

Foundations of Accompaniment

By Fr. Charlie Chilufya, S.J.

Ignatian accompaniment is about walking with another person in their journey of faith, helping them to notice God's presence and respond with generosity. This guide provides basic training notes for accompanateurs — companions who offer spiritual presence and support.

■ 1. The Role of an Accompanateur

- A companion, not a master: your role is to help the person listen to God, not to impose answers.
- Create space for God's work: trust the Spirit is already active in the person's life.
- Encourage freedom: help them make choices for life and love, not dependency.

■ 2. Basic Skills for Accompaniment

- Listening deeply: with patience, reverence, and without judgment.
- Asking good questions: open-ended, inviting reflection rather than yes/no answers.
- Discernment: notice patterns of consolation (peace, joy, hope) and desolation (restlessness, confusion).
- Confidentiality: respect what is shared to build trust.

■ 3. The Rhythm of Accompaniment

- Regular meetings: weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly.
- Begin with prayer: invite the Holy Spirit's presence.
- Explore lived experience: joys, struggles, inner movements.
- End with a short prayer or Examen together.

■ 4. Practical Guides

- How to guide an Examen: lead step by step, pausing for silence.
- Introducing prayer methods: share one at a time (Lectio Divina, Imaginative Prayer, etc.).
- Helping with desolation: remind them to stay faithful, not to make major changes in low moments.
- Encouraging freedom for decisions: ask, 'What draws you closer to God? What pulls you away?'

■ 5. Formation Pathway for Accompanateurs

- Personal foundation: practice Ignatian prayer yourself.
- Peer learning: join other accompanateurs to share experiences.
- Ongoing formation: attend workshops, read Ignatian texts.
- Supervision and mentoring: seek guidance from experienced directors.

■ Final Word

Accompaniment is a ministry of presence, trust, and humility. The accompanateur does not walk ahead or behind, but alongside. Your role is to help another person hear God's voice, grow in freedom, and respond with love.