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## Push Back

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## Push Back

When children play, if one pushes, the other pushes back, according to their version of playground justice. In airports, a push-back is the first movement of a plane from the passenger terminal toward the runway. In spirituality, Ignatius of Loyola identifies pushing back as an appropriate response to fear, which relates directly with the first two examples.

Fear, which we might experience as doubt or anxiety that occur while we consider making a decision to say or do something that matches authentic inspiration, is like the experience of a child who happens to be in the path of someone who does not believe in waiting for his or her turn to use a swing or other piece of playground equipment. While we adults might counsel children not to push back, lest a situation escalate, we can understand a child's anger at being treated unfairly, and a certain kind of balance that is achieved if the push back is equal and opposite to the first shove. When anxious thoughts of possible suffering, failure, or similar thoughts that induce fear pushes against us, we suffer an injustice of sorts, and have the adult prerogative of immediately pushing back in exactly the opposite direction, rather than retreating from the good we were set on choosing. The faster and more child-like our response to fear by trusting that we will restore balance by pushing back, the less suffering we will have from uncertainty and distrust in our own good intentions.

If we give consideration to contrary thoughts and accompanying negative feelings that arise when we already have in our hearts a sense for what is right for us to say or do, we will delay or even fail to begin the good deed that was ours to begin. An airliner can only take off on a planned trip when the push back from the loading area has taken place. A push back is literally a start for a journey, as is a push back against the literally mean-spirited thoughts that would keep us "safe" where we are, but prevent us from going where we want to go, even if some risk – real or only proposed – is involved.

We might have doubts and feelings of anxiety when we are about to try something new or unfamiliar, as when we agree to take even a minor leadership position with a diverse group of people whose interests and capabilities we do not yet know. But we cannot begin our journey with them until after we push back, drawing on the strength of our conviction that we have sufficient knowledge and accompanying desires that validate our decision to go forward. No internal or external rule requires that we give "equal time" to the fearful thoughts and feelings that arise when we make a free decision based on reasons of both mind and heart together.

Adult spirituality requires reflection upon experience, which we do not expect from children while they are playing together. Pushing back is an appropriate analogy for the conscious and free decisions we make to firmly proceed with the plans that we know are better for us and for others, and not to attend to the thoughts and feelings that would deter us.

We have not only the right but also the responsibility for pushing back when a movement opposes us that is contrary to God's justice at work within us.