



**Catholic Apostolate Center**

Reviving Faith • Rekindling Charity • Forming Apostles

**THE ART OF**

# *Mentorship*

A Catholic Apostolate Center Guide to  
Mentorship For Young Adults

The Art of Mentorship:  
A Catholic Apostolate Center Guide to  
Mentorship for Young Adults

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*May the Charity of Christ Urge Us On!*

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# Introduction

Young adulthood is a time filled with many opportunities. It is a time of exploration often filled with more energy, hope, and a zest for life compared to other seasons of life. In his post-synodal apostolic exhortation, *Christus Vivit*, Pope Francis reflects on this reality. Here, he recalls his answer when a friend asked what the pope sees when he looks at a young person:

*“I see someone who is searching for his or her own path, who wants to fly on their two feet, who faces the world and looks at the horizon with eyes full of the future, full of hope as well as illusions. A young person stands on two feet as adults do, but unlike adults, whose feet are parallel, he always has one foot forward, ready to set out, to spring ahead. Always racing onward. To talk about young people is to talk about promise and to talk about joy. Young people have so much strength; they are able to look ahead with hope. A young person is a promise of life that implies a certain degree of tenacity. He is foolish enough to delude himself, and resilient enough to recover from that delusion.”*

*(Christus Vivit, no. 139)*

At the same time, being a young adult comes with particular challenges. Young adulthood is filled with changing relationships, locations, dreams, beliefs, and identities such as starting a career, learning a trade, enrolling in school, falling in and out of love, making and losing friends, experiencing transitions, dealing with financial stress, enduring prejudice from those who do not understand our identities, thinking about our beliefs, or figuring out who we are. All of this can leave us feeling drained as we navigate each change and each new experience. It is a time of uncertainty; we hope for the day that our lives can feel more stable or look forward to leaving familiar surroundings and setting out for somewhere new. As young adults, we often feel restless, placing our hopes in what the future holds.

Also at the heart of young adulthood is the experience of contemplating many different questions all at once. *What should I do? What do I believe? Who should I love? Who am I? What shall I become?* Having these questions on our hearts and minds can leave us feeling overwhelmed and uncertain. We might feel isolated by the weight of all that needs to be answered, unsure of how to move forward, and anxious about where to seek support. As human beings, we are called to remember that we need relationships for our physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual

well-being. Just like in our lives of faith, in which we discover the need for other members of the Body of Christ, young adulthood is a privileged place for us to discover “. . . that no one is saved alone; we can only be saved together” (*Fratelli Tutti*, no. 32). Young adulthood might present us with feelings of insecurity or anxiety. However, we remember that we are not expected to face those feelings alone. Instead, young adulthood is a stage in which we should more readily seek out the wisdom and guidance of others—especially those more seasoned and experienced than us. Their steadying grasp and reassuring counsel comforts us and guides us. As Pope Francis reminds us: “Together, we can learn from one another, warm hearts, inspire minds with the light of the Gospel, and lend new strength to our hands.” (*Christus Vivit*, no. 199)

It is for this reason that accompaniment and mentorship are especially important topics for young adults to discover and understand. Accompaniment is “a broad term that refers to a relationship between two or more people who share mutuality and reciprocity in the spiritual life” (*The Art of Accompaniment*, no. 11). For young adults of faith, accompaniment provides support in living out our call to holiness through a relationship with another person, as “one who accompanies is a steadfast spiritual friend ready to support, encourage, and listen to the other in all circumstances” (*The Art of Accompaniment*, no. 11).

This is a guide for young adults of faith who would like to learn how relationships with mentors help us to cultivate our mental, emotional, and spiritual growth. At the same time, it also serves as a helpful guide for those engaged in mentoring, guiding, and accompanying young adults of faith at any level. This resource is an effort to break open the practical and concrete elements of being mentored and accompanied as a follow-up to the Center’s resource *The Art of Accompaniment: Theological, Spiritual, and Practical Elements of Building a More Relational Church*.

This guide includes practical wisdom, such as why mentorship might be helpful, what to look for in a mentor, how to initiate a mentorship, what healthy mentorship looks like, how to maintain a mentorship, what your role is in being mentored, how to handle challenging conversation with your mentor, and how to end a mentorship relationship. It includes questions for reflection on how mentorship and accompaniment have looked in your life, and how these past experiences can shape your future mentoring relationships. In addition to being a tool for reflection and discernment, this guide is also meant to be used as a point of departure for prayer and conversation in your own communities about how to establish a culture

of accompaniment and mentorship as a norm in Catholic young adulthood. Ultimately, this guide is meant to be a preparation for the practice of mentorship that aids in reflection and results in action.



# Part I: What is Mentorship?

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## Mentorship in Scripture

To learn about what mentorship is, let's look at an image from the Hebrew Scriptures: the interaction between Samuel and Eli when Samuel receives a direct call from God. This scripture comes from 1 Samuel 3:1-10.

*“During the time young Samuel was minister to the LORD under Eli, the word of the LORD was scarce and vision infrequent. One day Eli was asleep in his usual place. His eyes had lately grown so weak that he could not see. The lamp of God was not yet extinguished, and Samuel was sleeping in the temple of the LORD where the ark of God was. The LORD called to Samuel, who answered, “Here I am.” He ran to Eli and said, “Here I am. You called me.” “I did not call you,” Eli answered. “Go back to sleep.” So he went back to sleep.*

*Again, the LORD called Samuel, who rose and went to Eli. “Here I am,” he said. “You called me.” But he answered, “I did not call you, my son. Go back to sleep.” Samuel did not yet recognize the LORD, since the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. The LORD called Samuel again, for the third time. Getting up and going to Eli, he said, “Here I am. You called me.” Then Eli understood that the LORD was calling the youth. So he said to Samuel, “Go to sleep, and if you are called, reply, ‘Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.’” When Samuel went to sleep in his place, the LORD came and stood there, calling out as before: Samuel, Samuel! Samuel answered, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”*

In this passage, we read a story in which the guidance of an elder helps a younger person hear the voice of God and respond. Hearing a voice in the midst of his sleep, Samuel, a caretaker of the temple, does not realize that the speaker of the voice was God until after the guidance of Eli, an older prophet. In Samuel's actions in the story, we see the evidence of youth: eagerness, openness, and courage. Though Samuel at first does not know where the voice is coming from, or to whom it belongs, he nevertheless is eager to respond to it, getting up immediately to answer. We do not catch a glimpse of annoyance or frustration within Samuel's quest to answer the voice; instead, there is a newness and readiness in his response

each time he awakens. Finally, at the third calling of the voice of the Lord, Samuel remains open to Eli's guidance regarding how to respond. There might have been a temptation to become annoyed and unwilling to listen to Eli, but Samuel remains *teachable*, ready, and willing to be responsible to the voice each time it calls out.

In Eli's actions, we see some moments worthy of lingering reflection, too. We hear that Eli's eyes are weakened in his old age and receiving visions from the Lord has become more of an infrequent occurrence. Just like Samuel, Eli could have easily become irritated at the number of times the voice called or could have become frustrated at what seemed like pestering from Samuel. Instead, Eli models patience, willing to listen and believe Samuel's account of the voice. Eli also is becoming older, has worsening eyesight, and receives fewer visions from the Lord. It might have been easy for him to feel resentful of Samuel. Eli could have been tempted to be envious of Samuel's burgeoning call while his service to the Temple and the Lord was dwindling.

From this scriptural account, we start to form a picture of accompaniment and mentorship. Eli and Samuel take each other's current experience of God seriously. Samuel willingly and humbly accepts the guidance of Eli as he attempts to make sense of the Lord's call. At the same time, we see Eli offer Samuel selfless guidance based on wisdom and insight. Eli's mentorship and accompaniment of Samuel is not jealous or envious, grasping to maintain relevance or power in his former role as a prophet in the Temple. Rather, Eli demonstrates guidance that is patient and discerning of the ways of the Lord. Eli does not balk at the unconventional experience Samuel has of God's call. Eli trusts in the Lord, willing to be challenged and moved emotionally by Samuel's experience. Overall, this scriptural account helps us understand mentorship and accompaniment as mutual relationships of guidance and sharing insights that lead to growth and living out God's call.

Has this been your experience of relating to a mentor, more seasoned co-worker, coach, community member, family figure, or relative? Many of us have seen glimpses of this type of guidance. We have had positive relationships with people who have mentored or accompanied us in our education, hobbies, career, service, or faith. They have helped us to feel heard, believed in, and listened to. We may have experienced the steadfast guidance and support of a mentor, like a family friend or member of our community, over a long period of our lives. On the other hand, we may have been mentored in temporary ways through relationships with coaches, teachers, professors, or those who were in our lives for a shorter period of time. As young adults, we have moved and continue to move through places, stag

es, and experiences where we may have found a natural mentor through our education, hobbies, or interests.

