

## Book Review

### Dark Night of the Soul by Gerald May

Reading *Dark Night of the Soul* feels less like studying a text and more like entering a sacred conversation about the hidden movements of God in the human heart. Gerald May offers spiritual directors a language and framework for understanding experiences that often resist explanation, spiritual dryness, loss of meaning, disorientation, and the painful stripping away of certainty that so often emerges in the lives of those we accompany.

Drawing deeply from the wisdom of St. John of the Cross, May presents the 'dark night' not as a problem to be solved but as a mystery to be revered. For those engaged in spiritual direction, this shift in perspective is profoundly liberating. It reframes seasons of struggle not as obstacles to spiritual growth, but as sacred movements of grace, invitations into deeper freedom, surrender, and love.

As spiritual directors, we often sit with people in spaces where God seems absent, prayer feels empty, and long held images of faith begin to dissolve. May's work gently affirms that these experiences can represent not spiritual failure but spiritual transformation. The book encourages directors to resist the urge to 'fix' interpret too quickly, or restore consolation prematurely. Instead it invites us to cultivate a posture of trust, trusting the slow work of God in the soul.

This insight reshapes the ministry of accompaniment. The director is not one who provides answers but one who holds space for mystery, honours the process of unknowing, and recognises the divine presence even in apparent absence.

May's background in psychology brings a valuable clarity to the discernment required in spiritual direction. His careful distinction between clinical depression and spiritual desolation provides helpful insight, equipping directors to respond with both compassion and wisdom. He offers a language that honours the psychological reality of human suffering while recognising the possibility of profound spiritual transformation within it.

The book ultimately calls spiritual directors to a posture of humility, compassion, and contemplative attentiveness, to accompany others through darkness not with answers, but with presence, trust, and hope.

