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2014

Dryness

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Roche, Fr. Randy, "Dryness" (2014). *Spiritual Essays*. 366.

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Dryness

Drought refers to a lengthy period of insufficient rain, while dryness indicates a lack of moisture here and now. Many of us have experiences of dryness in prayer, which is not like the kind of drought of affections which Mother Theresa related about herself. Whether long-term or short-term, in our most significant relationships with family members and friends, or with God, we prefer, rather than dryness, to have positive feelings related to acceptance, care, appreciation and being valued for who we are.

When we do not receive positive feedback or affirmation in a particular relationship, we might become concerned about either our own perceptions or about the affection that the other has for us. If such questions arise, we can either ignore our concern or we can seek an answer in a number of ways: we can check our perceptions, we can ask the other person about his or her words and behavior, or we can reflect on the spiritual movements in our minds and hearts.

We all have different levels of tolerance for dryness in prayer, for trusting that "all is well" even when our senses perceive almost nothing, and while our minds are filled with thoughts that might be consonant with our beliefs but also thoughts that are completely disconnected from our relationship with God. If we become uncomfortable with dryness, we would do well to reflect on our experience rather than allow ourselves to become discouraged. We can also consciously and deliberately exercise our trust.

Reflecting on our experience of dryness allows us to consider whether we have made any changes in direction recently, especially right before the dry spell began, such as by making a decision that turns out to be not in our best interests, and which is effectively closing us in on ourselves. If that is what we did, we can make a healthy "course correction," and then take note of whether or not our experience of dryness gives way to rain, or at least to a bit of consolation. In a similar way, if we were hurt, troubled or otherwise confronted by some unpleasant reality, and chose not to deal with it, we would very likely experience dryness until we bring that issue consciously and freely into our relationship with God. Honesty opens us to the possibility of consolation.

Through reflection, we might come to a quite reasonable conclusion that in our present time of dryness there is nothing wrong either with us or our relationship with God, because we are genuinely content believing that feelings of consolation are not the sole measure of authenticity. If we can recognize and acknowledge that we prefer positive and supportive

experiences, but that we are basically at peace with ourselves and with God, all is indeed well.

Dryness can be a graceful invitation to greater trust. In our deepest relationships with family members or friends, there are times when we have no particular feelings of affection when in contact with them, and yet we continue and even grow in our belief that any one of them will act on our behalf whenever we are in need. Periods of dryness in our relationship with God are opportunities to exercise trust in a meaningful way.

We can rely on this: "I am with you always." (Mt. 28.20)