

A Guide for Supervisors

BY ROBERT T. O'GORMAN, Ph.D.

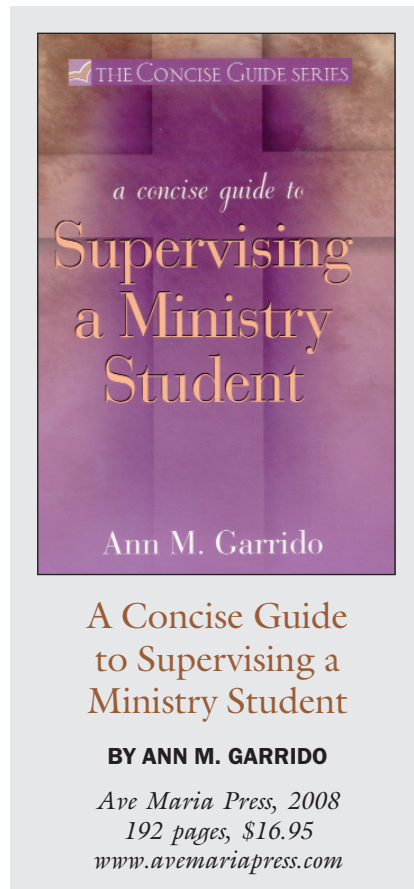
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Supervisors in any field, especially Catholic health care, will benefit from *A Concise Guide to Supervising a Ministry Student*, as it focuses on developing reflective practitioners with cornerstone components: the elements of professional skills, professional identity and authority, and integration of theory and practice. These are at the heart of training in any profession.

Field education emerged as a budding discipline in seminaries in the 1950s, initially supporting seminarians in the jobs they took in local congregations. Forward-looking professors from Protestant U.S. seminaries saw this financial exigency as an educational opportunity and began to organize classes to help students focus on ministry skills. Through the years, these professors organized what is now a professional guild representing some 350 Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox seminaries: the Association for Theological Field Education.

From the association's initial focus on ministry skills, it additionally incorporated the vital dimension of personal relations between student and parishioner that appear in the places where ministry happens — more than in the seminary classroom. Most recently field education has seen itself to be a locus of pastoral or practical theology, with the congregation as a place for theological reflection and reconstruction.

As the discipline developed, theologi-



cal schools formed connections with persons in the parishes to serve as supervisors of student interns and to complement the theoretical reflection the professors were doing. This ministry of supervision — an area of field education crying out for help — is addressed by author Ann Garrido, D.Min., who writes from her affiliation with the field educator's association,

and particularly as a leader in its Catholic caucus. The result is a handbook filled with concrete examples and practical tips for persons supervising students who are preparing to perform ministry in Catholic parishes or organizations and are being trained in Catholic seminaries or ministry schools.

The 192 pages are divided into five chapters, taking readers through an introduction to theological field education, its structure, theological reflection, key concerns of supervision and the spirituality of supervision. Four appendices are filled with case studies, a self-assessment inventory, and Scripture passages to use as prayerful images in supervision.

The first chapter is a “nuts-and-bolts” overview and an introduction to field education. Garrido places field education in the context of clinical education with an emphasis on reflection.

Chapter 2 focuses on the key elements of field education: preparation, writing objectives and evaluation. Garrido describes the supervisor as “the minister’s minister” and offers several models of relationship between a particular supervisor and a particular student.

Garrido’s passion for field education is revealed in a particularly lucid description of theological reflection in the next chapter. For Garrido, theological reflection is what ministerial supervision is all about — the process where the minister becomes a reflective practitioner. Briefly, theological reflection is a process wherein persons connect life and faith. The theological assumption behind this process is that “experience can be revelatory.” Life mediates experiences of God. What field education does in using theological reflection as its central method is to harmonize our “‘professed theology’ and our ‘operative theology.’” Garrido gives a rule of thumb that 50 percent of the learning of field education happens in doing the ministry itself and the other 50 percent happens “in self-conscious reflection upon that ministry.” She warns supervisors to take the regular 60 to 75 min-

“Ministry is a gift given without strings attached. At the same time, we cannot deny that, in the mysterious graciousness of God, whenever we minister, we do receive in return. Not always what we expected, but a gift nonetheless — often a greater gift than what we were able ourselves to offer.”
— *A Concise Guide to Supervising a Ministry Student*, pg. 117

utes of reflection time with the student very seriously. This is a “holy hour.” It is not the time of calendaring, business interaction or collaborative tasks. Garrido points out an important distinction between ministerial supervision and counseling on the one hand and spiritual direction on the other. She sums this up nicely by saying the primary focus of theological field education is “‘self as minister’ versus the ‘self as self’ or the ‘self as child of God.’” The author then goes on to suggest and describe three foci of theological reflection: action, meaning and identity. She suggests that the supervision might be concentrated on any one of these areas.

