



**Digital Commons@**

Loyola Marymount University  
LMU Loyola Law School

---

Spiritual Essays

Center for Ignatian Spirituality

---

2006

## Stronger Than Fear

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, "Stronger Than Fear" (2006). *Spiritual Essays*. 233.

<https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/spiritualessays/233>

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).

## Stronger than Fear

Some say that criminals would be deterred from their actions if they knew that they would be punished with the same sufferings that they inflicted on other persons. But fear, strong as it is in affecting our judgment and behavior, is not primarily a consequence of reasoning, but of immediate emotional responses to present dangers. And fear is often surpassed in power by other, more immediate influences: anger, hate, or, most importantly, love.

Those who consider the possible harm or punishment they could suffer if they cause injury to others might translate their fear into cautious behavior. But if their plans are focused entirely on what they desire, they might completely ignore the possibility of negative consequences in their decision-making. And for those who are unaware of the power that anger has to affect their decisions, any time they are angered, all thought of future consequences disappears from their awareness. Most of us know about incidents of "road rage" in which some angry drivers had no concern for the injury they might have caused to others or to themselves.

Anger is stronger than fear, which explains why laws prescribing punishments often do not deter criminals. Spousal abuse, elder abuse, and child abuse are not rational. Some of our own behavior might arise more as immediate angry reactions than as well-considered decisions. Heroes too sometimes become angered - at injustices - and put their lives at risk in service to others. Anger is a powerful form of energy that can serve the cause of love as well as hatred.

Hatred is stronger than fear, exemplified in suicide bombings as well as in repressive and oppressive laws and policies that are set in place to favor one group of humans over others.

But love is also stronger than fear, and has greater power to move us than either anger or hatred. Parents who go to the aid of their children with a house on fire, soldiers who aid their wounded companions during a battle, and martyrs who face suffering and death for their faith - all overcome fear or anger or hatred by their love for others, including God.

The human affections of fear, anger, and love are gifts of God. Even hatred can be viewed as a gift when it is directed against evil and not against persons. God gave us all our faculties as wholly appropriate for those whose purpose is to respond to the love in which and for which

we are created. We might recognize after the fact that some of our actions were expressions of love when we recall that we persisted in our chosen direction even though we experienced the resistance of negative emotions.

If we were to dismiss from life all fear and anger, we would lose love as well. Love is a choice, based on experiences that include our affections. Our love is the greater because we act in the face of contrary movements within us. Love is stronger than fear because we make it so.