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2007

Re-tiring and Retiring

Fr. Randy Roche

Loyola Marymount University

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Roche, Fr. Randy, "Re-tiring and Retiring" (2007). *Spiritual Essays*. 98.

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Re-tiring and Retiring

When a car's tires are worn out, we re-tire it, so that our means of transportation continues to be useful. When some of our body parts wear out, we have them replaced or repaired if possible, so that we can continue with some of our activities. We retire for the night, so that we might be rested and ready for the next day. We retire from some activities in order to be able to continue living at an appropriate level according to our circumstances. Whether we re-tire our car or retire from certain forms of interaction with the world about us, our aim and intention is to continue, not conclude.

As children of God, we have two perspectives on retiring that are focused on continuation, not cessation.

First, we can ask ourselves what we need for our lives that would be like a new set of tires for our car: the appropriate means for continuing on our journey. For many of us, our answers are not the equivalent of selecting the same model of tires as the original equipment. We require new perspectives, deeper insights, more gracious habits, and broader outlooks so that the value of our lives increases rather than diminishes with age. Rather than acquire more material things, most of us find that we need to let some things go from among our overloaded boxes, closets, garages, and storage areas. Within us, we need to negotiate letting go of old hurts, grudges, and negative attitudes. We might need to forgive ourselves or at least let go of long-held fantasies about being "the greatest," and put on some of the very latest model tires for the road ahead: trust in God, forgiveness of those who have hurt us, respect for God's creation, and love of all God's other children.

A second outlook on retiring attends to the continuation of humans through death. Entropy applies to the material universe, not the spiritual universe. We have probably noticed that, as many people age and become weaker, they become more focused, and more confident in their ability to live in accord with their values; more understanding of others, compassionate and loving. As we learn from our experiences, we tend to pull together many of the disparate parts of our lives into a simpler and perhaps more "mellow" whole. We might retire from a job, but not from personhood.

As people "wind-down," many can be observed to be "winding-up" in their acceptance, peacefulness, and readiness for whatever is next, even if they do not know exactly what is next. While some put all their

attention into seeking replacement parts (re-tiring) and others move into retiring from exertion, we know many persons who have become content with themselves as they are. They trust that God, who creates life, takes care of life. People who gracefully lessen their physical activities often increase their acceptance that God takes care of all the great and small things that are now – and probably never were – within their powers to change or affect.

Eventually we die, but we do not cease. We move on. God is fully prepared to re-tire us even though we die. From The perspective of God's eternity, we have unlimited mileage left in us. Though we appear to have been declared "out of service" permanently when we die, we move on to another part of life in an entirely different mode.

Thoughts about our future affect the present. Whether we look for "the resurrection of the body" or simply rely on our experiences of God as sufficient promise for what will take place after death, life is seen to be of absolute importance. We belong to God at every moment, including those when we engage in re-tiring or retiring.