For some of us, the scriptural example of Eli and Samuel is completely foreign. We might have felt cast aside, not taken seriously, overlooked, or misunderstood by former mentor figures. Former mentors may have been resistant to helping us step up in leadership roles or acquire more responsibility. We might not even be able to identify people that served as mentors for us, or perhaps never had the opportunity to seek out someone to guide us. Though we might have moved through different stages and experiences, we may not have connected with another person enough to consider them our mentor. Perhaps experiences like a parent's job being transferred or the experience of immigrating to a new country may have made it hard for us to find roots to establish a relationship with a mentor. Furthermore, we may find it hard to find someone with enough of a connection to our roots to understand our perspective and provide guidance.

No matter what your previous mentorship experience has been, it is possible to hope for an experience closer to the scriptural model of Eli and Samuel, and to hold it up as an ideal image of the possibilities of a relationship of guidance and authenticity. Though you might have had few opportunities to seek out a mentor in the past, it is still possible to seek out this type of relationship. It will require learning about what mentorship looks like, reflecting on your needs and hopes in finding a mentor, intentional action and communication, and a persistent attitude.

## Reflection Questions

1. What is your previous experience with mentorship?
2. What does the word mentor mean to you?

## Defining Mentorship: Cultural Reflections

In our culture today, we often hear the word mentor in the realms of professional ventures, learning a new trade, or being introduced to a new field or trade by someone more experienced. You might have been mentored as a student by a professor, or you may have friends who have started off as young professionals in their field through the guidance of a more seasoned professional in fields like medicine or teaching. You might know others who were mentored while starting

out in a family's business, or as a budding therapist or social worker. In all of these examples, one common element rises to the surface. Essentially, mentorship is a relationship engaged in by two people for the purpose of growing in skills or knowledge in a given field, topic, or endeavor.

Being mentored is similar to being coached or taught. Mentorship also involves the active role of the mentee, or the person being mentored. Rather than being taught something completely new with no experience or context of their own, mentees come to a mentoring relationship with their own life history, hopes, expectations, and desires. In other words, a mentee does not passively receive new knowledge as if they were a completely empty container waiting to be filled. Rather, mentees contribute their own personal context and integrate this with the new skills or knowledge that they acquire from a mentor.

Similarly, in mentorship, there is also less of a hierarchical sense to the relationship. Mentors are not necessarily the gatekeepers of experience or knowledge which make them superior to their mentee. Rather, the relationship is akin to one of two peers. Mentees and mentors share ideas, conversation, and thoughts with one another with the understanding that there is a mutual benefit to the relationship. For the mentee, a mentor can offer experience, seasoned knowledge, and wise perspective. For the mentor, a mentee can offer renewed energy and passion, a fresh outlook on a field or project in an ever-changing cultural and technological landscape, a chance to reflect on their experiences, an opportunity to challenge their assumptions, and a space to hand on their insights to others.

What defines mentorship are the qualities of mutuality, active participation by both mentee and mentor in keeping the relationship, and the sharing of insights and experience. Though mentorship is a phenomenon widely associated with business, education, or training, it can also be viewed through the lens of faith.

## Reflection Questions

1. Where have you seen mentorship in your experiences and life?
2. In your opinion and experience, what is the point of mentorship?

# Mentorship and the Church

In our Catholic tradition, the Church also speaks of the necessity of mentorship in the life of faith. During Pope Francis’s pontificate, many in the Church have heard the word *accompaniment*— a word closely related to mentorship. Pope Francis used the word accompaniment most famously in his 2013 apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, in which he paints a portrait of the “art of accompaniment:”

*In a culture paradoxically suffering from anonymity and at the same time obsessed with the details of other people’s lives, shamelessly given over to morbid curiosity, the Church must look more closely and sympathetically at others whenever necessary. In our world, ordained ministers and other pastoral workers can make present the fragrance of Christ’s closeness and his personal gaze. The Church will have to initiate everyone – priests, religious and laity – into this “art of accompaniment” which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other (cf. Ex 3:5). The pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze which also heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life.*

*(Evangelii Gaudium, no. 169)*

The “art of accompaniment” for Pope Francis is not some abstract musing divorced from real life. He begins this description by showing us why accompaniment is necessary. As Pope Francis sketches out in the quote above, accompaniment helps to bring balance and right intention to some of the experiences of relationships common to young people today.

As young adults, this period of our lives is one in which we directly wrestle with the questions, beliefs, and hopes about who we are and how we relate to those around us. We experience many moments of transition, such as the transition from formal education to the workforce, from our hometowns to a new city, from our childhood family to creating families of our own, or from others taking care of us to learning how to meet our own needs. We ask questions about who and what we love, sometimes seeking the quickest or most immediate answer. As digital natives, we have often come to know others by their social media profiles, posts, or statuses instead of coming to know a person in their fullness and recognizing their deep mystery. Our peers may have come to know us in this way as well. Put simply, the relationships that we hold as young adults are often affected by the

transient, questioning, uncertain, and digital landscape of our stage of life. Accompaniment has something to offer these experiences of relationships.

Accompaniment is an intentional relationship with another person that helps us grow in relationship with God. What is unique about accompaniment is that it builds on our humanity, our natural drive to be social, our attachment to others, and our desire to form relationships. At heart, accompaniment is about embracing these human qualities for a purpose. The words Pope Francis chooses to characterize accompaniment are not only words that are related to the experience of being a living organism—they are words that give shape to the experience of being human. We see the words *pace*, *reassuring*, *closeness*, *gaze*, *heals*, *liberates*, and *growth*. These words lie at the heart of our humanity. These words are action-oriented, needing a living giver and a living receiver to be true to their definitions. Accompaniment is relational; it cannot occur unless there is more than one person present.

From the words of Pope Francis, we also see another very human element present: art. Notice that he does not use “science” or “method.” Why is this significant? Computers, machines, and technologies can undertake science or employ method, but it takes a human being to create art. Machines and computers might be able to produce imitations or copies of art, or even function as tools for artists. However, true and original art involves the personal technique of the artists. This process involves steps that cannot always be pre-planned or mapped out. The artist begins the process with the vision of beauty in mind and works to bring it to life through a medium such as words, marble, paint, wood, or fabric. Throughout the spilling of paint, chiseling of stone, or weaving of thread, the artist might begin to uncover elements of the work they did not know could exist.

What emerges from the artist’s effort is something personally crafted, often inspired by emotions, events, or other people. Though the art is created by the artist, the art also impacts the artist. Even with the end vision of art in mind, the artist is shaped by the process of creating art itself, having to adjust strokes and patterns based on the shape their vision is taking. Described as an art, accompaniment requires a personal touch in a relationship—a relationship that not only shapes the person who is accompanied, but shapes the person who accompanies as well. Like the scriptural story of Samuel and Eli, Pope Francis’s use of the word “art” helps us continue to form a picture of accompaniment in our minds.

Accompaniment can be understood as being related to mentorship. Some might even say that the two words are interchangeable. So, what does mentorship have to do with accompaniment? Like accompaniment, mentorship involves an intentional relationship between two or more people. This relationship requires a personal touch and attention to the needs and experiences of the mentee. Mentorship is also a person-to-person endeavor. The mentee brings with them a willingness to learn, but also contributes to the relationship with their own experience and active participation. In addition, accompaniment and mentorship are not only related, but also manifestations of one another. Mentorship is a practical way of exercising accompaniment that often has a concrete or time-bound purpose or that executes a particular undertaking or project. Accompaniment has an element of mentorship to it but is also dedicated to intentionally cultivating the spiritual growth of the mentee. Therefore, as compared to mentorship, accompaniment focuses more on spiritual sharing.

This guide will use the term mentorship to explore this relationship, but will also make reference to accompaniment. In addition, like Pope Francis's use of mentor in *Christus Vivit*, this guide will use mentor and mentee to speak about the accompaniment relationship. However, there may be a more helpful terms for you that speak to your cultural, ethnic, or communal context. Consider reflecting on this so that the concept of mentorship can be woven into your particular environment or situation.

# Mentorship and Faith

How does being mentored in the context of the spiritual life actually work? What does it mean to be accompanied as a young adult through a project or while entering into a new field? Here are a couple of examples:

1. Mentorship and accompaniment provide a space for assistance and guidance through the “medium” of a concrete project, question, time-bound goal, or practical concern that allows us to become more fully integrated spiritually, emotionally, and professionally. In other words, by working on something concrete or practical, new thoughts, reflections, and ideas arise in us about who we are, who we are called to be, and how we might come to serve others. Through the assistance of a mentor, we can come to know more about ourselves, our faith, and others by sharing these and exploring these together.
2. Mentorship and accompaniment assist us in growing in holiness, which we are called to live out in particular ways. Through the help of a mentor, we can come to know more about our own gifts and talents, as well as how we can better develop or employ them. Mentors might point out things we do well, good ideas, or new insights we bring to a project or endeavor that we may not have recognized previously. By coming to know these, we become more aware of our gifts and purpose. A good mentor encourages us to use these gifts well in the pursuit of holiness and helps us to cultivate these strengths more broadly in our lives.
3. Mentorship and accompaniment help us to see parts of our lives through the lens of our faith. Mentorship provides the opportunity to view and reflect together upon the mentee’s lived experience through the lens of the Gospel message, even if mentoring conversations may not immediately relate to evangelization or faith—as in the case of conversations about career, relationships, mental health, or personal struggles. The mentoring relationship helps us to see that there should be no divide between our professional selves and spiritual selves; we are called to be integrated individuals who bring our whole selves to everything we encounter, able to see every situation through the implications of the Gospel and our call to holiness. While some mentoring relationships may be more spiritually focused than others, the mentee’s intentional reflection upon their life gives them a space to consider the intersection of spirituality and their everyday lives, with or without the assistance of their mentor.

