



Digital Commons@

Loyola Marymount University
LMU Loyola Law School

Spiritual Essays

Center for Ignatian Spirituality

2006

Soul Food Diet

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, "Soul Food Diet" (2006). *Spiritual Essays*. 237.

<https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/spiritualessays/237>

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.

Soul Food Diet

Many of us try not to eat and drink more than is healthy for us during the Christmas season. We do not want to put on too much weight. If we consider the welfare of our spirits as well, we might take care not to weigh them down by choosing unhealthy thoughts, images, or activities. Our bodies are visible; they make an impression on the scales, and we notice when our clothing feels especially tight – signs of “too much.” Our souls too, can feel constrained by burdens of negative attitudes. We want to enjoy the holidays, not regret them!

Each of us is a unique individual person, body and spirit; the way we treat our bodies affects our spirits, and the food we choose for our souls affects our bodies as well. Some of us eat and drink more than usual when we are stressed, and as a consequence we experience some dissatisfaction with ourselves for acting compulsively. At other times we decide consciously to attend events primarily to meet people, and find satisfaction with our interactions, and enjoyment of moderate partaking of the abundance available at table.

The Christmas holidays are for many of us a time when we need to pay particular attention to a proper diet for our souls. Just as we can eat or drink more than is healthy for us, we can entertain more stressful expectations than we can healthily sustain. We can literally become ill from too much concern for matters over which we do not have control. If we take occasional moments to check on our priorities before engaging in still another demanding effort, we are likely to make honest decisions about what we can do or legitimately expect of ourselves. We might wish we could eat and drink all that appeals to us without gaining weight, and we might wish that we could make everybody happy while we ignore our own pain, internal conflicts, or difficult challenges. Neither our bodies nor our spirits do well if we neglect for long our needs for a balanced diet.

The best food for our souls has love as at least one of the components. We can tell by looking at some holiday treats on the table that they are probably rich in flavors but also composed mostly of sugars and fats. We can also tell, with only a little reflection, how we might bring or leave behind love for God, neighbor, and self to our next activity. Cookies are already baked, so their ingredients cannot be changed. But, even as we enter a room, we still have the possibility of making changes to our attitudes, expectations, and manner of interacting. Deciding before we meet people to bring in an appropriate kind of love is usually easier than making adjustments while we are involved in

conversations, but our spirits are capable of instantaneous “upgrades” if we want to make them.

General wishes and resolutions are usually ineffective for us, whereas making practical decisions just prior to special events is quite helpful in maintaining a healthy diet of food and drink. Likewise, a vague, half-hearted intention is almost useless, while looking ahead to individual events and determining what attitude we will take, and what purpose we will bring, is the working of a vibrant, healthy spirit. A prayerful pause before acting is the essence of a soul food diet.