



Digital Commons@

Loyola Marymount University
LMU Loyola Law School

Spiritual Essays

Center for Ignatian Spirituality

2007

Let Not the Future Rob the Present

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, "Let Not the Future Rob the Present" (2007). *Spiritual Essays*. 95.

<https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/spiritualessays/95>

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.

Let Not the Future Rob the Present

War stories in films and books often represent their main characters talking about their fear of dying on the eve of a battle. For some, who get over-involved in thoughts about suffering or death, there is no room for anything else. They become filled with dread, withdrawn, and often physically ill. They are caught in a cycle of thinking that "tomorrow you may suffer grievously, or die." For those who get trapped in thoughts about what might happen, their present becomes almost as painful as if they had already been hit by a brick, a bullet, or a bomb.

We all face challenges: some are small though intense; others appear to be grave threats to our well-being. Any of us might have thoughts that anticipate failure, or being rejected, or experiencing great loss and pain, perhaps even death. If our thoughts run too far ahead of the real events, we take a "hit," and suffer physically and emotionally before anything has happened other than in our minds and imaginations. All our attention can become focused on what might happen, rather than giving the other side of the truth a chance. That which we fear might not occur; we might come through without harm or pain.

How great the waste of energy is when we concentrate on the pain or loss that we might suffer. Whether or not the dreaded event occurs in the future, we have already suffered, unnecessarily, in the present. If we are attentive only to negative possibilities, we are more prone to actualize them. Drained of energy and hope, focused only on our own thoughts, we are closed off from creativity, from movements of grace and inspiration, and from all that can help us to maneuver through our challenges.

We have options. We do not have to let the future rob our present state of peace. At the first thoughts about the future, rather than becoming engrossed in those thoughts, one after another, we can attend to the accompanying feelings of concern, fear, or anger, and try to name those feelings to God. That which we are experiencing is a present reality which can be shared with God who loves us. When we sit with another person who suffers, we do not take away their pain, but we share it in some small way that makes a difference. When we let God accompany us in our present state of mental and emotional turmoil, we will almost always find support that brings us a sense of peace and accompaniment, a lessening of fear and aloneness.

Whatever it is that we dread, whatever lies ahead for us, might come to pass. If tomorrow is a loved one's funeral, or a leave-taking from a home, of course it will be painful. But before it takes place, rather than dwelling on the pain to come, we can engage in some reflections that will not change the facts or events, but will change us. We can remain closed within a circle of painful thoughts, or we can ask ourselves, "Where might God be in this coming event?" "How might I bring honesty and love to what lies ahead?"

If the worst happens tomorrow, it will happen, whether or not we worry and get sick about it now. Entering into a trust relationship with God changes our present, allowing us to experience the peace that comes from being completely truthful about our thoughts and feelings, and being completely understood and accepted. We are not alone, no matter what might occur. God is not going to "take away" life, but always calls us to more life, even through pain, suffering, and death itself.

We do not have to let ourselves be mugged and robbed by the thoughts and imaginings that come to us when we are faced with some awful possibilities. What is the grace of this moment? At the very least (or best) let it be communication with God about our concerns for the future. If suffering lies ahead, it is both reasonable and possible to think and imagine that we are about to take up a cross, but with Jesus. And He is Risen.