

## Christian Spiritual Direction in a Digital Age

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### **Abstract**

Every age comes with its own culture. For the Church to be relevant and effective, she has to always embrace the new culture of the Age as guided by the Holy Spirit for fulfilling her mission of salvation. The present age is described as digital age because it is one in which the world keeps going digital virtually in every sector. The religious and spiritual sectors would lose touch with the world if it fails to think and develop its digital way of being in a digital world. Spiritual direction is one of the important ministries of the Church for salvation of souls. Though of the internal forum, it has the need of embracing the digital culture for her digital audience. How can this be done yet faithful to its nature and goal? This paper explores and proposes Spiritual direction with assistance of digital technology to a level that it does not compromise the nature and goal of Spiritual direction.

**Key words:** *Spiritual direction, Spiritual director, Spiritual directee, Digital Technology, Digital Age*

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### **1. Introduction**

In recent times, some spiritual directors have had people seeking spiritual direction who, in order to save the cost of travelling, seek the use of digital means for their spiritual direction. While the spiritual directors may have a sense of what is wrong with such a demand in terms of faithfulness to confidentiality and the need for presence in Spiritual direction, these people feel alright about their demand. For them, digital technology is the in-thing, and it can make presence possible. If the Spiritual directors are not ready to give spiritual help digitally, many of these people may either give up seeking spiritual direction or seek it in some other way that may not be helpful in their spiritual life. Some of them actually have difficulty travelling the distance to meet a spiritual director physically. If digital means of communication are a positive development in the world that people are getting more used to as their means of doing virtually everything, refusing the use of such means for spiritual direction is likely to be interpreted as saying that spiritual direction is not for the men and women of this age. In an attempt to explore Spiritual

direction to find its possibility and to what extent within the context of the digital age, this paper would first discuss Christian spiritual direction and its nature. It will proceed to discuss the digital age and its nature. Furthermore, the paper will discuss practicing the ministry of spiritual direction in a digital Age with digital technology, showing the extent to which it can promote Spiritual direction as well as the limits. Then, recommendations and conclusion will be made.

## **2. Clarifications of some Terminologies**

Spiritual direction cuts across the lines of different religions and spiritualities and is not a practice limited to the Christian or Catholic Faith alone. But the focus of this paper is Christian Spiritual direction. Spiritual direction has a lot of definitions given by various scholars. Among the notable scholars in this direction are William Barry and William Connolly (1986), Chester P. Michael (2004), F. Antonisamy (2003), Jordan Aumann (2006) and others. While the definition given by each of these scholars stresses only some aspects of the meaning of spiritual direction and not all about it, the definition as given by William Barry and William Connolly is taken for the most parts of this paper. These two scholars in defining Spiritual direction said: "We define Christian Spiritual direction, then, as help given by one Christian to another which enables that person to pay attention to God's personal communication to him or her, to respond to this personally communicating God, to grow in intimacy with this God, and to live out the consequences of the relationship. The focus of this type of spiritual direction is on experience, not ideas, and specifically on religious experience, i.e., any experience of the mysterious Other whom we call God" (Barry, Connolly, 1986, p. 8). Spiritual Direction is not limited to any particular generation. The two visible persons in spiritual direction are the helper and the Christian in need of help. While the former is known as the Spiritual director, the later is known as the Spiritual directee. This paper therefore discusses Spiritual direction in a generation described as Digital Age. Digital Age may be simply defined as the age of technological advancement, where the use of digital technology is increasingly replacing the use of natural means most, especially with regard to information and communication. It includes the use of Computers, machines, mobile phones, Facebook, email, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram: Where much information is now widely available. Spiritual Direction in a Digital Age means carrying out the ministry of Spiritual direction in a world that is most disposed to use digital technology in their communication and handling of information.

## **3. The Nature of Christian Spiritual Direction**

Spiritual direction is one of the helping ministries in the class of psychological counselling, pastoral counselling and Catholic sacramental confession. It has both elements of similarities and dissimilarities with these others of the same class. These elements of dissimilarities indicate the uniqueness of spiritual direction, arising from its meaning, purpose, and goal. The meaning of spiritual direction is as given earlier. The focus is religious experience, and the goal is

