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Confusion and Love

Fr. Randy Roche

Loyola Marymount University

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Confusion and Love

The English word, confusion, combines two Latin words that mean "mix together" – a rather bland expression. But an experience of confusion is not bland for us; rather, confusion is a state of mind and emotions that we want to either avoid or bring to an end as soon as possible. Being pulled this way and that by thoughts and accompanying feelings is quite unpleasant. When we struggle with divergent and often incompatible ideas, we can scarcely decide which way to go. When we need to make decisions, we want to have clarity of mind, without hindrance from our emotions.

Confusion about motives, directions in life, values, ethics, or morals is understandable, in that we can think of reasons on both sides of many important issues. But we cannot choose our way arbitrarily; we need to know which option is better, and which is not. We must find a way to break out of the darkness of confusion into the light of a fitting resolution.

One kind of confusion is limited mostly to thoughts and to understanding, as when a person of faith, with long-held ideas about the correct manner of expressing reverence for God, encounters a different idea, represented by a trustworthy person. Such confusion is often settled by "fusion:" recognizing a synthesis of two different ideas about manifesting proper respect for God. There are many times when we come to wider, deeper, broader understandings that enable us to resolve differences, and bring our confusion to an end.

Confusion that touches upon our spirituality involves more than ideas. When some irreconcilable thoughts are in our minds we are disturbed in spirit; we face real contradictions, with felt distress and lack of interior peace. Confusion of this sort is often experienced as a tearing apart within us, rather than a movement towards unity. We cannot make an appropriate decision in this state of confusion. It is enough to drive a person to prayer!

The fastest and most effective means for putting a stop to an experience of painful confusion is not by throwing darts at a board – hardly a satisfactory decision-making process. We can admit our confusion to God Our Lord, and thereby make two significant steps at once. First, we stop being pushed and pulled by opposing thoughts, because we name the experience for what it is: confusion – a temporary state of thinking and feeling that must be stopped. And secondly, we make a connection with God who loves us not just in our

minds, but at every level of our being. Taking our confusion to prayer and seeking release, healing, or whatever we need, is at least as effective as when the signal lights are not working at an intersection and a police officer holds up a hand towards oncoming traffic and signals "stop!" Order is restored where a possibly dangerous conflict existed.

Would God not help when we present ourselves in a state of confusion? Will parents let children remain in confusion without addressing their pain? Mothers and fathers might not make all the decisions for children when they become confused, since they need to grow in the exercise of their own gifts of mind and heart. But letting them know that they are loved and trustworthy grounds them anew in a reality from which they can make appropriate choices. When we go to God with our confusion, we will not necessarily receive an instantaneous and clear decision, but we will be aided, inspired, guided, and encouraged in the use of our faculties of mind and heart to take an appropriate next step. Peace is a consequence of being in touch with God, and confusion is an indication that we need to reach out to God.

Confusion is a temporary state that can provide an occasion for turning honestly to God, rather than erroneously supposing that we can always do everything by ourselves. Confusion, when it occurs, is an invitation to re-connect with the one reality that underlies every small and great choice we make: towards or away from love.