It is worthwhile to note here that mentorship is distinct from another type of relationship between two people that serves the purpose of spiritual growth: spiritual



direction. Spiritual direction is a relationship specifically oriented to seeing how God is working in one's life over time, discussing the spiritual life in a profound way, and growing in practices of prayer. While spirituality might arise as a topic of discussion in a mentoring or accompaniment relationship, most mentors may not have the training necessary to cultivate a spiritual direction relationship. Discussion of spirituality in a mentoring relationship might mostly focus on surface-level or practical topics, rather than deep, ongoing discernment of God's call as found in an experience of spiritual direction. Also, sharing deep spiritual conversation or insights may not be something with which your mentor is comfortable. Therefore, mentors and mentees will most likely discuss things like the connection between faith life and professional life, prayer practices appropriate for a mentee's current state in life, and making decisions related to work, projects, or lifestyle guided by faith. It may be helpful to seek out spiritual direction in addition to the mentoring relationship. In some cases, mentors might serve as a valuable resource to connect mentees to formally-trained spiritual directors.

Essentially, mentorship and accompaniment are intentional relationships that help us grow in order to become aware of our potential, practice our faith authentically, and progress in our understanding of ourselves, our gifts, and how we are called to serve others. Mentorship and accompaniment can be helpful tools in our integration, which is the process by which we as human beings learn to unite the different parts of our lives—such as our personality, interests, hopes, and experiences—in service of our deeply held values and beliefs. In order to assist mentees in this process of integration, mentors help mentees to grow in their gifts and talents and encourage them to become good stewards of their lives.

This personal, intentional relationship is one that requires the active engagement of the mentee, who is not a passive recipient of skills or knowledge. Instead, as *The Art of Accompaniment* mentions, the mentee or person “represents not an empty receptacle to be filled with knowledge; rather, foremost in the consideration of their role is their exercise of their own freedom, desire, and motivation” (*The Art of Accompaniment*, no. 59). The mentee is called to build on their experiences and gifts to grow in their ability to live out their call to holiness in all areas of their life.

Next, we will continue to explore mentorship. We will look at the roles of mentee and mentor and explain how to begin, maintain, and end a relationship of mentorship.

# Reflection Questions

1. Pope Francis describes accompaniment as an art. How might mentorship be seen as an art?
2. In what situations, experiences, projects, questions, or goals in your life can you identify a need for accompaniment and mentorship?
3. Where have you seen examples of mentorship in a faith context?

# Part II: The Roles of Mentee and Mentor

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In the relationship of mentorship, mentor and mentee walk together towards a common goal, vision, or project in order to facilitate growth. Naming the roles of mentor and mentee helps shed light on how mentorship can help us to grow in faith and live more authentically by engaging our own questions, gifts, and personal situations. Though this guide is primarily designed for those considering becoming a mentee, learning more about the role of a mentor helps inform your understanding of mentorship. Reflecting on these roles will allow you to have some helpful guideposts when looking for a mentor and thinking about what you are hoping to receive from a mentoring relationship.

## The Mentor

When considered with the eyes of faith, mentorship that leads to growth is inspired by the apostolate of accompaniment. When we are baptized, we enter the family of God, becoming part of the Body of Christ (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1267). By entering into God's family, we acquire an important responsibility: strengthening and supporting the faith of the other members of the Body of Christ. This responsibility is an example of something called an apostolate, or the work that all the baptized are called to do because of the grace of their Baptism. The Vatican II document, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, or *The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*, explains further:

*The Church was founded for the purpose of spreading the kingdom of Christ throughout the earth for the glory of God the Father, to enable all men to share in His saving redemption, and that through them the whole world might enter into a relationship with Christ. All activity of the Mystical Body directed to the attainment of this goal is called the apostolate, which the Church carries on in various ways through all her members.*

*(Apostolicam Actuositatem, no. 2)*

In other words, an apostolate is anything that the baptized faithful are called to do in order to bring others into deeper relationship with Christ. In accompaniment, relationships are cultivated in order to strengthen one's relationship with Christ.

The apostolate of accompaniment refers to the work of forming intentional relationships of guidance, support, and mutuality that all the faithful are called to by virtue of their baptism. Shaped by this apostolate of accompaniment, the role of the mentor in the context of faith is similar to that of one who accompanies another:

*The work of the mentor in the apostolate of spiritual accompaniment is to provide a presence that is “steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and compassionate gaze which also heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life” (Evangelii Gaudium, no. 169). One who accompanies walks spiritually alongside another at a pace that reassures, encourages, and progresses towards a definitive direction. In this spiritual walking alongside another, a mentor accompanies through tenderness and humility, recognizing the holiness to be found in relationship through “remov[ing] [their] sandals before the sacred ground of the other” (Evangelii Gaudium, no. 169).*

*Accompaniment is a journey of mutuality and respects the work of the Holy Spirit and the mystery of the human person; a mentor who is called to accompaniment must “realize that each person's situation before God and their life in grace are mysteries which no one can fully know from without” (Evangelii Gaudium, no. 172). A response to the call to spiritual accompaniment requires that a mentor be open to these and other qualities, seeking formation to strengthen their own gifts and talents to provide fruitful ministry to the Christian community.*

*(The Art of Accompaniment, no. 28)*

Essentially, a mentor is meant to walk alongside the person they mentor or accompany in a steady and encouraging way. In this sense, the mentor becomes a “point of reference” for the mentee. Mentors can provide a space of safety for mentees as they ask questions and learn new things regarding their vocation to holiness. As a touchstone in the life of the mentee, the mentor provides a secure landing place for the mentee to experience growth, new challenges, and constructive feedback. Because of the relationship's character of safety and security, the mentee can experi-

ence the mentoring relationship as a place in which their value is not measured by perfection or mastery, but by their willingness to experience new challenges and collaborate with their mentor in facing these opportunities. The mentor recognizes that, while they will not always have the right answers, they can provide a welcoming presence and relationship of companionship. Therefore, the most fruitful result of accompaniment is not necessarily specific answers or solutions, but the wisdom that comes from the sharing of life between the mentor and mentee.

Whether the mentor introduces the mentee to a new field, helps them acquire a new skill, or collaborates on a project, the mentor is always called to accompany the mentee with a personal touch. Because of their natures, mentorship and accompaniment cannot be pre-planned endeavors. Instead, mentorship and accompaniment require a sensitivity to the mentee's experiences, needs, and interests. Mentors must meet mentees *where they are*, taking care to address the actual needs of the mentee rather than what the mentor imagines for them. To this end, mentors must ensure to enter into this role humbly and listen patiently to the mentee. Mentorship involves growing in the capacity to take initiative, lead, and make decisions. A good mentor will focus on guiding and supporting their mentee, while also empowering the mentee to cultivate their own gifts and become protagonists in their journey of personal, professional, and spiritual growth. Care must be taken in a mentoring relationship to ensure that mentors are discerning how they can assist mentees in cultivating their gifts.

Additionally, mentors must continuously discern when to encourage their mentees to step into leadership roles when the opportunity arises, such as in the example of Eli and Samuel. It is important for mentors to consider how they can raise up their mentees as leaders in their communities, fields, or organizations. Fruitful and healthy mentorship includes empowering mentees to use their gifts in leadership. For some mentors, resentment can creep into the mentoring relationship as a young person steps out on their own to lead. However, mentors are invited to generate life and wisdom by passing on their knowledge to their mentee. Furthermore, mentorship can provide the gift of reflection, gratitude, and wisdom to both mentors and mentees. Mentors can view mentorship as a means to give back to those who mentored them, continue their own legacy in a self-giving way, or hand on the tradition of their profession, field, or faith.

By being committed to their own personal and professional growth and practicing self-awareness, the mentor can prepare themselves to mentor fruitfully. In the context of faith, a mentor should also attend to their spiritual formation, cultivating their relationship with God. The way in which a mentor engages their own profes-

sional development, self-care, and personal habits serves as an important example for their mentee. In this sense, mentors accompany through discussion, sharing, and conversation, as well as through the example of their own lives.

## Functions of the Mentor

Adapted from *The Art of Accompaniment*, pages 52-53

While mentorship can look different according to the contexts in which it is practiced, there are a few functions that are essential to any relationship of mentorship. Of course, mentors are human beings, and not always able to live out these ideals perfectly. Rather than being an authoritative checklist, this list of qualities is meant to help those seeking mentorship to know what to look for and ask for as they strive to live a more integrated life. At the same time, this checklist also provides helpful guideposts for those looking to mentor others.