Christian perfection. Those involved in Spiritual direction are God, the Holy Spirit who is the principal Spiritual Director, the human helper, who is the Spiritual director, and the help-seeker for deepening his/her relationship with God, known as the directee. For this, Spiritual direction is defined by Charles Chukwunedum Anene (2022) “as a process, which comprises a three-part encounter between our Lord Jesus Christ, the Directee, and the Spiritual director under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, for the purpose that the Directee may grow in personal relationship with God” (p. 81). The point of similarity between spiritual direction and other helping ministries like psychological counselling or pastoral counselling is the matter of skills. Spiritual direction uses all the listening and counselling skills associated with both pastoral and psychological counselling, but for a different end that is unique to it. Listening is key to Spiritual direction on the part of the Spiritual director. It is his/her major task to listen, dispose, and encourage the directee to speak more while he/she listens more. For this listening, disposing, and encouraging the directee, the director needs the skills for listening similar to those of other helping ministries and professions, yet for an end different from these other ministries. Jordan Aumann, in his definition that tells the nature of Spiritual direction and as well brings out its end clearly more than any other author, said:

Spiritual direction is the art of leading souls progressively from the beginning of the spiritual life to the height of Christian perfection. It is an art in the sense that spiritual direction is a practical science that under the guidance of supernatural prudence, applies to a particular case the principles of the theology of Christian perfection. It is orientated to the perfection of the Christian life, but this direction must be given progressively, that is, according to the strength and need of the soul at a given time. The direction should begin as soon as the soul has definitely resolved to travel along the road to Christian perfection and should continue through all the phases of that journey.

Although it is true that individuals have attained sanctity without a spiritual director-which proves that spiritual direction is not absolutely necessary-normally those who have reached perfection have had the counsel and advise of a spiritual director. In the ordinary providence of God, spiritual direction of some kind is morally necessary for the attainment of Christian perfection (Aumann, 2006, p.380).

So unlike pastoral and psychological counselling that has the end of problem solving and is also limited to moments of problem solving, Spiritual direction has the end of Christian perfection, and since the struggle for Christian perfection is all life-long, Spiritual Direction is for all life-long. It is given progressively according to the strength of individuals. Speaking on the nature of Spiritual Direction, while William Barry and William Connolly by their definition put stress on helping to pay attention, Elizabeth Ngozi Okpalaenwe (2019), by her definition, said, “Spiritual direction is the practice of being with

people, as they attempt to deepen their relationship with the divine” (p.17). Her stress is on “being with People,” which signifies full presence with a person to help. For a presence to be full, it means there is nothing on the side of the director (Interior and exterior) and between the two (director and the directee) capable of preventing the presence. It is only such a form of presence that enables a director to go into another person's life to give help. The Director being only a facilitator of relationship with God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, means that spiritual direction is not about him/her but about the directee and God. Therefore, he/she neither seeks to dominate nor exercise authority in a manner that demands obedience. He/she rather guides the directee to pay attention to the Holy Spirit. While he/she suggests and clarifies for the directee, guides the directee to see the direction the Holy Spirit is leading, he/she leaves the directee to make decisions. Okpalaenwe(2019), said: “The help which the spiritual directors offer is to facilitate the whole process by encouraging, supporting and challenging the directees in their journey of faith. In another way of putting this, spiritual directors look for ways to help the directee recognize the movement of the Holy Spirit in their life, and channel that movement with a view to bringing about a deeper orientation to the Father” (p.20). Since the relationship with God takes place in the soul, in the interior and in the privacy of an individual, and a matter that is sacred that an individual cherishes to remain confidential, care has to be taken to ensure that this privacy is protected without exposing a directee's privacy or secrecy by divulging information about what happens therein. On this matter of confidentiality, Jordan Aumann (2006) said:

The Spiritual director is obligated to observe absolute secrecy in regard to the confidences he has received from the person he directs, not only because many of these things are in some way connected with the internal forum, but also because the office of spiritual director obligates him to natural secrecy. The obligation to secrecy is especially important when it is a question of advanced souls who have experienced certain extraordinary phenomena and supernatural charisms. Although a director who comes into contact with such phenomena may have a strong inclination to discuss these things, he should remember that, as a rule, the narration of such things does nothing more than arouse morbid curiosity in others and dispose the director himself to feelings of pride and self-complacency (p.391).

