



Digital Commons@

Loyola Marymount University
LMU Loyola Law School

Spiritual Essays

Center for Ignatian Spirituality

2007

Open Heart

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, "Open Heart" (2007). *Spiritual Essays*. 125.

<https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/spiritualessays/125>

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.

Open Heart

We all know someone who has had open heart surgery. A doctor has to cut, literally to the heart, in order to help the patient regain the capacity for living a normal life. Though the intervention is not intended to cause harm, it does produce pain and some loss of blood. Even a "paper cut" on a finger bleeds and is painful, though it is usually very small. We are sensitive to all cuts; some we deliberately choose for good reasons and some happen through no choice of ours.

God sometimes cuts to the heart for the sake of healing, but the "surgery" is bloodless, even if there is some pain. All of us need, at times, to have our hearts opened up to love: we need to have our "stony hearts" turned to "hearts of flesh" as much as someone with clogged arteries requires surgery for the sake of a healthy blood flow.

When we face some challenges in our lives we are quite aware that we are in need of help to increase the flow of love through our hearts. Even if we foresee the possibility of some pain, we ask our God to bring about the changes within us that we cannot manage to effect by ourselves. At other times, we are not aware of our need to grow in love, but a painful challenge might demand our attention as much as any heart attack or even a small paper cut. If we turn to God at those times, we also receive help to deal with events and experiences that confront us. And our hearts grow in the capacity to love.

When God opens our hearts, it is not to "teach us a lesson," but only to heal some blockage within us that prevents the flow of our love to others, and from others to us. Our spirits are made for loving more than our physical hearts are made for circulating blood through our bodies. Sometimes we seek God's help before confronting an interpersonal problem, a painful decision, or a new option just as one might opt for elective surgery. At other times, a health crisis or emotional trauma might serve as an occasion of our changing from a hard-hearted attitude to that of being open to giving and receiving love. God does not force open our hearts, but we often come to realize that what we had once experienced as a cutting pain has led to a healing gain.

God knows well what we need, and when and how best to open our hearts without impinging on our precious gift of freedom. The Divine Physician has all the skill that is needed to bring us safely through an opening of our hearts. We do not need to seek a second opinion. Any good surgeon has an expert medical team to assist. God makes use

not so much of specialists, but the people who surround us in our everyday environment – those who can reach out to us and evoke from us the particular loving responses that are appropriate for our hearts at the time.

Physical and spiritual healing does not always or necessarily involve the kind of cutting that we associate with surgery. God is quite capable of touching our hearts directly without causing any pain at all. We welcome consolation, peace, and trust that cause our hearts to expand in love. But some of the most significant acts of care, concern, and love that we experience are in response to the pain of others. In such cases we can say that our hearts are cut, not due to some injury or illness of ours, but with fitting compassion for others. Love, like a paper cut, can hurt, but we do not lose blood; rather we grow in love, understanding, and acceptance. Like Jesus Christ, we become divinely human when our suffering is for the sake of love.