### **Mentors Must Foster a Space of Patient Listening**

*“The foremost task of the mentor is to provide the one they accompany with a presence of patient listening.... To foster a space of patient listening within the relationship of accompaniment, the mentor relates to the one they accompany with patience, love, respect, non-judgment, and fidelity... Practically, a mentor fosters a space for patient listening... within the relationship of accompaniment by establishing familiarity with the one they accompany, asking questions about the ordinary and extraordinary experiences of their life, meeting them where they are by understanding their frame of reference, carrying out their own call with respect and sensitivity, and honoring the relationship of accompaniment through appropriate boundaries and levels of confidentiality.”*

*(The Art of Accompaniment, no. 52)*

### **Mentors Must Foster a Relationship Where the Mentee Can Encounter Christ**

*“Through spiritual guidance in the ordinary and extraordinary components of life, the mentor is tasked with assisting the one they accompany in identifying situations where Christ invites them into deeper relationship with him. Mentors help those accompanied attune their spiritual vision to see Christ in the circumstances of their career, interactions with*

*their family, partnership with their significant other, needs of the community, and their own development towards Christian maturity.”*  
(*The Art of Accompaniment*, no. 53)

## **Mentors Serve as a Conversation Partner in Sifting through the Mentee’s Experiences**

*“Like data for a scientist or marble for a sculptor, the material for spiritual accompaniment is human experience - the living account of what it means and feels like to be a human person in a particular context in a specific period of historical time. In the accompanying relationship, one main role of the mentor is assisting the one accompanied in interpreting this human experience in light of the Gospel in order to discover the movements of the Spirit at work in their life . . . Therefore, human experience is a method by which someone can mature in their faith, discern their vocation, grow in awareness of God’s action, and love in their life and throughout human history, and ask questions regarding their vocation in God’s plan for salvation.”*

(*The Art of Accompaniment*, no. 53)

No matter what you are seeking mentorship for, these functions serve as helpful guideposts for healthy and holy mentorship. Additionally, there might be other qualities and roles that are helpful for you to have in your relationship of mentorship.

## **Mentors Must Be Open to Being Formed by Their Mentees**

As mentioned in previous pages, mentorship and accompaniment are concepts that are closely intertwined. Therefore, the mutuality and reciprocity found in a relationship of accompaniment are also found in relationships of mentorship. A mentor is not the only active presence in the relationship, but also learns from and is formed by the presence and actions of the mentee. Mentees might form their mentors by offering new ideas, fresh perspectives, and an openness to new ways of doing things. For example, a tech-savvy mentee might introduce a mentor to a more productive way of managing projects through an internet platform or software. A mentee’s worldview can also influence a mentor’s outlook. Mentees might bring an openness to ideas and attitudes not yet accepted or understood by the mentor.

Besides mutual learning cultivated through intergenerational differences, mentorship also involves mentors learning from the witness and example of their

mentees. In paragraph no. 150 of *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis mentions the importance of personal witness, saying that, “Today too, people prefer to listen to witnesses: they ‘thirst for authenticity.’” Through the witness of their lives, mentees cultivate a space of learning for their mentors. This witness might be to enthusiasm, energy, openness, and flexibility characteristic of youth. It could be a witness to wisdom and resilience hard-won by difficult experiences endured at a young age. Still, this witness could be to a dedication to a field, passion for a cause, or desire for growth and learning. Furthermore, mentors can also be formed through the witness rooted in their mentees’ experiences and identities. For example, imagine how a seasoned mentor’s perspective might be shaped by the experiences of a mentee that identifies as part of a minority community or background. Or think about how a mentor’s own practice of a trade or field might be enriched by considering another’s background or perspective. When received and appreciated, the mentee’s witness can be a powerful means of shaping their mentor’s own life, work, and perspective.

## Reflection Questions

1. In light of your specific hopes for mentorship, what functions would you add to the above list?
2. Did any of the above qualities surprise you or change your understanding of what a mentor is supposed to do?
3. Have you ever experienced a mutual or reciprocal relationship with another person who related to you in a teaching, coaching, or guiding role? If so, what was that like? If not, when in your life might have you benefitted from that?

## The Mentee

As mentioned above, one of the unique features of mentorship is the active participation of the mentee. In mentorship, the mentee cannot sit back and “be mentored.” In other words, mentorship is not a spectator sport! While the mentor may bring more seasoned knowledge, connections, or years of experience to the relationship of mentorship, mentees also have some essential responsibilities. As mentioned in *The Art of Accompaniment*, the one accompanied, or the mentee, has some essential functions just as the mentor does:

*“The one accompanied ...seeks out the wisdom and guidance of a fellow Christian with whom they journey on the path of life... Piv-*



*otal to the role of the one accompanied is their active participation in accompaniment. The one who is accompanied represents not an empty receptacle to be filled with knowledge; rather, foremost in the consideration of their role is their exercise of their own freedom, desire, and motivation.”*

*(The Art of Accompaniment, no. 89)*

In other words, a mentee’s role in the relationship of mentorship is active. The mentee can show this active participation in several different ways. Some of these ways include:

### **Mentees Must Ask Questions & Listen for Answers**

*“In the Gospel of Matthew, the rich young man questions Jesus, “Teacher, what good must I do to gain eternal life?” (Matthew 19:16). Like this parable, the one accompanied must have the courage to ask great and challenging questions of life, faith, and purpose. Overall, the one accompanied must act as a seeker, and one who strives to follow the voice of Jesus at every turn of life. They not only have the bravery to ask challenging questions, but also have the patience to listen intently to the voice of the Lord unfold gradually in the events of their lives.”*

*(The Art of Accompaniment, no. 60)*

### **Mentees Are Open to Transformation and Have a Willingness to be Formed**

*“Through her dialogue with Jesus, the Samaritan Woman at the Well comes to know him as the Messiah; while she does not instantaneously recognize Jesus as the Savior, she comes to trust him and be moved by his penetrating questions and answers (John 4). Because she allows Jesus to transform her understanding of him, she comes to form her own response of faith by asking, “Could he possibly be the Messiah?” (John 4:29). Like the Samaritan Woman, the one accompanied does not begin perfect in belief, but is open to being transformed through dialoguing with Jesus. Those accompanied are open to formation and display their willingness to be formed by authentically seeking holiness, collaborating with their mentor, remaining humble in the midst of difficulty, and giving thought and prayer to challenges or new ideas.”*

*(The Art of Accompaniment, no. 60)*

## **Mentees are Drawn to Jesus and Responsive to His Call**

*“On the Road to Emmaus, the disciples encountered Jesus without knowing it, but were still drawn to him over the course of their journey (Luke 24). The disciples beg him to “Stay with us,” which ultimately leads to their recognition of him “in the breaking of the bread” (Luke 24:29-31). Like these disciples, the one accompanied must not only have a desire to see Jesus, but seek to respond to this desire at each prompting of the Holy Spirit. Concretely, the one who is accompanied actively participates in their own spiritual journey, taking responsibility for their own holiness, vocation, and journey of faith.”*

*(The Art of Accompaniment, no. 60)*

## **Mentees Learn to Become the Protagonist in Their Own Journey of Faith**

*“By approaching their role in the relationship of accompaniment as a seeker and protagonist, they acknowledge the sense of urgency and action to which the Christian is called.”*

*(The Art of Accompaniment, no. 63)*

Like the list of essential functions of the mentor, this list is not meant to be exhaustive. Depending on the context and preferences of the mentor and mentee, the relationship will be unique and require a personal touch. There might be additional qualities or roles that would fit the context of the relationship of mentorship that you are hoping for.

## **Reflection Questions**

1. What additional essential functions of the mentee would you add to the above list?
2. Which function from the list above resonates with you the most? Which function do you anticipate needing the most self-growth in?
3. If you have been mentored before, how do these roles measure up to your previous experience as a mentee? If you have not been mentored before, do these functions surprise or challenge your understanding of what it means to be a mentee?

# Part III: A How-To Guide for Starting, Maintaining, and Concluding a Relationship of Mentorship

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This section includes several opportunities for personal reflection on your goals related to mentorship and accompaniment. Consider reading this section over and answering the questions below in prayerful discernment.

## Mentorship and Discernment

The period of life from adolescence to young adulthood is full of transitions, questions, and uncertainty. From educational and professional transitions to changes in geographical locations and close relationships, the decisions and choices of young adulthood are numerous. Young adults face new roles, decisions, situations, and relationships for the first time. During this period of psycho-social development, young adults are balancing *who they were* amongst their family of origin and in their childhood home(s), *who they are* in their current stage, and *who they will be* in terms of relationships, occupations, and locations. Young adulthood is a period of navigating the past, present, and future—a task that requires change, discernment, and new experiences.