It is in this direction that Spiritual direction shares similarities with Sacramental confession. In the past, Sacramental confession, spiritual direction and counselling existed as three in one sacramental confession, where spiritual direction accompanies confessional examination between the priest and the penitent. This was so until the Middle Ages when the two (Sacramental confession and Spiritual direction) gradually began existing independently (Kidder, 2010). When they existed together, it meant they were all together in the sacrament of penance and a ministry exercised by the priest, who serves as

Christ's representative or acts in persona Christi in the cure of souls. As ministry of the internal forum as such, where issues are sacred, all was under confessional seal. Though both have separated, where one remains sacramental and the other is non-sacramental, the fact of the two being of the internal forum, sacred, and the agents being Christ's representative (even if not a priest) still remains. The connection between the two where spiritual direction could prepare one for sacramental confession still remains. It is only the exercises of the two that are done separately today. Therefore, the confessional seal still binds the two (Sacramental confession and Spiritual direction) for it is the same confidentiality required, though with different goals (one is for forgiveness of sin and other is for deepening relationship with God). The Catechism of the Catholic Church speaking about sacramental seal teaches:

Given the delicacy and greatness of this ministry and the respect due to persons, the Church declares that every priest who hears confessions is bound under very severe penalties to keep absolute secrecy regarding the sins that his penitents have confessed to him. He can make no use of knowledge that confession gives him about penitents' lives. This secret, which admits of no exceptions, is called the 'sacramental seal,' because what the penitent has made known to the priest remains 'sealed' by the sacrament (*The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1994, CCC.1467).

Due to this Sacramental seal that binds Spiritual direction though a non-sacramental ministry, when by necessity for the good of the directee, information has to be divulged, it must be with the permission of the directee. The Code of Canon Law extends sacramental seal to the interpreter at Confessional and all others who in anyway come to knowledge of sins from a confession (*Code of Canon Law*, 1983, CIC 983#2). Applying this to Spiritual direction means that every person who is involved in spiritual direction process even as an assistant in any way, anyone who is aware of the knowledge of what is discussed at Spiritual direction session by whatever means is bound by sacramental seal.

#### **4. The Digital Age and its Nature**

Qualifying an Age as Digital signifies the extent to which the Age is digital. Digitalization is affecting virtually every sector of life in this Age. Explaining the digital Age with statistics, Gerald Musa (2019) said: "A recent article indicates that there are over 1.79 billion people active users of Facebook (the most widely used Social Media, 600 million use the Instagram and 317 million people are on twitter (Gray, 2017. Apparently, Social Media enjoys popularity among young people. This explains why Marc Pensky used the term "Digital Natives" (for people born after the 1980s, 1990s, and onwards, in the digital age of computer) and "Digital Immigrants" (for people who were born much earlier)" (p.110). The Age is one in which everything is going digital, and everyone, both young and elderly, has to learn to go digital in order to fit in. In addition to Musa's assertion that social Media enjoys popularity among the

youth, Inaku Egere, giving the motivating reasons statistically, said: “The survey indicates that it is useful for sharing knowledge with other people (96%), looking for entertainment (91%), building relationships (86%), and searching for information on development (84%). In addition, youth used the media for religious activities, too, such as downloading religious music (82.6%), looking for information about their own Faith (78.5%), seeking spiritual guidance (65.1%) and 61.6% making prayer requests” (Egere, 2014, p. 38). What these mean is that digital means of communication are becoming a reference point for virtually everything including spiritual matters. This does not apply to the young people alone, the older people too are affected. Egere, sharing his experience, said: “I was talking with a widow who had lost her only child a few years ago, and she shared with me how cyberspace has created a new world of possibilities for her. According to her, she is now connected with the divine and many more old friends whom she had lost contact with many years ago. With the cyber, one is able to be linked to or hook up to many sites that offer even spiritual counselling for various reasons” (Egere, 2014, p. 42). Cyberspace is creating a world that people are finding as home in. The Church is not unaware of this fact. She is seeking ways of getting involved in the use of digital technology at various levels of her life. The Pontifical Council for Social Communication on the “Church and the Internet” said:

A growing number of parishes, dioceses, religious congregations, and church-related institutions, programmes, and organization of all kinds now make effective use of the Internet for these and other purposes, Creative projects under Church sponsorship exist in some places on the national and regional levels. The Holy See has been active in this area for several years and is continuing to expand and develop its Internet presence. Church-related groups that have not yet taken steps to enter cyberspace are encouraged to look into the possibility of doing so at an early date. We strongly recommend the exchange of ideas and information about the Internet among those with experience in the field and those who are newcomers ([http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/pccs/documents/rc\\_pc\\_pccs\\_doc\\_20020228\\_church-internet\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/pccs/documents/rc_pc_pccs_doc_20020228_church-internet_en.html)(accessed July 2013).

