Introduction
Young adults often express the need for spiritual accompaniment to grow in their relationship with God. They desire help and guidance from mentors. Those working with young adults through campus ministries, parishes, and volunteer programs also see this need in the young adults they work with but often do not have sufficient staffing to be able to respond adequately to these needs.

At the same time, we religious are growing in awareness that we need to have more contact with young people so that they have opportunities to get to know us. For if they have no contact with us, how will they ever be able to consider the possibility of joining us?

The spiritual mentoring of young adults by religious sisters, brothers, and priests is one way of meeting both the needs of young adults for spiritual mentoring and the needs of religious communities for positive contact with young adults.

Clarification of Purpose
It is very important, however, at the outset to be clear about what the purpose of spiritual mentoring is and particularly what it is not. The mentors are to serve the needs of the young adults for spiritual accompaniment. They are not counselors, spiritual directors or vocation directors.

Referrals
One important function of a mentor is to refer the young person to the proper resource if issues arise that s/he does not feel competent to handle. Examples might be serious emotional issues such as severe depression or suicidal thoughts or experiences of physical or sexual abuse that should be handled by a trained mental health professional.

Vocation Discernment
If the young person raises discernment issues, the mentor can respond to initial questions inquirers often ask out of curiosity. If a young adult continues to ask questions about vocation discernment, refer them to a vocation director. After the mentor has gotten to know the young person, s/he might ask whether they have ever thought about religious life or priesthood and perhaps even suggest that they might be well suited for this. However, this must be done very sensitively as an affirmation and open invitation without pressure.

Skills of Spiritual Mentor
--Ability to listen well to become acquainted with the young adult and gain the person’s trust.
--Ability to ask open-ended questions such as “Tell me about . . .”
--Ability to share age appropriate responses to questions and concerns about faith.
--Ability to be attentive to the cues given by the young adult regarding the length, depth and frequency of conversations.

Meeting Format
Spiritual mentors typically meet with the young adults once per month to talk with them about their spiritual lives and particularly their prayer.

First Session
- Begin by asking them to tell a little about themselves – their age, year in school, major, family, activities, where they are from, etc.
- The mentor would then ask about their faith life including their involvement in their parish, campus, volunteer work, etc.
- Then the mentor would ask about their spiritual life and particularly their prayer. The mentor would ask the young person how, when, and where they pray, for how long, etc., in the spirit of trying to find out where s/he is in their prayer and spiritual life. You could ask the young person to describe their prayer, their relationship with God, how they see God, how their prayer and spiritual life impacts their life as a whole – their attitudes, values, relationships, actions.
- The mentor would also ask what the young person would hope for from their mentoring sessions – why s/he asked for a mentor. It would probably be helpful to write down a few notes on the responses to help your memory.
Ongoing Sessions

At the second session, the mentor can ask the young person which of the needs they expressed at the first session they’d like to focus on – whether it be on how to pray, help with a decision, etc. Then the mentor can respond to the given area as s/he deems best.

Possible Themes To Explore

Possible themes to explore in succeeding sessions could be:

- How to pray
- How they see and relate to God – whether as parent, friend, sibling, coach, mentor, judge, etc.
- How their faith and prayer impacts their lives
- What their faith and relationship with God calls them to – both now and in the future
- What they are most grateful for – what gives them life, energy, and joy
- What they are least grateful for – what drains life from them and makes them unhappy
- Their relationships
- Balance in their life
- Initial vocation call narratives and their call to holiness.

Resources

There are handouts with quotes from spiritual leaders, prayers, and reflection questions at https://nrvc.net/313/article/vocation-discernment-materials-7840

There are excellent articles available at https://vocationnetwork.org/en/articles/archive

The NRVC resource, Busy Persons Retreat booklet contains 17 themes for reflection. Young adults select a theme which includes at least 8 scripture choices and a variety of reflection questions that can be used throughout the retreat: All About Mary; Balancing Sports & Fitness with Faith and Studies; Caring for God’s Creation; Christian Leadership on Campus; Eradicating Global Poverty; Following the Voice of the Spirit; Growing through Failure; Inviting God into Decision Making; Praying in Times of Stress; Praying with Music; Promoting Global Peacemaking; Relationships; Time Management; Transitions; Seeking Solitude; Vocation Discernment; and Women in Scripture. Purchase one per student. These booklets are reasonably priced at $1.00 each for members and $1.50 per copy for non-members at www.nrvc.net/store