While uncertainty and transition are frequent experiences of young adulthood, a relationship of mentorship ensures that these experiences do not have to be faced alone. During this season of life, mentorship can provide a space in which asking questions, trying new things, and having access to new information and counsel is encouraged. In addition, because young adulthood features many opportunities for life choices and new life experiences, the mentorship relationship can be a space where mistakes are viewed as opportunities for growth. As mentioned above, a mentor can provide a space in which discerning questions and trying on new roles or making new decisions is encouraged and supported. Like accompaniment, mentorship is not about “a perfect and seamless life,” but is a “school of virtue” oriented towards growth in both one’s spiritual and personal life (*Art of Accompaniment*,

no. 17). In other words, the purpose of mentorship is the pursuit of well-rounded growth intellectually, professionally, emotionally, and spiritually. Young adults and people of faith who are discerning questions about their professional, personal, and spiritual life can benefit greatly from seeking out a mentoring relationship.

## **How can mentorship help me grow as a young adult and person of faith?: The Fruits of Mentorship for Young People of Faith**

### *Assists in the integration of faith and professional life*

A mentor can help the mentee to process situations or issues that arise in professional work and assist in reflecting upon these in the light of faith. For example, a challenging project might benefit from processing with someone outside of the situation, or a situation with a co-worker might be better understood with the insight of a more experienced person. Developing a relationship with a mentor who has experience in similar situations may be beneficial to your professional growth. In addition, a mentor can provide encouragement to view professional situations through the lens of faith. With a mentor's guidance spiritually and professionally, the mentee can find support in discerning who God is calling you to be.

Remember, a relationship with a mentor is different than a relationship with a spiritual director. In the relationship of mentorship, you might discuss spirituality and faith, but most mentors will not have the proper training to guide you in a relationship dedicated to spiritual direction. Consider if having a spiritual director would be more helpful than a mentor, or if the two relationships might complement one another by providing additional support.

### *Provides a space of support, reflection, and discernment to help the mentee begin to answer big questions*

Young adulthood is often accompanied by discoveries of new ideas and relationships. Mentorship can be a valuable resource during this time of newness and transition. A mentor can provide a space of support, ask questions, and assist you in making sense of your experiences. The external perspective of a mentor can assist you in recognizing what you may miss about your everyday life and choices. Mentors might be able to pinpoint the right questions to ask in your situation, identify personal gifts that you have not recognized yourself, or shed new insight into your experience of a situation. For instance, they may note patterns you might

not have recognized in your behavior or response to certain situations, or they may also help you place the issue within a wider context.

At the same time, though you may have questions that you are discerning, your mentor may not have all the answers to these questions. In fact, mentors must know that their main role is not to answer questions for you, but collaborate with you in your process of pursuing solutions. A good mentor will not offer you quick fixes or easy answers to everything that you ask in the mentoring relationship. Instead, a good mentor will walk alongside you as you discern questions and possibilities, supporting you in investigating options and helping you to process your experiences.

### *Connects one to a more seasoned person who has “been there”*

Whether you are welcoming a new baby, considering a career change, or dealing with personal challenges, it can be beneficial to speak with someone who has been through a similar experience. While your experience is unique, the perspective and companionship of others may assist in making a current, challenging situation more bearable. A feeling of being supported by someone who has encountered an experience similar to yours may help you to persevere through a challenging moment or difficult issue.

If you identify as part of a minority or marginalized group in your field, community, school, or within your career path, mentors who share your identity can help validate or make sense of your experiences. It may be helpful to share your experiences with those who understand the nuances and complexities of the intersection of your identities and experiences with work, career, faith, relationships, or goals.

### *Establishes a relationship of friendship that can help set an example for others*

By having a mentor, sharing what that experience is like with friends, and encouraging others to try mentorship, young adults can help cultivate a culture of mentorship. Seeking out guidance and a companion on the journey can be an important remedy to loneliness and isolation. Whole organizations, teams, and institutions should be encouraged to adopt this style of leadership and guidance in addition to fostering mentoring relationships at an individual level.

## Reflection Questions

1. What, if anything, resonated with you from this section about the experiences of young adulthood? Could you imagine mentorship as a helpful tool in any of these experiences?
2. Of the fruits of mentorship mentioned above, which would be most important for you to cultivate in your relationship with a mentor?

## What am I looking for in seeking out a relationship of mentorship?

Before moving forward with the practical steps of seeking a mentor, it is helpful to take some time to reflect on what exactly you are looking for in a mentoring relationship. A good place to start is by taking inventory of where you are in your life to identify the places in which you might benefit from mentorship. Consider taking some time out of your schedule to evaluate each area of your life—such as the spiritual, social, professional, physical, and leisure parts of your life—to better understand (or evaluate) what your needs are.

In addition, you might consider the following questions below to assist you in your reflection:

1. Is there an area of my life in which I feel stuck or stagnant?
2. Are there particular challenges I am facing that could use the assistance or perspective of another person?
3. How does my faith influence the rest of the areas of my life?
4. Am I hoping to try something new, whether a career, hobby, or lifestyle?
5. Do I feel isolated in trying to complete a project or goal?
6. Is there an area of my life where I have questions or could benefit from guidance?
7. Is there a particular change I feel that I need to make in one or more areas of my life? Do I need help making that change?
8. Am I going through a transition in which guidance from another person might be especially helpful?

After you spend some time taking stock of the areas of your life, you can view your reflections through the lens of mentorship. Spend some time in prayer and reflection with some of the questions below to help form a sense of what you are looking for in a relationship of mentorship.

1. What about mentorship attracts me?
2. Is there anything about a mentoring relationship that gives me hesitation?
3. Do I have specific fears, anxieties, and hesitations? If so, why? What can I bring to prayer?
4. What is holding me back from seeking a mentor (a specific mentor or a mentor relationship in general)?
5. Why am I looking for a mentoring relationship? What are the needs I am trying to fulfill?
6. Is there something specific I need to discern?
7. How is God calling me to live out my vocation to holiness right now (student, young professional, teacher, pastoral minister etc.)? How is God calling me to live out my vocation with regards to my state in life (priest/sister, married, single, religious)?
8. Based on the previous question, does a specific type of mentor fit my needs (a priest or lay person, old or young)?
9. Is there a concrete project or initiative I need to carry out in my professional or personal life? Is there a specific area of growth I am being called to in my spiritual life? Do I have a big question I need help exploring?
10. What are my expectations for this relationship?
11. Would I need other relationships like spiritual direction or therapy to assist in other expectations or needs that I have?
12. How long do I expect this mentoring relationship to last? Months? Years?
13. Am I looking for something more formal or casual?
14. Is there an area of my life where I could use the support of a mentor?

## Looking for a Mentor: Where do I start?

### Reflecting on the Past

If mentorship is not a common term or experience for you, you might not have your pick of mentors. However, knowing what kind of mentor you would like to have will help you ask for what you need in the mentorship relationship, maintain healthy expectations of your mentor, and be able to more easily identify when a relationship of mentorship is not helpful or harmful. Check out the reflection exercise below to get a better sense of where to begin in your search for a mentor.

Think back to relationships in your past with parents, teachers, coaches, supervi-

sors, spiritual guides or ministers, or other mentor figures. Pick a concrete person and reflect on your experience of relationship with that person using the following questions.

- When did this person come into my life?
- Was my overall experience with this person fruitful, harmful, or neutral? Why?
- How was this person a guide in my life? In what particular areas of my life did they offer their guidance or friendship?
- What did the person do, say, or be that was helpful, fruitful, or beneficial to me?
- What did the person do, say, or be that was harmful or unhelpful to me?
- Looking back, was the relationship missing anything? Are there experiences you would have liked to share with that person, or qualities that might have changed the relationship?
- What is the state of my relationship with this person now in my current life? If you no longer have an active relationship, why is that?
- What was most important about this relationship?
- Is this relationship still continuing? Did it end? If so, how? Did it change?

## Reflection Questions

1. Gather up all the answers to these questions above. Summarize a few qualities from the relationships you reflected on above that you would like to find in a mentor.
2. From what you reflected on above, what qualities, dispositions, or experiences are most important to you when looking for a mentor in your current stage of life?

## Other Considerations for Choosing a Mentor

In addition to the list of reflection questions above, another area which you may want to consider is trying to find a mentor who shares the same identities or experiences as you. For example, many Latino/Latina young adults may find it helpful to look for a Latino/Latina mentor to guide them through specific challenges and experiences related to being part of a specific ethnic or cultural community. BI-POC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) young adults might additionally benefit from the guidance of a mentor who can speak to their particular reality and share their own experiences with their mentee. Besides ethnic or cultural identities, those with other identities or experiences, such as immigrants, particular so-



cio-economic backgrounds, first-generation college students or graduates, women in predominately male fields or environments, or other similar identities, may especially benefit from a mentor with a similar identity. Being mentored by someone who shares your identity can be an invaluable experience in which you can find a deep understanding of your own life, feel more comfortable being open about your experiences, and be given the chance to grow in appreciation and ownership of your particular experience of identity.