At this juncture, it is good to discuss the nature of the operation of digital technology. The Digital technology machines and means operate with human assistance other than the two persons directly communicating. There is the “gate-keeper” in social media whose function is editing and filtering what is communicated. This extends to phone calls between two people. Also, with the ICT Gadgets, there is the main server where information that has been passed can still be retrieved. This happened in the recently conducted Nigerian presidential, Gubernatorial, and Senate elections where information from the servers are serving as evidence in the lawsuit. Besides all these, Digital technology is owned and controlled by human beings.

There are lots of advantages of digital technologies such that with it, it can be said that the world has advanced positively. One of such is the fact that it has made much information available, accessible, easy and fast. Information is now available to a larger number of people at the same time, irrespective of distance and location, accessible without any hitch of bureaucracy, easy, and fast to communicate within a second.

Consequently, the Digital Age through her technology has made the whole world a “Global Village,” where contacts and meetings are possible in a room by people in different countries, irrespective of distance. This in effect has reduced the cost of transportation and the hazards of travelling. What all these means is that issues of life such as social, economic, political, religious/spiritual, emotional/Psychological, health, and educational etc can all be handled with ease. It has enabled needs whether emergency or not to be easily addressed. All these advantages make the internet and Digital technology attractive for usage.

However, as advantageous as Digital technology and Age, they have the great tendency of reducing human and physical contact. It has started in many families, and communities etc. Though there have been efforts to relate digitally, doing virtually every human thing, the fact remains that there has been no perfect replacement for human and physical contact and their values.

While Digital technology strives to remove humans from their natural habitat and from relationships of natural family members, it is beginning to introduce strangers to each other, who do not have in-depth knowledge of each other. The relationships and interactions it creates are often the ones with the greatest opportunity to hide information from each other. The tendency towards incomplete information is possible, either intended or not. This is due to the fact that communication is done not just by verbal means but with the whole person serving as a means. Where contact with the whole person is not possible, only partial communication takes place. This fact is well attested to by Pope Benedict XVI in his Message on the 45<sup>th</sup> World Day of Communications. He said:

In the digital world, transmitting information increasingly means making it known within a social network where knowledge is shared in the context of personal exchanges. The clear distinction between the producer and consumer of information is relativized and communication appears only as an exchange of data, but also as a form of sharing. This dynamic has contributed to a new appreciation of communication itself, which is seen first of all as dialogue, exchange, solidarity and the creation of positive relations. On the other hand, this is contrasted with the limits typical of digital communication: the one-sidedness of the interaction, the tendency to communicate only some parts of one's interior world, the risk of constructing a false image of oneself, which can become a form of self-indulgence (Benedict XVI, 5 June, 2011, p.1).

Another fact of Digital technology and Age is that nothing is private or secretive once it has entered the Digital space. It is immediately made accessible to a third party both in the present and in the future generations to come. It is made available more to the owners and managers of a particular digital platform. To save one's secrets or privacy, the best is not to allow them on any digital platform. This does not mean effort cannot be made to secure information as many have been doing. But the fact still remains that knowledge on how to secure information, is not readily available and accessible to many. Even for those who are versed in the knowledge, there are still possibilities of hacking into their information.

### **5. Practicing the Ministry of Spiritual Direction in a Digital Age**

The Digital technology has no doubt been of tremendous use in virtually all sectors of life, including Spiritual life in human society. In spiritual life, the fact is attested to by lots of spiritual materials available online. Like every other conferences lots of spiritual conferences, seminars, and other programmes are taking place online. In fact, the internet has been a reference point for spirituality and for other areas of life. More than being a reference point, digital technology is attractive for education including spiritual education, and formation. The attractiveness of digital technology, according to Egere, is largely due to the fact that “with Web 2.0, the digital technology also offers audio-visual materials such as videos and still Pictures, as well as text materials for those who prefer written communication. Such multiple capacities provide a platform that satisfies the life choices and situations of the users” (Egere, 2014, p.41). Furthermore, there is the possibility of interaction irrespective of distance and location. Since the internet has been one of the most attractive means of various kinds of education both good and bad, the failure of the Church to get involved in her spiritual ministry may only leave her members more attracted to spiritual education and formation from the wrong people who are involved in the use of digital technology. For this, Egere proposes a Cyber-Church, giving various models such as Computer-Mediated Communication model (CMC), Electronic Mailing Model, Electronic Bulletin Board Model, Web Based Model and Social Media Model. Speaking on the use of CMC with regard to youth ministry, Egere (2014) said:

Through Cyber-Church, messages containing catechesis, homilies, and sermons, religious instructions on both doctrinal and dogmatic issues are composed and saved to files that are designed to permit multi-user access. Spiritual directors and other pastoral workers in the parish can reach the young people through mediated retreats, spiritual exercises and counselling. For instance, the parish can create special interest groups (SIG) among the youths in order to share individual faith encounter with God among members of the group. This sort of conferencing could be made use of for ongoing discussion, sharing and interaction that does not require the physical presence of the participants in one place. In fact, a youth who is a member of a

particular group may be residing in Canada while the other in Abuja (p.47).

