

## **SDC 600: Advanced Prayer and Complex Situations in Spiritual Direction**

### **Verbatim Instructions and Sample Verbatim**

#### **Overview**

A verbatim is a confidential, written account of what transpired during a spiritual direction session. It is written after a session, and seeks to capture the most salient parts of the session.

The purposes of a verbatim are varied, and its benefits are manifold:

1. It allows a spiritual director to remember and assess what took place during a spiritual direction session. This prayerful assessment allows the director to discern more clearly what is taking place in the life of the directee, especially if the spiritual director was not able to ponder sufficiently all that happened during the session itself.
2. It also permits spiritual directors to know themselves better and understand their own reaction to the varying circumstances of their own lives and that of their directees, and how well they are connecting with the directees.
3. It becomes an important tool for spiritual direction supervision

#### **Verbatim Parts**

1. **General information:** Identify:
  - a. your (spiritual director's) name;
  - b. pseudonym for the directee
  - c. Date, time, and approximate length of session;
  - d. How long and how frequently you have been seeing this directee;

*For example:*

*Director: John Director    Directee: Joe Directee (pseudonym)*

*Date: February 28, 2017, 5-6pm. Meet approximately every 6 weeks, for 3 years.*

2. **Directee background information:** Write a short paragraph providing the necessary context of the directee (**but be sure that you do not include any information that might personally identify the directee**).

*For example: Joe is a middle aged businessman who has been married for 30 years, has 4 children, and is applying for a new position in the company which would imply a move and other major changes for the family. Overall, he has lived a solid spiritual life for the last 20 years and is stable.*

3. **Summary of the Critical Moments in the Conversation.** In this section, transliterate the most important part(s) of the session. Pay particular attention to capturing the parts of the session where there is a particularly strong emotion, positive or negative, in the directee. You will probably not be able to remember a conversation word for word, but try to restate what you remember, as best you can. What you remember is significant regardless of whether it

is literally what was said or done. The format is in dialogue style, like you would see in movie or play script. The goal of this section is not to analyze what was said and the causes of the directees words or actions, but simply to observe and capture them as well as you can. This should be 2-4 pages (no less than 2, and no more than 4)

*Sample part of a verbatim:*

*Conversation between (D)irector and (J)oe*

*J: Since we last spoke, I've had a lot challenges at work and at home, but I feel that I've been level-headed and keeping to my basic commitments to God, family, and work.*

*D: Sounds like you've been pretty busy. What sort of things have been going on?*

*J: Well, remember that talk I had with my supervisor? The company has offered me a promotion but it means picking up and moving. The pay would be great for the family, but I don't know what a move would mean to Sally and the kids. On top of that, it's been a busy time with graduation, getting our oldest ready for college...*

*D: What are your thoughts about the job?*

*J: Well, I think the money could certainly come in handy. But I asked for some time to think about it and talk it over with the family. Sally has always been pretty supportive, and has a real spirit of adventure. But we've been trying to discern what that would mean to the kids, our relationships with our friends and supports here in town.*

*D: Where do you think God is in all of this?*

*J: That's the interesting part. I'd normally be pretty worked up about a situation like this, either not being able to decide or just barreling right into something that looks good to me, and forcing my wife and kids to deal with it.*

*D: That's not the case now?*

*J: That's what I feel level-headed about now; I'm not anxious. I think God's place in my life has given me a sort of an indifference to the money... I'd like it, but I really value the peace and stability we've had in the family over the last 2 years since our marriage renewal retreat, and since Sally and I have begun to take our spiritual life more seriously.*

*D: Wow, do you realize what you just said? Sounds like God has really been blessing you over these last months and years.*

*J: Yea, I guess it's good to see some "progress", isn't it?*

- 4. Attentiveness to Your Interior Movements.** What thoughts and reactions were taking place within you at the various moments of the conversation? Note those alongside the dialogue, on the left column. Again, the goal of this step is not to analyze what is taking place, but to capture authentically what did take place interiorly.