Another consideration which may be helpful in choosing a mentor might be their experiences or qualifications. Would a mentor with a specific educational background, years of experience in a certain professional or volunteer role, or membership in an organization be ideal for your needs? Would a mentor who has written a grant, who has completed an apprenticeship program, or who holds a particular certification assist you in completing a project or reaching your goals? Alternatively, would a mentor who has experienced a particular personal event or situation—such as the loss of a parent, transitioning out of active military service, or who is juggling childcare and a career at once—be a helpful frame of reference for your goals? At the same time, think about whether it would be helpful to have a mentor who can offer an outside perspective on your goals or project. Would having a mentor with completely opposite experiences or qualifications improve your mentorship experience by providing a fresh perspective? Considering questions like these can help you to narrow down possible choices for your mentor and assist you in identifying your own needs and hopes for the relationship of mentorship.

Even after identifying the needs you are hoping to meet in a relationship of mentorship, you may not be able to find a mentor that “checks all the boxes.” Not every mentor will be well-versed in your field, identify the same way that you do, or share your faith or background. You might need multiple mentors to meet all of your needs, or you might seek out additional support through particular people. For example, imagine that you might need some guidance related to an interpersonal situation and also guidance in the early stages of your career. In this situation, you might seek out both a mentor and a therapist. Or, if you are hoping to make a lifestyle change in regards to your health and fitness but also could use help in your professional life, you might seek out a mentor for your physical fitness and a more seasoned coworker who can provide occasional guidance. No matter your situation, consider thinking about a mentor as one of many other support people in the greater context of your life.

Keep in mind that mentorship may be more familiar to young adults and people

of particular generations than others. This fact might make finding an experienced mentor somewhat challenging. At the same time, your geographical location or other factors may prevent you from finding a mentor with the perfect combination of experience or training to fit your needs. Therefore, another helpful practice for choosing a mentor might be to consider who is already within your network of relationships. Do you have a coworker, neighbor, relative, or friend of a friend that might be able to meet at least some of your needs for mentorship? Choosing a mentor from those who are already in your network of relationships may cut down on time and difficulty in the process.

## Reflection Questions

1. Are there any particular identities or experiences that you would hope to have in common with your mentor?
2. Would it be more beneficial for you to have a mentor with a similar background or completely different background than yours?
3. Is there anyone in your current network of relationships that might be able to meet some of the needs you are hoping to address in a mentoring relationship?

## What does healthy, holy, and fruitful mentorship and accompaniment look like?

In the 2019 apostolic exhortation *Christus Vivit*, Pope Francis reflected on the importance of the mentorship and accompaniment of young people in the Church. *Christus Vivit* was a summarizing document of the conclusions of the XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment held from October 3rd to the 28th of 2018. During the Pre-Synod Gathering and the Synod itself, young adult delegates gathered at the Vatican to discuss vocational discernment, holiness, and Catholic young adulthood. The young adult delegates spoke at length about their desire to be mentored and accompanied. They identified several qualities that mentors should have when accompanying young people in the Church:

*“The same young people described to us the qualities they hope to find in a mentor, and they expressed this with much clarity. “The qualities of such a mentor include: being a faithful Christian who*

*engages with the Church and the world; someone who constantly seeks holiness; someone who is a confidant without judgement. Similarly, someone who actively listens to the needs of young people and responds in kind; someone deeply loving and self-aware; someone who recognizes his or her limits and knows the joys and sorrows of the spiritual journey. An especially important quality in mentors is the acknowledgement of their own humanity – the fact that they are human beings who make mistakes: not perfect people but forgiven sinners.*

*Sometimes mentors are put on a pedestal, and when they fall, it may have a devastating impact on young people’s ability to continue to engage with the Church. Mentors should not lead young people as passive followers, but walk alongside them, allowing them to be active participants in the journey. They should respect the freedom that comes with a young person’s process of discernment and equip them with tools to do so well. A mentor should believe wholeheartedly in a young person’s ability to participate in the life of the Church. A mentor should therefore nurture the seeds of faith in young people, without expecting to immediately see the fruits of the work of the Holy Spirit.”*

*(Christus Vivit, no. 246)*

If you’re struggling to answer the question of what healthy, holy, and fruitful mentorship looks like, spend some time with the above passage from *Christus Vivit*.

## Reflection Questions

1. From the paragraph from *Christus Vivit* quoted above, which qualities of a mentor resonate with you? How do these compare with what you identified in earlier sections?
2. What qualities have you experienced or hope to experience in a relationship of mentorship? Which qualities are priorities for you to find in a mentor?

## What should I expect in the relationship

# of mentorship and accompaniment?

Mentorship can look very different depending on the context, goals, time, and people involved. It is important to narrow down as specifically as possible what concrete “asks” you have for a mentor in order to make the relationship the most fruitful it can be. Depending on your earlier reflections in this guide about what your needs are regarding mentoring, break these into the most simple and specific descriptions possible. For example, let’s say you have a mentor who can support you while you carry out a new initiative in your parish or community. In order to move forward with your initiative, you might: meet your mentor to learn more about the parish, ask your mentor to connect you with particular people, ask your mentor to help you formulate a five-step process for executing your goal, or ask your mentor to help you recruit and train volunteers.

To help you brainstorm some of the concrete expectations that you hope to ask of your mentor, think carefully about the questions below.

## **Personal Inventory: What am I asking of my mentor?**

1. What are the concrete tasks, questions, problems involved in my question, project, problem, etc.?
2. What am I hoping to gain from my mentorship—concrete results and experiences, more knowledge and professional, personal, or spiritual formation, or connections to a field, group, or professional realm?
3. What are the tasks that a mentor could help me with?
4. How long do I think I would need a mentor’s help or support? Am I in need of a short-term experience of mentorship or am I hoping for a longer-term range of support?
5. How often do I envision meeting with my mentor?
6. If I could summarize what I am hoping for in an experience of mentorship in three words, what would they be?

## **Reflection**

Gather the answers from the questions above. See if you can summarize what you are hoping to ask of your mentor in a short paragraph. This will assist you in the eventual task of asking someone to be your mentor.

## Where do I find a mentor?

After identifying both the qualities and tasks that you hope for in an experience of mentorship, you can shift your focus to places where you might find possible mentors. Consider the following places to contact and ask for a referral for a mentor:

- Professional development organizations or guilds
- Parishes or faith communities
- Local colleges or universities
- College campus ministries
- Relevant people and profiles that are reputable and well known on social media networks
- Relevant community or government organizations
- Co-workers
- Professors
- Coaches
- Relevant events, webinars, or gatherings

Brainstorming some possible people, organizations, and places is a critical step in the process of choosing a mentor. In addition to the people and places listed above, you might consider asking someone who knows you, your working style, or your personality well to make recommendations for potential mentors or places to seek one. Even if someone might not be able to connect you to the perfect mentor for your situation, they could provide important direction to set you on the path of finding the right mentor.

Once you receive a recommendation of a potential mentor, do your research on them. Consider asking relevant people about them or looking up their work or projects on the internet. If you find after learning more about them that your potential mentor would not be a good fit, do not be afraid to look elsewhere or try again.

Sometimes, it can take several attempts to find the right mentor. The process takes patience and understanding. However, attempting to find a mentor is not only beneficial for the mentorship itself. The interior process of beginning the search for a mentor is also important spiritual and personal work. Utilizing discernment,

reflection, and prayer will hopefully lead to finding a mentor, but can also assist in your personal growth as well. Using these questions to evaluate your hopes related to mentorship and the role it can play in your life may bring you to a new level of self-awareness. Additionally, the process may help to begin to answer the personal, professional, or spiritual questions that you want to bring to your mentoring relationship.

## Reflection Questions

1. Where are some places that you might look for a mentor? Who are some people you might ask for recommendations regarding a mentor? It may be helpful to have a list of several places or people you would like to contact in case some recommendations do not work out.
2. If it takes several tries to find the right mentor, how do you imagine you might react? Are you a patient person or do you see yourself becoming discouraged if you are not able to find the right mentor right way?

Now, it is time to think about how you will approach someone to be your mentor.

## Initiating the Mentorship

Beginning the process of asking someone to be your mentor can be intimidating; however, the more you are able to articulate your goals for mentorship and identify your needs, the easier it will be to ask. While any relationship of mentorship is unique, consider some of the steps and tips below as you move forward to begin the mentoring relationship.

### **Crafting the Initial Contact**

In order to initiate a mentoring relationship, you have two options: to immediately ask a potential mentor if they might be interested in forming a relationship of mentorship with you or to ask them to enter a less formal setting or situation where you can get to know them. With mentors you might know less about, the second option might be best.

#### *Direct Approach*

This approach directly states that you would like to enter into a relationship of mentorship. It can take the form of an in-person conversation, email, text, or phone call. When deciding which form of communication to use, consider the level of formality needed in communicating your desire to be mentored. For example, if you know the person well, you might feel more comfortable sending a text. Or, if you do not yet know the person and are hoping to be mentored professionally, it may be best to reach out through an email. Additionally, it is also helpful to consider your mentor's perspective in receiving your request. Is your potential mentor less acquainted with texts and emails and more likely to appreciate a phone conversation? Or is your potential mentor harder to reach, making email difficult but a text more convenient? In any case, your communication to a potential mentor should include the following details:

- Why you would like to be mentored by them
- Information about yourself, and any relevant connections to them, their work, or organization
- What you are asking/expecting of them in this role as your mentor
- How long you envision this relationship of mentorship to last

Here, describe your needs based on what you are working on or working through, any time frames, or anything else that you have in mind based on your reflections on the content above. Make sure to take care to describe in as much detail as possible what you are hoping for. For example, would you like to meet once or twice a month with your mentor over coffee? Do you want to set up weekly phone calls or Zoom sessions? The more specific you are, the more helpful it will be for your potential mentor to assess if they will be able to help you.

