



**Digital Commons@**

Loyola Marymount University  
LMU Loyola Law School

---

Spiritual Essays

Center for Ignatian Spirituality

---

2014

## Yawning

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, "Yawning" (2014). *Spiritual Essays*. 326.

<https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/spiritualessays/326>

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](mailto:digitalcommons@lmu.edu).

## Yawning

We might yawn when we are tired and sleepy; sometimes we might yawn when we are disinterested in what is happening around us, especially if we are in a passive, listening mode or in a situation where we have no involvement. We also yawn sometimes in response to a need for more air, for some deep breaths. I have discovered another use for yawning: when my eyes are uncomfortably dry, yawning causes them to water.

Is it acceptable to yawn during prayer, when we are in contact with God? We would not yawn in anyone's face in a situation where that might be understood as rude, or as representing an uncaring attitude. But the question is not really about "good manners" as accepted by our particular culture, but presents an opportunity for reflecting upon some qualities of our relationship with God. There are very likely similarities and also differences between our sensibilities of appropriate behavior when we converse with God, and with everyone else.

When teachers or public speakers see people yawning, they might think that those listeners care very little for what is being said, rather than that they might be especially tired, or in need of fresh air in their lungs. Presenters cannot know what is happening inside the people of an audience whose external behavior they can observe. God, of course, knows even better than we what physiological processes are at work in us, and also every aspect of our thoughts, feelings and desires. And so, God cannot "take offense" when none is offered, whether we yawn or cough, pray with eyes open or closed, walk, sit, stand or take any particular posture. Even when we fully intend to give our complete attention to God in prayer, we might find our minds wandering and feelings of devotion lacking, and yet in no way give offense to God.

In any relationship, appearances are not as important as the orientation of our hearts: in the degree of care that we have for one another. Often, we will accept almost all behavior in those we trust, even if the way they speak or act appears to be inappropriate. We either readily minimize their small failures in courtesy, or assume that they did not intend to treat us in an uncaring manner. God radically outdoes us in acceptance of all our weaknesses, even our real failures to relate in honesty and in fitting trust of God's absolute love for us.

We do not want to mistreat friends and family and all who accept us by deliberately speaking or acting in a manner that would cause them discomfort. We rely on our imperfect knowledge of them in making the small caring decisions that are part of all conversations and interactions with

others. Likewise, we do not want to presume on God's faithful love for us by consciously choosing any form of interacting and communicating that we know would be offensive. But who of us has come to know God's sensitivities in the same way as we know them in people? God does not want us to be more guarded in our relationship with him than we are with everyone else, but God sees from inside us our sincerity, honesty, respect, and love. When we speak and act in the presence of God from those interior qualities, we will experience the peace and closeness that belongs to the beloved children of God; we will surely cause or intend no offense of any kind.

If we are tired and sleepy, we are. If we need more air, we do. God knows better than we when yawning is appropriate in prayer.