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## Foil

Fr. Randy Roche

*Loyola Marymount University*

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## Foil

Thin, flexible metallic sheets called “foil,” most often of aluminum, are used by many of us in another meaning of the word: for foiling or thwarting unwanted interactions between whatever is on one side of the metal with that which is on the other. In a kitchen, foil is employed for wrapping or covering meat or vegetables during part or all of a cooking process in order to keep them from drying out. And many windows in homes and offices use highly reflective foil to completely block the sun’s rays. A substance that has very little weight and thickness has significant qualities that foil unwelcome contact.

We call people “thin-skinned” if they react strongly to small annoyances and “thick-skinned” when they hardly respond to even the most direct communications. The best foil for protecting us from feelings of hurt or anger is not physical, like the thickness of skin or of aluminum foil, but spiritual, having no thickness, but possessing the precise qualities that we need.

We can foil all manner of attacks upon our peace of mind and heart by making honest choices about who is the rightful owner of the negative feelings projected towards us. We can admit that someone else is hurt or angry, critical, judgmental, or manipulative, while at the same time recognizing that the pain or discomfort we might experience does not arise from anything that we have intended or done. We equivalently say “yes” to the feelings that are present in others and in us, but “no” to our being responsible for the cause of those feelings. We cannot foil the process by which our own emotions are affected when someone confronts us, whether in person, or through messages, but we definitely can advance directly to healing by rightly refusing ownership of whatever false accusations are made against us.

The difference between “yes” and “no” is about their unambiguous direction. At times we might waver between the two in the cloudy weather of “maybe.” But no matter how very thin the line might be for us in the act of making an honest choice, whenever we use “yes” or “no” in judging whether we are the responsible cause for the feelings of another person, we enact an indispensable power of our spirituality.

When we are pressed, our capacity to foil unjust projections directed towards us depends in some measure upon our habitual sense of confidence: a conviction that we are loved, valued, and capable of honest reflection. We acquire such confidence through being trusted by persons whom we respect, and also by acknowledging all levels of our religious

experience, from simple prayer to personal transcendental or inspirational moments.

We have no good reason to place even the thinnest of barriers between ourselves and the empowering love of God. When we take some time each day to reflect on one or other of even the small experiences that indicate the presence of love, inspiration, or whatever spontaneously causes us joy or gratitude, we grow in our capacity to deal appropriately with the sometimes negative messages that come to us directly from others, or even from the media.

Whenever an advertisement on a billboard, an email, or a serious one-to-one encounter upsets our interior disposition of peace, we can foil any real harm to ourselves by making the appropriately loving and honest decision of whether or not we have a responsibility to respond in any way.