



**Digital Commons@**

Loyola Marymount University  
LMU Loyola Law School

---

Spiritual Essays

Center for Ignatian Spirituality

---

2011

## Apples and Oranges

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, "Apples and Oranges" (2011). *Spiritual Essays*. 200.  
<https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/spiritualessays/200>

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).

## Apples and Oranges

We are reminded every so often that people, events, and situations differ from one another in qualities that cannot well be compared.

We can compare one computer with another, and we can talk meaningfully about the similarities and differences between travel by personal car or by public transportation, but we will accomplish little of value in attempting to compare one person's gifts as a musician with another person's gifts as a mechanic. Some of the most significant aspects of our lives are best admired or at the very least accepted, but not compared with those of anyone else.

Consider the harm that devolves when we praise the high school graduate who goes to a four-year college but pity another graduate who has no aspirations for higher education. Is one really of greater significance than the other in the world community which depends upon persons exercising a variety of complementary occupations and careers? And what of comparing persons by their salaries, so that a teacher is valued less than a business executive solely on the basis of annual income? Both kinds of persons are needed in society for us to function. There would be no executives without educators, and no society can function without those who organize and direct businesses and public works.

Just as we are not to harm one another, we are not to harm ourselves, as we surely do whenever we decide that we should or could be the same as some other person who has had different experiences, and who has developed different personal gifts than ours. We have grace to be ourselves, with our talents, and our backgrounds of learning through mistakes and failures, as well as successes and providential support. We do not have grace to be like any other person. We have and are all that is appropriate and needful for the present, in God's gracious workings with each one of us.

Comparisons dishonor the unique aspects of each person's "calling" in life. Who among us has the right, the reason, or the moral authority to judge one person's life as of more worth than another's? Human history contains many examples of laws, customs, and societal norms that have been quite flawed, as seen in slavery, oppression of women, or disregard for the human rights of children or the poor. Our Creator makes no such distinctions among us, loving each one of us into being, valuing each of us as an individual treasure that is literally incomparable to any other.

God gives different gifts to different people for the good of all, but that includes levels of mystery and trust that we cannot comprehend. From God's point of view, not ours, a child who dies young, an indigenous minority

person who suffers greatly in a colonized land, the elderly victim of Alzheimer's disease, and the person who lives an apparently healthy and happy life cannot be compared as to how much they are loved, nor as to their fulfillment as persons.

We are loved so much that God wants us to live together in community not just for now, but always, even after death. We can live as though such a plan is both suitable and possible, or not. But whatever our beliefs, we are apples and oranges, not to be compared with one another.