Egere's advocacy for Cyber-Church shows greatly what Digital technology can be used for including spiritual issues and the fact that information can be available only for participants and not those who do not belong as participants. It equally shows the limitation to what it can be used for which includes what does not demand physical presence of the participants. However, the issue of absolute security is not clearly guaranteed. There are still those outside the participants that can have access to information (Egere, 2014). He equally limited Spiritual director's usage of this means to mediated retreats, spiritual exercises and counselling. When a thing is mediated, it means there is a third party. But the questions that arise, given the nature of spiritual direction, can Digital technology be used for effective Spiritual direction properly? Spiritual direction as discussed in this paper requires full presence of the Director without any hindrance both interiorly and exteriorly and also without hindrance between the director and the directee. It is this that enables the director to go into the world of the directee to give the help. But is this possible digitally? Also the fact that communication is made with the use of the whole persons involved is another need that cannot be guaranteed digitally. The fact of lack of full communication, hiding of certain facts in digital technology that may not be easily noticed makes communication partial. Furthermore and most importantly the fact of confidentiality, secrecy have not been clearly established as secured. Following the teaching of the Church on Confessional Seal, Emmanuel C. Anagwo speaking on E-Confession said:

By its nature, it requires person to person contact. Indeed, the sacrament of reconciliation is a very delicate one that needs to be handled with great care. Here, the penitent pours out his/her entire self to God without any reservations and the priest listens empathically and reprimands as well as encourages the penitent to persevere. This priest does that with a smile of the loving father and warm touch during absolution. Nothing is too sinful or secretive to mention in the course of confession and the priest is bound by the seal of confession to ensure everything that happens at the confessional remains there. This is not possible with e-Confession. Admittedly, every phone call has a third party and could be recorded and saved. Between the caller (sender) and the receiver (recipient), there is what is called a 'Gate-keeper'. The gate-keeper is responsible for editing and filtering of the call or message before passing it to the receiver.

Accordingly, ICT Gadgets have main servers from where any information that has passed through them can be retrieved. The machine is not bound by any oath or seal to choose whom to access it or not. Once anyone has access to know what to do or better still, the right button to press, then very sensitive information can be hacked, and the

seal of confession breached. When such situation occurs, the electronic device is not blamed because it is not bound by any seal of secrecy.....Hence, e-confession should be totally discouraged (Anagwo, 2023, p. 69).

All that Anagwo said about sacramental confession applies to Spiritual direction for the fact of similarities and being of the same root and of internal forum. Like Sacramental confession, Spiritual direction is a person-to-person. The directee too pours out his/her entire self even more than it is done during sacramental confession. There is no limitation to what he/she is to pour out during spiritual direction. The director listens empathically, attentively, and wholly, encouraging the directee to speak. Nothing is so secretive or sinful as to be mentioned, and like sacramental confession, the director is bound by confessional secrecy. All these are not possible in what, in our context, can be described as e-Spiritual direction. With digital technology, information in Spiritual direction, as it applies to e-confession, will be accessible to any that knows what to do to access it. There is no provision in ICT gadgets to keep secret what should be kept as such to a third party. These gadgets are not bound by an oath of secrecy.

In favour of physical contact, which is very important in Spiritual direction, Jordan Aumann even discouraged spiritual direction by correspondence. He said:

It may happen in exceptional cases that it is the only way in which a person can receive spiritual direction, and even apart for these cases there are examples of direction by mail in the lives of the saints (for example, St. Francis de Sales and St. Paul of the Cross).

But the disadvantages far outnumber the advantages of spiritual direction by letter. It is morally impossible for the director to acquire an intimate knowledge of the person directed unless there is oral communication between them. It is very difficult to express and describe one's interior life in writing; it is equally difficult to understand another person from a written account.....

In practice, the spiritual director should not be willing to accept the direction of a soul through correspondence unless he already knows the individual and the person has no other recourse. In the actual writing of letter, the director should never write a single line that would in any way constitute a violation of the seal of confession (Aumann, 2006, p. 397).