*Some helpful questions: What was on your mind before this session? Were you aware of any strong distractions: anxiety, excitement...? Was there anything that was unrelated to the experience that may have affected your behavior during this experience? What motivated your responses in this particular situation? Is there anything about the personal situation of the directee that influenced how you processed what was said (language, economic, racial, political or ethnic differences, age, education, etc.)?*

*See example in sample verbatim*

## **5. Assessment**

In this section,

- a. Reflect briefly on the directee's situation and consider: Where does it seem that God is acting through "consolation" or the evil one through "desolation"? What is the Lord asking specifically of this person?
- b. Reflect upon your stance during the session and what I was trying to do: Was the focus of the session really spiritual direction (listening for God's will specifically for this person), or pastoral counseling, coaching for problem-solving?
- c. Reflect upon my own inner movements during the session: Is there anything that needs greater purification or detachment so that you can be a freer instrument of God in the directee's life?

## Sample Verbatim

### General Information

Director: John Director    Directee: Joe Directee (pseudonym)

Date: February 28, 2017, 5-6pm. Meet approximately every 6 weeks, for 3 years.

### Background

Joe is a middle aged businessman who has been married for 30 years, has 4 children, and is applying for a new position in the company which would imply a move and other major changes for the family. Overall, he has lived a solid spiritual life for the last 20 years and is stable.

### Conversation

<i>Reactions</i>	<i>Critical Moments in the Conversation</i>
Struggling to concentrate	<p>J1: Since we last spoke, I've had a lot challenges at work and at home, but I feel that I've been level-headed and keeping to my basic commitments to God, family, and work.</p> <p>D1: Sounds like you've been pretty busy. What sort of things have been going on?</p>
Frustration	<p>J2: Well, remember that talk I had with my supervisor? The company has offered me a promotion but it means picking up and moving. The pay would be great for the family, but I don't know what a move would mean to Sally and the kids. On top of that, it's been a busy time with graduation, getting our oldest ready for college...</p> <p>D2: What are your thoughts about the job?</p>
Happy	<p>J3: Well, I think the money could certainly come in handy. But I asked for some time to think about it and talk it over with the family. Sally has always been pretty supportive, and has a real spirit of adventure. But we've been trying to discern what that would mean to the kids, our relationships with our friends and supports here in town.</p> <p>D3: Where do you think God is in all of this?</p> <p>J4: That's the interesting part. I'd normally be pretty worked up about a situation like this, either not being able to decide or just barrelling right into something that looks good to me, and forcing my wife and kids to deal with it.</p>

<i>Reactions</i>	<i>Critical Moments in the Conversation</i>
Gratitude, admiration	<p>D4: That's not the case now?</p> <p>J5: That's what I feel level-headed about now; I'm not anxious. I think God's place in my life has given a me sort of an indifference to the money... I'd like it, but I really value the peace and stability we've had in the family over the last 2 years since our marriage renewal retreat, and since Sally and I have begun to take our spiritual life more seriously.</p> <p>D5: Wow, do you realize what you just said? Sounds like God has really been blessing you over these last months and years.</p> <p>J6: Yea, I guess it's good to see some "progress", isn't it?</p> <p>[verbatim should continue 2-4 pages]</p>

### Assessment

- a. Of the directee:
  - It seems that directee has made some progress over the months. In a situation where he would normally be anxious, indecisive, or impulsive, he has learned to pause, consider other's perspective. I see a real growth in Christian virtue. It is not clear what he should do, but he is going about the decision in a right way.
- b. Of my own reactions
  - I was pretty distracted at the beginning. There was some lingering frustration and even anger from the previous activity (tough spiritual direction session having to face deep marital issues). It took me some effort to be present with my mind, and especially my emotions.
  - My strongest reaction was J2... When he began to recount his situation, it sounded like a broken record. I noticed the frustration right away and quickly counteracted it by considering his good will and demeanor.
  - I really did rejoice and feel uplifted by his awareness of spiritual growth and sense of detachment from self. Grace has a way of transforming us!
- c. Points of purification
  - Find a better way of transitioning interiorly to spiritual direction, so I can be really "present". Perhaps a visit to the Blessed Sacrament and a short prayer.

In addition to documenting key moments of the spiritual direction session, at the end of your verbatim include a thoughtful response to the following reflection questions:

[Include responses to the reflection questions presented on the Verbatim template below]