### *Indirect Approach*

This approach can be thought of as asking for help with a smaller question or for short-term help or collaboration. It could involve meeting informally over coffee to discuss ideas. Essentially, this way of initiating a mentorship relationship involves getting to know your potential mentor better prior to asking them formally to be your mentor. You can ask them to meet for coffee, schedule a phone call to talk over ideas about your field, or get their thoughts on a project or any other "smaller ask." Basically, instead of directly asking someone to be your mentor, you can ease into that step by first letting a concrete project or conversation topic facilitate you getting to know one another.

If this initial meeting goes well, be sure to follow the same steps above in being as detailed as possible when asking your potential mentor to formally become your

mentor.

### *Going Back to Square One*

If you receive a negative response from your potential mentor, take time to consider that experience. Did it not work out with the schedule and demands of your mentor? Could you have been clearer in what you were asking for related to a relationship of mentorship? Was the person you asked too busy? Taking the time to reflect on your experience of trying to find a mentor, even if you have yet to be successful, is an important exercise. Intentional reflection can help you cultivate an attitude of discernment. By paying attention to your actions, emotions, and thoughts, you can stay more closely in tune with the Holy Spirit's action in your life, specifically in the experience of seeking out mentorship.

## Reflection Questions

1. Which form of communication—phone conversation, email, text, etc.—are you most comfortable using with a potential mentor? Which form of communication might be best received by a potential mentor? How might you reconcile these two preferences if they differ?
2. Write a draft of an email, text, or phone conversation that you might have with a potential mentor. Consider running this draft by a trusted friend or colleague to seek their input or feedback.

## Proceeding with a Plan

If you receive a positive response from your potential mentor to start a mentoring relationship, go ahead and begin formulating a plan to move forward. As mentioned before, it is important for you to be the protagonist of your mentorship relationship. It will be helpful to your mentor for you to take as much initiative as possible. This will allow busy mentors to stay in the loop with your progress, give helpful feedback, and in general have more time for you, knowing that they do not have to make all the effort in this process and that you will tell them what you need.

Begin your mentorship on the right foot by taking initiative and formulating a plan to get started. When thanking your mentor for saying yes, be sure to communicate

with them about proposing a plan to move forward. A plan might include the following details:



- What goals, projects, or questions you are hoping to address with your mentor
- What a potential time frame for addressing your goals with your mentor might look like
- Whether you will be meeting, checking in, or discussing your progress, and how often
- What times and dates you are most available to meet, or asking the best times and dates for meeting according to their schedule
- What the best way to contact you or share information with you is
- What their preferred method of communication is
- What you hope to share during your meetings or check in's: questions, concrete progress, thoughts, etc.

Keep in mind that your mentor may not be able to meet all of your needs, such as those related to your schedule or giving feedback within a certain time frame. Be prepared to make adjustments, either in how to meet your needs or finding a mentor who is able to meet your most important needs.

## Reflection Questions

1. What gifts do you think you might bring to a mentoring relationship? For example, are you punctual, thoughtful, open, or thorough, etc.?
2. What might be some areas of growth for you to be aware of in maintaining your mentoring relationship? For example, are you less detailed-oriented, less likely to follow through, or inclined to lose sight of a goal, etc.?
3. How might you integrate your gifts and areas of growth into your mentoring relationship?

# Maintaining the Mentorship Relationship

In order to maintain your mentorship relationship, it will be important for you to continue taking an active role in establishing what you need. Consider reflecting on the following tips as you begin and continue your mentoring relationship.

## **Taking Time to Discern Your Own Role in the Relationship of Mentorship**

When in the process of being mentored, consider being intentional about asking yourself frequently, What is my role as a mentee? Overall, a mentee's role is to be the protagonist, or the active agent, in the mentorship relationship. Though your mentor is also participating with their time, experience, and feedback, it is important to recognize that mentorship will require you to take initiative. Taking this initiative may come easily to you, or it may require a little more effort and discernment—especially if you or your mentor come from a cultural or community background that traditionally relies on the effort of the more experienced individual in the relationship. A good rule of thumb in navigating your role in the relationship is to communicate with your mentor. Questions such as: How can I show up in a productive way in our meetings?, What can I do to prepare for when we meet next?, or I have struggled with taking initiative in the past—do you have any tips for growing in that? might be helpful in starting and practicing this communication.

## **Setting a Precedent in the Relationship With Your Active Participation**

Active participation can take many forms. It may mean sending a meeting or check-in agenda beforehand, taking your mentor's suggestions to heart, and making regular meetings with them a priority in your schedule. You might also ask for your mentor's thoughts about what would be helpful for you to do or plan to prepare for your meetings.

## **Learning and Observing Your Mentor's Mentoring Style**

Just like any relationship, it will take some time for you to get to know your mentor and their mentoring style. When you first start to meet with your mentor, it may be helpful for you to ask them directly about their mentoring, working, or collaborating style to get a sense of how best to go about the mentoring relationship. Some mentors may not be familiar with the formal process of mentoring and there-

fore may not have a precise answer to this question. Another option is to ask them about their past experiences of mentorship. Some questions to begin this conversation could include: What did you enjoy about mentoring someone else or being mentored? What would you have liked to have done differently? What was their understanding of the purpose of mentoring or being mentored?

As the mentorship goes on, try to pick up on how your mentor likes to give feedback, communicates, and connects with you over similar interests. Noticing these nuances will help you to strengthen your relationship and form realistic expectations.

## **Set Some Parameters Around Meetings and Contact**

Before you begin meeting with your mentor, it is helpful to envision what regular meetings with them might entail. Thinking about the following items may be helpful to give you and your mentor a better sense of what your relationship will look like.

## **Establish Points of Discussion and the Content of Your Meetings**

Establishing what you will be discussing in your meetings helps put you at ease and allows your mentor to know what to expect. In addition, it gives your mentor additional time to reflect on their own insights, prepare resources or suggestions for you, or come up with a plan to address your questions and concerns. Points in your discussion might include:

- Challenges and successes since your last meeting
- Questions or concerns that have arisen
- A report on progress and examples of implementing or trying out their advice
- Where you experienced joys and/or challenges

If you are hoping to include a spiritual component to your relationship of mentorship, first consider what you are hoping for individually, and then discuss what this looks like with your mentor. What parts of your spiritual life would be helpful for you to share? Is there anything that you are hoping to discuss that might require additional tasks, time, knowledge, or other resources from your mentor? Will you pray together? How much will you share about your faith and spiritual life? What do you know about your mentor's comfort level regarding the discussion of spiritual matters?

## **Determine What Communication Will Look Like and How You Will Measure Progress**

In addition to sharing progress in your meetings, it might also be helpful to share brief updates outside of your meetings. Discuss with your mentor if it would be helpful to check-in via phone call, e-mail, or text in between meetings.

## **Taking the Temperature**

As time goes on, it is a helpful practice to check in with yourself about the value of your mentoring relationship. You might consider the following questions to take the temperature of or evaluate your relationship:

1. Has the relationship thus far been helpful, harmful, or neutral?
2. What has changed since beginning a relationship with your mentor?
3. What goals or projects have you reached or completed since beginning the relationship with your mentor?
4. What effect has your relationship with your mentor had on your own overall sense of purpose, identity, and vocation?
5. What changes would you make to your mentoring relationship?
6. How is your communication with your mentor? Are there changes you would like to make related to the frequency or style of communication?
7. Do you look forward to contacting or meeting with your mentor, or do experience anxiety or discomfort? Why might that be?
8. Do you think it would be helpful to continue your relationship with your mentor at this time?

## **Anticipating and Addressing Change**

As you progress in your relationship with your mentor, keep in mind that circumstances, relationships, and opportunities change. Change might take the form of less or more frequent meetings, more initiative or leadership on your end, or the addition or moving on from particular goals or projects. Though these changes might be challenging, they ultimately will contribute to your personal, professional, and spiritual growth. Adaptability is an important quality to cultivate, and young adulthood provides plenty of opportunities to grow in this area. Keeping an open and adaptable mind about your mentorship will be important for your own development.

If you become aware of upcoming changes in your own life—such as getting married, changing jobs, moving, or having a child—be sure to communicate these with your mentor. In addition to communicating the change itself, talk with your

mentor about how you see this change affecting your mentoring relationship. Possible effects of significant changes might include less frequent meetings, switching to meeting virtually from meeting in-person, or changing preparations for meeting. This way, your mentor can work to accommodate your situation as much as possible or help you to discern other options for a mentoring relationship if necessary.

