with the situation
  - Sometimes ***ambivalence and sudden changes***: from love to hatred, from trust to mistrust, etc.

# How REAL are such feelings?

## ATTENTION! BEWARE!

- Such feelings are **VERY REAL** for the person
- but they **may not be “REALISTIC”**—they may not correspond to the reality of the situation.
  - Example of **phobia**: real feeling of fright but disproportionate, not realistic

# What to do? How to handle?

- Do not **PROVOKE** them! Act naturally and professionally...
- Keep the focus on the **GOAL** of the relationship...
- **DON'T PANIC!**
- **RESPECT** those feelings, they belong to the person and are **REAL** for him/her, they are *sacred*...
- Allow them to be expressed in words, if the person desires (but **NOT** acted on)

# How to respond?

- **LET THEM BE! LEAVE THEM ALONE!**
  - Avoid quick and shallow analyses, technical jargon, defensiveness
  - In spiritual direction, such feelings are usually NOT to be analyzed or interpreted
- **BUT IF THEY BECOME DISRUPTIVE?**

# If they are disruptive...

- **NEGATIVE** reactions, like laziness, side-comments, lateness, loss of interest,
- Or **POSITIVE** attitudes, like dependency, gifts...
- **Most important:** stay within the “contract” and remind the person of the “working agreement”: too deepen one’s relationship with God...



# CỨU TÔI VỚI!!!

- **If they get out of hand, seek help:**
  - First **consult** a competent person to understand what is happening and find out what could be done
  - Second, suggest **referral**, if you cannot handle it.
- **And ALSO: check your own ATTITUDES and REACTIONS!**
- (this is called **COUNTERTRANSFERENCE**)

# **“COUNTERTRANSFERENCE”**

- **What is this?**
  - ***All feeling reactions*** experienced by the director in the relationship.
  - They are important: they help to see what is going on in the relationship...
- Such feeling reactions may come from different sources:

# First possible source of countertransference

## 1. **REALISTIC RESPONSES:**

- Some people evoke similar responses in most people:
  - A friendly and pleasant client liked by all
  - Or a difficult person who makes people angry with her.
- Then my emotional responses may say something objective about the directee's personality.

# Another possible source:

## 2. RESPONSES TO MATERIAL THAT IS TROUBLING TO THE DIRECTOR:

- The directee enters an area that is **an unresolved issue in the director:**
  - For example, the seminarian has a conflict with his bishop, and this triggers my own authority hang-up...
  - Or the novice is revealing her experience of sexual abuse, and since this also happened to me, I am not able to listen to her peacefully...

# **A third possible source:**

## **3. DIRECTOR'S PERSONALITY:**

- **Perhaps my reactions come from ME, and not from the other person...**
  - **I need to be at the center of attention, and I seek to impress the directee with my wisdom, my charm, my own experiences...**
  - **I like people to be dependent on me and I subtly do this also in direction...**
  - **I am very sensitive to criticism and I**

# Is this GOOD or BAD?

- It is neither good nor bad: **IT IS A FACT!**
  - But it can become good or bad...
- If I am aware of my emotional interaction with my directee and try to find out where my reactions come from,
  - I can learn a lot about my directee, but also about myself.
- **What do I need for this?**

# I NEED...

- ... **HUMILITY** and the readiness to look into myself...
- ... **SELF-KNOWLEDGE** so as NOT TO PROJECT my own conflicts upon the other person.
  - Otherwise, things can get BAD, real BAD...
- This is why **SUPERVISION** (consultation) can be so important...

# What are “*boundaries*”?

- They can be defined as ***an appropriate limit on the relationship between a director and a directee.***
- A sort of **structuring** of the relationship according to its nature and goal.
- It is part of a professional way of approaching the relationship.
- Boundaries reflect a **clear understanding of what this relationship is all about** on the part of the Spiritual Director.



# **PURPOSE of boundaries**

- **To maintain the integrity of the Spiritual Direction situation.**
  - **Boundaries offer protection for both the director and the directee.**
  - **They define clearly what is right and correct, and what is suspicious or clearly wrong**
  - **They may prevent RATIONALIZATION and possible**

# ***“BOUNDARY VIOLATION”***

- When a director acts in ways that **satisfy personal needs** rather than the needs of the person seeking help.
- Boundary violations can range from the seemingly innocuous and subtle to the quite overt and explicit.
- Here are some examples...

# **Some examples of boundary violations**

- **Encouraging the directee to reveal more of their personal lives than necessary**
- **Encouraging dependence in the directee**
- **Suggesting topics that gratify us rather than aid the directee**
- **Self-disclosure that makes us the focus of attention**
- **Inappropriate physical contact**

# Physical contact?

- Is there room for physical contact in counseling or spiritual direction???
- First, a basic point of agreement:  
*Sexual activity between a professional and the recipient of his or her care is NEVER permitted because it is always*

# One position

**(Code of Ethics for Spiritual Directors):**

- ***"Holding hands to pray, healing touch, and amiable embraces are all acceptable and natural, and can be most helpful in the spiritual direction partnership."***

**Condition:**

- ***"Directors, however, should ask whether these actions promote or take away from the overall purpose of each relationship rather than indiscriminately imposing them on directees."***

# But...

- But many people would disagree with this position because of the **confusion** it may create,
- especially in some cultural contexts.
- In the field of counseling and therapy, the ethical guidelines are **CLEAR** and **STRICT**:

- **Most forms of physical contact are to be avoided...**
  - **not only because of the risk of leading into a sexual form of contact**
  - **but also because physical contact may NOT be helpful to the client.**

# In the light of this...

- We need to ask:
  - Are such forms of *spiritual* intimacy really helpful to spiritual growth?
  - Is there not a sort of *angelism* involved in those gestures that seems to disregard the reality of human sexuality?
  - Is there not a real danger that many directees would not feel comfortable in such situations yet would not dare to say anything to