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Our Stories

Fr. Randy Roche

Loyola Marymount University

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Our Stories

We all have some personal memorable stories about times in our lives when we made decisions that have continuing positive effects. One or more of these stories might be of inspiration, courage, and honesty, another might be of mistake, frustration, and delusion, but all of them involved learning about our place in the world. Who we are now, with our values and directions in life, we can relate with a relatively small number of significant insights and decisions in our past.

I am as sure today as I was one day towards the end of my senior year in high school that being a priest was a far deeper desire than any other calling I could imagine. Likewise, no one can convince me that my failure in college physics was anything other than an invitation to seek a different direction, more in accord with my as yet unrecognized abilities. We all have some stories that we can elaborate with some details if we reflect privately, or especially when we share one of them with a person we trust.

Recalling one or more of our stories benefits us in confirming anew some of the experiences upon which many of our habits of thought and action are founded. We know now whether we chose well or poorly at the time, and what we learned is quite important for our present, ordinary process of decision-making. We are subject to many influences from persons, media, and events immediately around us; we are continually learning through reading, listening, and observing. But we filter almost everything through a perspective we have built previously, based in part on our foundational experiences of success and failure. We made some firm decisions at particular moments in our lives, because we understood, at our deepest level, that our very selves were at stake.

Most of our stories are spiritual, not necessarily because we prayed during those experiences, or referred directly to God, but because the significant decisions we made have had, and continue to have, effects upon our relationships not only with persons, but with all of created reality including our thought processes and the interpretations we make on everything that comes to us through our physical and interior senses. One of the kindest options we have in the present is being able to review one or other of our stories directly with God, or with one of those persons, like ourselves, who is created in the image and likeness of God.

One of our stories might be a bit embarrassing to recall, another, primarily affirming. All our stories can be joyfully humbling, in the sense that we can be amazed at the anything-but straight-line path, by which we have come to our present state in life. Gratitude is an appropriate response when we

review one or other of the defining and yet mysterious moments through which we have become the persons we are now. "Who would have thought" that you or I would be able to look back at some outstanding high and low points of reference in our lives and affirm that we are now, at this moment, where we belong?

Our stories, for all their variety, witness to the love of God at work in us at every moment, wasting none of our negative or positive experiences, leaving us completely and really free, yet always present with us in our capacity to recognize which of our decisions are truly "for us" and which are not.