For Jordan Aumann, apart from the fact that correspondence does not help the acquisition of necessary intimate knowledge of the directee, it has the ability to compromise the seal of confession. He only allows spiritual direction by correspondence in exceptional cases, but with caution.

Following Jordan Aumann, there can really be exceptional cases when Spiritual direction can be requested and may demand being handled digitally. This includes the need for spiritual direction where distance and location constitute an obstacle. Also, when there is no spiritual director that one finds reliable and trustworthy that is available nearby. In addition, there can be the problem of a few or no people who are ready and competent to be spiritual directors as is often experienced in some parts of Nigeria. Another reason may be a time of epidemic, as experienced in the era of COVID-19, where movements and contacts were highly discouraged. Similar to Aumann on Spiritual direction by correspondence, spiritual direction through digital technology is not encouraged. However, digital technology can be used to assist in Spiritual direction to some extent but with caution.

## **6. Recommendation for Spiritual direction in a Digital Age**

Digital Age is a reality, and the demand for Spiritual direction by digital means is equally a need to be met in the lives of digital natives and immigrants who have found digital world as their home. Therefore, the following recommendations are made to meet the need for spiritual direction in the digital age.

Digital age comes along with the gradual loss of human contact. This loss should not be encouraged for the good it serves to have a healthy and whole person, both spiritual and temporal. Therefore, human contact should still be preserved by all means. Rather than quickly jump to the use of digital technology for spiritual direction when people seek it through the use of digital technology, people should be helped to find the location of a spiritual director nearby to them, to have spiritual direction through physical contact. Finding location of spiritual director nearby can be done with the assistance of digital technology.

Since Spiritual direction is done through physical contact, there is a need to train more people in spiritual direction. It is not a ministry reserved for the ordained. Any Christian who is prepared and as well has the training can give it. Therefore, people should be enlightened and encouraged on the fact that they can do it if they are disposed and trained. This will enable people in need of it to always find people around them that can attend to them on matters of spiritual direction.

Also, as the digital community constantly seeks spiritual direction through digital means, the Church should keep searching for the possibility of having digital means where all those involved in the process who have access to information in spiritual direction will be bound by the confessional seal. Also, the Church should keep searching for technological means to keep information secret from third parties. Until these are achieved, Spiritual direction via digital technology should be limited to issues that are not secretive, or harmful to the directee if heard by a third party. It should be limited to the exchange of pleasantries, keeping contacts and booking of appointments.

With the knowledge of the spiritual life of a directee(s) and their spiritual needs, spiritual reflections or talks that do not expose the directee can be given online. In this case, it is given as a spiritual talk for everybody, inspired by the spiritual life and spiritual needs of directees. In this way, it serves both the general public and particular directees. Also, the directees themselves, for the purpose of online spiritual guidance, knowing their spiritual lives and needs, can suggest topics of their spiritual interests for the director to deliver online talks on them that would help them spiritually.

Also, spiritual interactive sessions between a spiritual director and directees can take place online. This is meant for clarifications on spiritual matters which do not in anyway reveal confidential information or the interior life of a directee. It is more or less a teaching session on spiritual matters. It is good that all online spiritual talks and possible online interactions should be audio-visual, as this enables some levels of physical contact that may be helpful.

In addition, materials that can be helpful to spiritual lives of directees such as the spiritual writings of saints and great teachers on spiritual matters and biblical references, can be made available online for easy accessibility to Spiritual directees. For the spiritual guidance of the people at various levels, the Church or spiritual directors should engage in the giving of spiritual reflections, conferences, and seminars very much via the internet in ways that respect confidentiality and do not in any way compromise the Confessional seal.

So, while all the above can take place online, issues of interior life, confidential and secretive nature, such as discernment of the Spirit, helping to recognise the movement of the Spirit in the lives of directees, which demands the physical full presence of both the director and the directee, are to be limited to moments of personal contact between the directee and the spiritual director, at a scheduled appointment.

## **7. Conclusion**

The world has gone digital and the Church and her spiritual ministry must strive to meet the world where it is. While the Church will keep making efforts in this direction, she must guard against compromising what must be maintained for the spiritual good of the people. This paper has tried to explore Spiritual direction within the context of the digital world. Spiritual direction should take place in the digital world without compromising its nature and goal, but at the same time, engage in use of digital technology spiritually as much as possible to meet the people's spiritual needs.

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