



Digital Commons@

Loyola Marymount University
LMU Loyola Law School

Spiritual Essays

Center for Ignatian Spirituality

2014

Work and Play

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, "Work and Play" (2014). *Spiritual Essays*. 327.

<https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/spiritualessays/327>

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.

Work and Play

We usually distinguish "work" from "play," with the former being considered as more meaningful and significant, and the latter being thought of as a leisure activity. Without work, it seems that nothing will be accomplished. But play is also essential for adults. The Bible describes God as doing work in creating the world, and resting afterwards. But God also plays. And might some of what we call work, also be play?

For us, even when we thoroughly enjoy being creative, whatever we do requires some effort, and we generally call that "work." For example, when we speak about paintings and sculptures, we refer to them as "works of art" rather than "results of play." But when our work is quite rewarding, we give no thought to the efforts required, and when we play, we might become exhausted, but consider our tiredness a mark of enjoyment. Perhaps work and play are not opposites as we use them, but are instead descriptive categories that reflect our viewpoints at the time we use them.

The specific event of Creation appears to us as a huge project. But for God, just to want the universe and all it contains to exist is enough for its creation. No effort required; no blueprints, plans, or time to completion. From God's perspective the act of creation might be play. And yet, helping us to fulfill the purpose of our existence as creatures, looks like the most extreme kind of work: Jesus enters fully into our human experience of limited time and energy, and labors on our behalf even through suffering and death. It does not look like play to us. But whether we call what God does either work or play, it seems that God's concern is only to love, and so both categories and neither suffice to describe the beautiful mystery of love that encompasses all of creation in general and each of us in particular.

When we relate with God in personal prayer, is it work or is it play? In English, "pray" sounds very much like "play." Sometimes we might even have said "play" when we meant "pray." There is more to the similarity of the words than sound and spelling. When we pray, it often requires effort on our part just to be present. Yet, when a word of Scripture, a beautiful scene or a moment of deep peace lifts our hearts, we are wholly unaware of any work on our part. In such moments, all seems like play, as God moves in our spirits with perceptible affection. And is that "work" for God, or is it more like creation, God playing with us, quite personally and lovingly? Prayer, relating with God person to person, connects us with the saving work of Jesus. But that "work" has been completed.

Both work and play are meaningful concepts in our lives. But when we pray, we participate in God's love, where both work and play merge into one and the same experience.