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2006

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Repository Citation

Roche, Fr. Randy, "Direct Contact" (2006). *Spiritual Essays*. 386.
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Direct Contact

Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, was imprisoned three times by the Inquisition in Spain because he was teaching people that God deals directly with us, and was guiding men and women in seeking experiences of God in their daily lives. The authorities who imprisoned him were not able to find fault with his writings or teachings. God does relate directly with us, and we are welcome to seek direct contact.

Though none of us need fear imprisonment for believing in, and deliberately seeking, personal encounters with God, more subtle fears can lock us up and prevent the kinds of interactions with God that God desires to have with us. "What would someone think" if I took time for prayer? Would others consider me a "religious kook" if I made decisions based on trust in God as well as relying on the data of my senses? Might I be thought of as "politically incorrect" if I requested a moment of silent reflection before a group was to vote on a proposal?

We might have fears about trusting the experiences of God that we sense taking place within us. When we consult God in the quiet of our hearts, we have to rely primarily on our own sense of honesty; we do not at that moment have another witness. We might think, "Who am I to be asking God to give me personal answers to my concerns?" We can doubt our experiences, even though at the time they occurred, we were certain that we were being guided by the spirit of God. When the moment passes, other thoughts might come to mind: "No, it was not real." We need to distinguish between experience and subsequent doubts. Every real experience of spirit remains real after it is over. If we were touched by God, and received an insight, the experience did not disappear just because a contrary thought came to mind afterwards. Experiences have more validity by far than subsequent dismissive thoughts.

If some form of direct contact with God is rather new for us, we might become a bit nervous, or at least cautious, as we do with experiences that we have not initiated. Or we might question our worthiness, and compare ourselves negatively with others we consider "holier" than ourselves. But God does not require a long training course with prerequisites; God wants to meet each of us now, as we are, not as we might be if we had prayed or reflected for many hours a day.

God is here and now willing to meet with each one of us, though the encounters can take place much more easily when we turn off the

radio, iPod, or TV. We can deliberately turn away from the computer and the email messages; take a moment to look out the window with the eyes of our hearts open to perceive more than what our physical eyes provide for us. We can walk a few steps towards some place we need to go, with an additional intention of letting God join us on our way.

Direct contact with God is not primarily about us, but about God. We do not make anything happen in our relationship with God. Rather, God is always looking for open windows and doors to our hearts so that communication and communion might take place. We belong to God, so God alone can walk freely in and touch our feelings directly. For our part, we can set out a welcome mat, expect inspiration, and trust our experiences. We are welcome to ask for help in making decisions, and to look for actions on our behalf such as the closing of options that are not helpful, and opening of new possibilities that will be exactly suited to us.

We can ask God to be God, while we think and act like people who believe that God loves us better than our dearest friends, companions, or family members and is closer to us than the air we breathe. Direct contact with God? Yes!