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## Foghorns

Fr. Randy Roche

*Loyola Marymount University*

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## Foghorns

When I was a child growing up on the coastal side of San Francisco, I was accustomed to hearing the foghorns that were located near the Golden Gate. The sound was comforting, even though I had no experience with being on a ship or on a fishing boat where the warning sound would be a significant factor for arriving safely in port. When I could not see across the street because the fog was so thick, the sound of a foghorn somehow made up for diminished vision, and conveyed a sense of safety and security.

What and who have been "foghorns" in our lives? We can probably still "hear" the voices of particular persons who helped us either avoid some near wrecks, or assisted us in learning how to determine directions to take for maintaining our integrity at times of significant decision-making. While it might be easier to call to mind the familiar sound of a foghorn or a musical phrase, we might find a deeper kind of satisfaction by deliberately recalling the voices, facial expressions, and especially the encouragement and support of some of those persons whose care for us continues to have effects in our ways of thinking and acting.

November is a month when many people recall loved ones who have died, perhaps to pray for them as an act of love or gratitude, perhaps to recover in our present moments, some of what we once received from them. When we look into our past for some of the "foghorns" we have had - family, friends, mentors, teachers, guides, coaches, some of whom have died - we can experience anew some of the enlightenment we first received when they were with us, and we were very much with them. Active remembering is not a means for going back into the past, but rather a choice to engage in a new and present experience of gratitude, and to open ourselves to confirmation and affirmation of some particular graced influences that we have assimilated.

One surprise for many of us if we spend some time considering the significant contributions we have personally received from others - those whose words and expressions were greatly helpful to us along the way - is the realization of how many there were. No one person enabled us to negotiate all the growth and changes we made to our ways of thinking and acting. Many different people have had significant positive effects in our lives. Though we made the choices to accept what they offered us, we would not be who we are today had these "foghorns" not been within our hearing.

Many of those persons whose words and deeds we now recall with gratitude might not have had from us anything like our present recognition of their positive influence upon us, nor the level of thankfulness that we so clearly perceive within us. Whether or not we can imagine that our conscious recalling of them could in any way be pleasing to those who have gone before us, we can acknowledge the love we now experience in remembering them as a value itself. If we visit someone who is unconscious in a hospital bed, or someone who has no recognition of us as a result of Alzheimer's disease, we cannot see that our love for them makes any difference to them, but that does not lessen the love we bring to a reality that is beyond our capacity to understand.

I find it easy to conflate gratitude to God with gratitude for the many persons whose wise words and caring attitude enabled me to move forward in a positive direction. If we cannot know how or whether we can convey our thanks to those whom we remember, we can certainly thank the God of "foghorns," and that might be enough for us.