

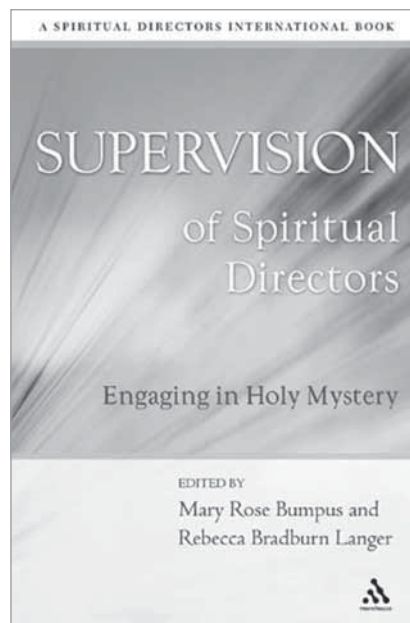


**Supervision of Spiritual Directors:
Engaging in Holy Mystery**
edited by Mary Rose Bumpus and Rebecca
Bradburn Langer

Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2005.
208 pages, US\$ 22.95
Reviewed by Cissy McLane

This new Spiritual Directors International Book offers a valuable contribution to a relatively new educational field: the training of supervisors. *Supervision of Spiritual Directors: Engaging in Holy Mystery* is a collection of essays edited by two long-time practitioners in the field, Mary Rose Bumpus and Rebecca Bradburn Langer. They, along with eight additional contributors, hope their writings about formal supervision will expand and encourage further conversation about this arena of formation and training. The essays begin by defining supervision and shift to pertinent subjects such as gender and sexuality; parameters of supervision; supervision of beginning directors; ethical quagmires; “co-cultures” in supervision; working with diverse ethnicities; the differently-abled; and more. These topics permeate our teaching methods.

One crucial subject is the meaning of supervision itself. My first experience as a supervisor many years ago was difficult. At the end of the academic year I thanked the program director for trusting me to do the work. His response was simply, “Cissy, if you are going to be a good supervisor you need to learn how to trust yourself.” Supervision is the process in which spiritual directors are helped by their supervisors to facilitate growth of a relationship between God and another individual. While good skills help this process, the writers tell us that we most often gain self-confidence as a supervisor and spiritual director by recognizing the particular gifts God gives each of us for our work. The reminder is to allow our gifts to unfold in their own time. It is my experience that the luxury of time is difficult in supervisory settings that span a few academic quarters, with the added pressure of



grading vulnerable learning. A contemplative approach described by James Neafsey can help with this difficulty.

The second part of this book grounds supervision in incarnational reality. Jesus becoming human makes it possible for every aspect of our own selves to be holy. Supervision acknowledges this by using the director’s emotions, sexual desires, other bodily sensations, and thoughts to discern God’s presence or absence. My heart further resonated with the final section of this book that invites us to see God in all things. Supervision can enlighten the process by helping us encounter God beyond the confines of silence in prayer, privacy in “me and God” relationships, and monastic settings. Seeing beyond limits widens our worldview and helps the spiritual director discover God within cultural diversity and in other settings. A chapter regarding spiritual direction with disabled persons is particularly helpful.

These essays left me wanting more. I wondered, for instance, what qualities supervisors look for in a potentially good spiritual director. The answer seemed implied in the excellent writing throughout this book. An explicit list of core competencies, however, would have been helpful.

The writing is, for the most part, well done. The writers are primarily from spiritual direction training and formation programs in California, USA. An international flavor in future books of this type might add a broader perspective. *Supervision of Spiritual Directors: Engaging in Holy Mystery* makes a fine contribution to the training of spiritual directors. I highly recommend it as an excellent resource for new and experienced supervisors and spiritual directors. ■

Cissy McLane has been a spiritual director and retreat presenter for twenty-two years and has supervised spiritual directors in a variety of training programs. She is co-founder of the Ignatian Spirituality Center in Seattle, Washington, USA. She is a wife, mother, and grandmother. She can be reached at cissymclane@comcast.net.