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Good Impressions

Fr. Randy Roche

Loyola Marymount University

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Good Impressions

So close in sound and spelling, yet so different our interior reactions to these words: impression and depression. The first is either neutral or benign, whereas none of us enjoys the thoughts and feelings that accompany any mention of depression.

The Spirit of God moves in us continually, leaving impressions of various kinds that can be very worth noting. The same Spirit never causes anything like the associations we make with the word "depression." Consider, for example, one of those moments of clarity that sometimes comes when we search in our minds and imaginations for the right words to use in communicating to another person a decision we have made that will affect him or her. The insight or inspiration makes a good impression on us: we are pleased with what has come to us, and we act on that favorable movement. And afterwards, we remain pleased with our participation in what we might reflectively identify as a movement of grace in which we readily participated.

By contrast, we might recall a moment of similarly searching for words that we wanted to use, but we were so intensely focused on what we intended to accomplish, that we became mentally confused and out of contact with our feelings, to the extent that we could call it an experience of depression, and definitely nothing that we would consider as a gift from God.

If experiences of depression are not to our liking, we can intentionally seek, look for, and open ourselves to, movements that make a good impression on us. Given the choice, most of us are more attracted to having a number of rather small, gentle and therefore less noticeable "indentations" within us, than one gaping hole. As a physical metaphor relating to the side of car, the difference would be like a hardly visible dent, or light impression, and a conspicuous gouge, or deep depression. We cannot completely prevent receiving bumps, but we can drive with care. We cannot prevent disturbing thoughts and painful experiences, but we can look beyond ourselves for healing and help; we can exercise our spirituality in ways that lessen the possibility of depression or at least its duration.

God does not live our lives for us any more than parents (even if they try) can live the lives of their children for them. But just as we suggest and encourage some possibilities for growth in those for whom we have concern, God continually advocates for us and, with complete understanding of the personality and experiences of each one of us, deftly inspires our minds and attracts our hearts, that we might choose what is better for us and for all.

Impressions, especially in terms of spirituality, stay with us, something like return addresses that are impressed onto envelopes. Depression, as it affects our spirits, might include strong negative thoughts and feelings that become entwined, generalized and oppressive, but it is not an abiding state of being. It is foreign to us, a temporary invasion that cannot possibly have its origin from Love.

As children of God, we are the intended recipients of good impressions. The more we notice and accept graced movements within us, the more frequently they will occur, as we align ourselves with God's loving desires for us.