



Digital Commons@

Loyola Marymount University
LMU Loyola Law School

Spiritual Essays

Center for Ignatian Spirituality

2007

Interpretations

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, "Interpretations" (2007). *Spiritual Essays*. 131.
<https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/spiritualessays/131>

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.

Interpretations

Some interpretations involve language, as when one person interprets some sentences spoken in Spanish for an English-only listener. But an individual also might interpret a dance, choreographing it according to his or her concept of a classical movement. And a number of conductors can interpret a piece of music as they see fit, though all of them use the same musical score. We might not think of ourselves as interpreters, but most of us do interpret rules, Scriptures, and official documents of both Church and State.

Some persons are skilled at the interpretation of languages; various artists exhibit a wide range of talent in their interpretations. When we interpret the meaning of written and spoken words, we exercise gifts of spirit. In all cases of interpretation, individuals start with something that is given, and, without changing the essentials, bring forth a particular meaning to what they see and hear based on their own experience, personality, and capabilities.

All good interpretation depends upon spirit; the Spirit of God is the guide for all authentic interpretation.

Since we do interpret, and should interpret, we do so not according to whims and certainly not under compulsions, but allowing ourselves to be guided. We exercise our God-given freedom, not to be moved by fear, ore even by a false desire to please others. Rather, we listen for the thoughts, ideas, and images that arise within us that are neither defensive not self-aggrandizing, but are experienced as invitations, consolations, and inspirations. When we read a passage of writing, we wait for an "aha" that accompanies a graced understanding coming to us more as gift than the exercise of our intelligence. When we listen to someone speak, we do not try to force the speaker's words into our consciousness, but allow a concept to develop within us that meets some perhaps never-before-recognized need. For us ordinary people, God regularly guides our personal interpretations.

Some might describe our responsibility for interpreting communications as "following our consciences." We can also describe our every-day experiences of interpretations as letting the Spirit of God bring to mind and heart the most helpful understanding available to us at the time of all that we read and hear.

Some of us are more of a literal mind while others of us are more of a "left-brain" orientation. Neither mode is more correct than the other,

though we all know some speakers and writers who insist that their words and expressions are the only legitimate means of understanding the concepts they choose to share. The Holy Spirit has complete freedom and power to act in each person as is best for the sake not only of individuals, but for human society as well. Who are we to say that this or that set of human words is the only legitimate channel for expressing a thought? God is not limited by languages. God's gracious desire is to bring all people into a unity that transcends languages, yet allows for individual interpretations of all human means of communication.

The personal interpretations we make for ourselves do not always adequately address the needs of others. Many legislators, judges, rulers, preachers and writers are mistaken when they deliver their interpretations as absolutes. If they are good willed and honest, they will deliver the best words that they can discover at the moment. Whether or not a speaker or writer consciously seeks to be guided by the Spirit of God, all listeners and readers are responsible for making interpretations for ourselves based on our present relationship with God.

In making our interpretations, we might consider some words originally written in Greek, but here in English: "We know that all things work together for good for those who love God." (Rom. 8:28)