## **Taking Initiative Outside the Mentorship Relationship**

As the protagonist of your mentorship relationship, it is important to be taking initiative outside your regular meetings with your mentor. Checking out resources, doing your own research, making connections with relevant people, and journaling and reflecting on your progress are all practices that can help you not only to be prepared for your meetings, but also continue to expand your agency and initiative in the relationship.

While there are quite a few things to do to ensure that you are maintaining a healthy relationship of mentorship, the most important thing to remember is to reflect often on why you sought out mentorship. In other words, if you keep the reasons for wanting a mentor in mind throughout your mentorship, this will help motivate you to be an active presence in the relationship and assess its value. Ultimately, mentorship is an intentional way of being in relationship with another. Because both you and your mentor are human, no mentorship relationship is perfect. For this reason, it will be important to evaluate your progress towards your goal or objective throughout your mentorship.

## **Reflection Questions**

1. What methods or styles of communication do you find most helpful? Do you benefit from quick check-ins, lengthy process conversations, or a variety?
2. Would you consider yourself a reflective person? What value do you think self-reflection and self-awareness bring to a mentoring relationship?
3. How do you handle change? How do you anticipate this might show up in your mentoring relationship?
4. How can you continue to express your gratitude for your mentor's time and expertise?

# Concluding the Mentoring Relationship

Your mentoring relationship will at some point come to an end. After a time of discernment or the natural end of a time-bound project or goal, you may choose to conclude your mentoring relationship with your mentor. Other reasons for concluding the relationship could range from you or your mentor no longer having enough time to give to the relationship, relocating or moving to a different area, or changing jobs or fields entirely. Concluding this relationship can feel challenging, but it can be made easier through intentional communication.

## **Choosing How to Communicate the Conclusion of a Mentoring Relationship**

Like dating and relationships, the way in which you choose to communicate the end of a mentoring relationship will most likely depend on the depth of your sharing and the amount of time you have spent with your mentor. If you have just spent a year with your mentor, checking in with them bi-weekly and sharing some degree of emotional connection, it may feel important to conclude your mentoring relationship in-person, or at least to allow for an occasion of closure after communicating in writing. If you have spent less time getting to know your mentor, or your connection is not much deeper than what you have worked on together, it may feel more appropriate to send an email or call your mentor to conclude the relationship.

## **Communicating a Clear End**

No matter what means you choose to communicate, what is most important is ensuring that you clearly express that you are choosing to end your mentoring relationship. This way, both you and your mentor will know where you stand going forward, and neither party will feel uncertain about their expectations in the future.

In the event that your mentoring relationship is coming to a close because of a reason other than completing a time-bound goal or process, you might consider how to communicate this to your mentor. Drafting a sentence or two to help organize your thoughts before communicating this to your mentor might be a helpful practice.

## **Expressing Gratitude**

Make sure to express to your mentor your gratitude for their investment of time in your relationship. It might feel important to name some of the concrete ways

that your mentor has helped you throughout your time together. Additionally, you might consider giving them a small token of thanks, such as a heartfelt thank you card or gift.

### **Consent and Expectations about Future Communication**

If you would like to have the option of contacting your mentor in the future, or just to be able to keep in touch, make sure to communicate that. You might also consider if it would be helpful to ask your mentor's consent for being a professional reference or writing letters of recommendation, or if you might be able to contact them with questions in the future.

## Reflection Questions

1. What signs might you look for in determining if a mentoring relationship has run its course?
2. What hopes do you have for yourself upon concluding a mentoring relationship? Are there particular practices, attitudes, or other desires that you hope to integrate into your life?

# Going Forth From the Mentoring Relationship and Reflecting on Your Experience

Your relationship with your mentor is a valuable learning experience, not just for the knowledge that your mentor passes onto you and the new things you learn through their help, but also in your reflection upon the relationship itself. Taking time to reflect on the experience of being mentored can help you gain new insights about how you learn, how you communicate, how you form relationships with others, and what you value. The sample questions below might help you get an idea of where to start in reflecting on your experience.

1. Has your understanding of your field, career, vocation, and/or project changed since beginning your mentoring relationship? If so, what do you think brought about this change?
2. Has your understanding of yourself developed or evolved? If so, what new things have you learned about yourself?
3. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the least helpful, and 10 being the most helpful, how helpful and beneficial was your experience of your relationship with your mentor?
4. What would you change or do differently about your mentorship relationship?
5. Reflect back on your interactions, meetings, or conversations with your mentor. What was most memorable? What are you taking away from this experience?
6. Think back to some of the questions you might have answered earlier in this guide. How did your expectations of the mentoring relationship or your mentor play out? Did your experience match your expectations?
7. How would you describe your involvement, investment, and participation in the relationship of mentorship? Is there anything you would do differently?
8. Did your relationship with your mentor and the experience of mentorship have any effect on your spiritual life and practice of faith? Why or why not?

Reflecting on these questions will assist you in gaining new insights, adjusting the way you might approach another mentoring relationship in the future, and also prepare you to mentor and accompany others who seek you out as a mentor in the future. Pope Francis reminds us in his many writings on accompaniment that the best preparation for accompanying and mentoring others is to have been accompanied and mentored yourself. In *Evangelii Gaudium*, he explains, “Our personal experience of being accompanied and assisted, and of openness to those who



accompany us, will teach us to be patient and compassionate with others, and to find the right way to gain their trust, their openness and their readiness to grow.”  
(*Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 172)

# Being Sent: Reflection and Conclusion

## Closing Reflection: Luke 10: 1-2

*After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others whom he sent ahead of him in pairs to every town and place he intended to visit. He said to them, “The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest.”*

In this passage from the Gospel of Luke, Jesus sends out seventy-two of his followers. He does not send them out alone, but with a partner. The seventy-two followers go before Jesus in order to prepare others to receive the Gospel and respond to their own call to holiness. Put yourself in the dusty sandals of one of the seventy-two for a moment. Imagine the thoughts and questions in their minds as they were sent out on this new venture by Jesus: *Where are we going? Who are we going to spend our time with? Where will we sleep and what will we eat? Do we even have a plan or a purpose? What will the next days of my life look like? Will I feel alone or miss my family or home? Will I be able to do what has been asked of me?* Think about the emotions they might have felt: excitement, apprehension, curiosity, anxiety, or restlessness. With these questions and emotions, the seventy-two were sent out to answer a call put forth by Jesus. Though they had a general idea of what they would be doing, the seventy-two did not have a clear plan, specifics, or a certain sense of how things might turn out.

Considering these questions, emotions, and next steps of the seventy-two sent out by Jesus in the Gospel of Luke offers a valuable insight—the seventy-two are not that different from us as young adults. In this stage of life, we are sent out, too—whether from our homes, families of origin, hometowns, training programs, military service, university, job, or other circumstances—as we try to navigate the next step forward. As we consider the new journey ahead of us, we must learn to open ourselves to the new experiences, relationships, and opportunities that lie beyond our adolescent homes, locations, and families. We too might find ourselves anxious, wondering what the days ahead will look like. We might wonder who we will meet, what our future families will look like, the next steps for our work or career, or what our identities might look like as we reconcile who we have been and who we have yet to be. But, just as the seventy-two did not have to ask these questions and think these thoughts alone, we too have companions on the journey during this life stage where things may feel like they are in constant transition and movement.

Even as young adults, we too are sent out with others to help us grow and accomplish our purpose.

This is also how our faith and our salvation work. In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis reminds us: “No one is saved by himself or herself, individually, or by his or her own efforts. God attracts us by considering the complex interweaving of personal relationships entailed in the life of a human community” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 113). So, too, does Jesus save you and send you out, not alone, but with others. It is through relationships with others that we are strengthened in challenges, supported in difficulties, that we learn to love God more deeply, and that we begin to understand ourselves and our place in the world more clearly. We are not only meant, but invited and called, to share our questions, emotions, prayers, challenges, and transitions with others. As a person of faith, you are called to accompany and be accompanied in your search for God and in your pursuit of becoming the person God has called you to be.

Clearly, the harvest to be gathered from these transformative relationships with others is abundant. However, this harvest needs more laborers; the Church calls all Christians to till the soil and sow the seeds of life lived in relationship to others. Perhaps you have just experienced a mentoring relationship for this first time, or maybe you are considering finding a mentor after reading this guide. Either way, know that your call to be a faithful Christian is one that is lived out in relationship, both in being accompanied and accompanying others. If you are called to be accompanied through a relationship of mentorship, your role right now might look like being guided and learning through your mentor. If you have already experienced a relationship of mentorship, consider how you are now being called to accompany others. Either way, God’s call challenges you not to remain stagnant, but to go forth boldly to be accompanied and to accompany.

## Reflection Questions

1. After reading and reflecting upon this guide, has your understanding of mentorship changed or developed? If so, how?
2. What have you learned about yourself, your hopes, and your challenges as you have engaged with this guide?
3. How do you hope to move forward from here?
4. After this experience, how might you mentor someone else now or in the future?

