



Digital Commons@

Loyola Marymount University
LMU Loyola Law School

Spiritual Essays

Center for Ignatian Spirituality

2011

Checkers

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, "Checkers" (2011). *Spiritual Essays*. 197.

<https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/spiritualessays/197>

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.

Checkers

Those who have developed skills playing the board game of checkers plan several moves ahead. Winners are those who capture all the pieces of the other player, and losers have no pieces left at the end of the game.

Sometimes we treat our inner experiences as though we were engaged in a game of checkers where we only have a possibility of winning if we can plan far enough ahead to make all the correct moves. Also, some of us seem to believe that we are in a kind of competition with ourselves, since we have conflicting thoughts within us. The words and metaphors we use to explain to ourselves the movements in our spirits are of great importance, as some correspond better with reality than others.

Most of us have developed skills for planning ahead. If we are going to go shopping, we either have in mind the kind of shop or store that will have whatever we seek, or we will try to acquire from some reliable source of information the location of a place where we will be able to obtain what we want. If we experience a desire to be more loving, or more honest with ourselves and others, or less prone to becoming angry at small things, we might immediately move on to planning how to accomplish our goal. But, in spiritual enterprises, we will not succeed if we plan as though we should go shopping for something outside ourselves. That which we seek is already present within us, though in need of whatever encouragement and support we can find or provide.

As soon as we notice an inner movement towards positive growth, we do not engage in a metaphorical game of checkers as if we were in a contest with ourselves, but we have an opportunity to win, and to continue winning on a regular basis. Opposition, though we experience it in sometimes quite powerful thoughts, does not imply that there are two persons with opposite desires inhabiting our one body. Rather, internal conflict furnishes us with occasions to verify and affirm the original desire as our primary and more deeply authentic experience. We can recognize that the contrary, disruptive and discouraging thoughts are of lesser importance and usefulness. The desire is authentically ours, while the resistant, antagonistic, and hostile thoughts are neither relevant to us as "winners," nor deserving of any status within our minds, no matter what their claims or clamor.

We cannot make a plan to obtain our deepest and most authentic desires in the same way as we can organize a shopping trip. But we have some sound and quite reasonable and helpful options: seeking spiritual guidance in the form of trusted persons, finding some worthy reading material, and taking our personal concerns directly to our Creator, the initiator of all positive

desires. When we experience internal opposition in pursuit of our inspired dreams, rather than focusing all our attention and energy as though we were engaged in a contest like checkers, we grow more fully into the winners we are meant to be by acknowledging the truth that is both ours and God's, found in our hearts, within us.

Checkers is a game, while choosing the better options we perceive rather than those that are less good, is life, and satisfies us most deeply.