



Digital Commons@

Loyola Marymount University
LMU Loyola Law School

Spiritual Essays

Center for Ignatian Spirituality

2014

How Long?

Fr. Randy Roche

Loyola Marymount University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/spiritualessays>



Part of the [Catholic Studies Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Roche, Fr. Randy, "How Long?" (2014). *Spiritual Essays*. 354.

<https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/spiritualessays/354>

This Essay is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for Ignatian Spirituality at Digital Commons @ Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. It has been accepted for inclusion in Spiritual Essays by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@lmu.edu.

How Long?

When we suffer from a cold or any illness, we might wonder how long the suffering will last, much as a child might be impatient for a journey to be ended, and ask, "How much longer?" No direct answer will satisfy us, for the real issue is the present discomfort or pain. When we acknowledge how we are feeling right now, and face it, we will move through suffering much more satisfactorily than if we focus on "How long?"

We are not the first persons to learn that living in the present allows for healing and for progress, whereas focusing on the desire to be through with whatever experience we find challenging accomplishes nothing. But we can always become more adept at engaging in a process of discernment through which we recognize patterns of thinking that help or hinder maintaining a peaceful spirit.

Even a small physical irritation or a slightly negative comment directed toward us can claim our awareness; much more can a prolonged illness or emotional stress demand our attention. At some time during a painful experience, we might make a decision to either discount the suffering as unimportant, or to look forward to the time when we will no longer be faced with the problem. More helpfully, we can bring our present thoughts and feelings to the place inside our hearts where we meet God, and then decide what to do or not do about the reality of our suffering. The quickest way out of pain is to enter it in company with the One who loves us.

There is nothing in our human experience that is too great or too small for God's caring attention. But in order to meet God in the midst of suffering, we need to acknowledge the full range of our thoughts and feelings, not pushing aside either aspect to the exclusion of the other, and courageously opening ourselves to whatever we will find.

We might realize, for example, that we can only manage to deal with our pain for this moment, acknowledging our present reality not as evil in the sense of wrong-doing on our part, and certainly not a punishment from God, but in all honesty as hurtful as we find it to be. Or, we might receive an insight as to an appropriate manner of seeking help that could run contrary to our usual manner of staying in control by doing everything ourselves. A further option might come to mind as an inspiration that makes our situation seem less a form of suffering and more a manner in which love flows more readily in us and around us and in other people who help us. And, not the least of the "amazing graces" that we sometimes receive, we are led to turn our attention from ourselves to someone else, and in so doing, become less

aware of our suffering. In all cases, we allow God who is within us and in everyone and everything outside us, to guide, inspire, heal and surprise us.

When we go directly to God with our concerns, we do not need to ask, "How long?"