Chapter 4 may be the supervisor’s most worn and marked up chapter. Garrido discusses issues such as conflict, boundaries, time management and cross-cultural considerations. With reference to this last issue, Garrido not only deals with ethnic diversity in ministry but also (through the research of Dutch social psychologist Geert Hofstede, who has developed an intriguing five-dimensional model for understanding cultural differences) the conflict between individualism and community, the power hierarchy, the male-female balance, avoidance and acceptance, and long-term versus short-term orientation. Her focus in this chapter is on the relationship of diversity between the student and the supervisor as well as the student and the ministry placement.

The final chapter is where Garrido places supervision as an exercise of religious spirituality — supervision as a call to wholeness, humility, courage, trust, curiosity, patience and eventually like Jesus, death and hope in resurrection.

Theological educators from various religious traditions will have no trouble bridging the book’s context to the context of their supervisors. Even better, this useful book will serve supervisors in any profession, including Catholic health care. ■

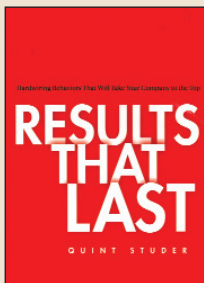
BOOKS IN BRIEF

Results That Last

QUINT STUDER

John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2007;
320 pages

There may be help here for organizations seeking to strengthen internally while waiting for a weak economy to improve. Consultant Quint Studer’s name is already well known to many



in health care. His name has appeared on the list of *Modern Healthcare* magazine’s top 100 most powerful, and he has been named

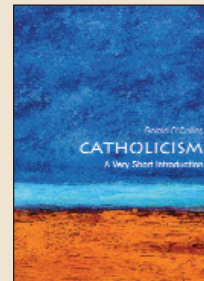
“Master of Business” by Inc. magazine. A previous writer for *Health Progress* has noted that Studer’s methods — set out in an earlier book, *Hardwiring Excellence: Purpose, Worthwhile Work, Making a Difference*, integrate well with a Catholic culture. This sequel, for leaders about leadership (and for staff members who want to help their leaders improve), is subtitled, “Hardwiring Behaviors That Will Take Your Company to the Top.” Studer offers seemingly obvious steps for weathering tough times like the present and for managing change, while citing common, if often inadvertent, behaviors that undermine. On the to-do list is the obvious — cut costs, but also: foster leadership, practice transparency, nix negatives, sing “from the same choir book,” weed out low while re-engaging high performers. Despite the book’s simplistic appearance, it’s hard to imagine that even the most seasoned manager couldn’t find something useful in these pages.

Catholicism: A Very Short Introduction

GERALD O’COLLINS, S.J.

Oxford University Press, 2008;
144 pages

Fr. Gerald O’Collins provides a snapshot of Catholicism for insiders and outsiders who wish to know it better. He does it largely with a wide-angle lens, sweeping across 2,000 years of history, with close-ups on some ways in which the past impinges on or is repeated in the present (e.g., centralized authority, scandals and divi-



sions). One of more than 200 titles in Oxford’s “very short introduction” series, Catholicism ironically followed such topics as atheism, animal rights and quantum theory by years. But then, it is a daunting subject, though one that Fr. O’Collins, former dean of the theology faculty at Gregorian University in Rome, brings masterfully under control. He amply demonstrates the contributions of Catholicism without overlooking some warts (the “shameful slowness” of Catholic moral teaching to develop in some areas, and some “unfinished business,” such as gender inequality and required celibacy for priests). There is a wealth of discussion fodder in these pages, though even the author mourns what is inevitably left out. Formation leaders in Catholic health care might find this book a worthwhile tool.

— Pamela Schaeffer, Ph.D., editor

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