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2009

Which Language

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Roche, Fr. Randy, "Which Language" (2009). *Spiritual Essays*. 50.

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Which Language?

Which language does God use? God speaks the language that is most familiar to each of us. Our intention to communicate seems to be the only essential in conversing with God, not our choice of language. We do not have to be careful of proper grammatical construction and literary forms. We do not have to stand, sit or kneel when we talk with God. Tears, sighs, and gestures are acceptable. So too, the whole range of human emotions, from anger and disappointment, to love and affection. Could any language possibly exist among us that God would find unfamiliar?

Though we are capable of conversing with a small group of people, and might even be able to keep the exchange of ideas going when more than one language is being used, few if any of us can fully interact with more than one person at a time. Try to imagine that right now, people of various languages are communicating with God all at the same time, and experiencing God as responding to them in their uniqueness. God not only understands every language and mode of expression of each and every person, but also responds in the manner that is uniquely appropriate to us, and all at once.

However, God is not some kind of cosmic switchboard, through which all our communications flow in their multiplicity of languages and modes of expression. Our experience is not that of relating with a thing, but with someone. Many, many people of every age write and speak of direct personal contact with God. But not all people, for we differ from one another not only in language, but in culture, faith, and our understanding of the meaning and purpose of life.

Some of us find spontaneous informal communication with God to be familiar and easy, while others relate more readily in formal prayers and rituals. For some, maintaining very close connections with traditions as handed on by culture groups is most important; for others, continual growth and change in response to their individual experiences are of primary concern. God does not require that we all communicate in the same way, or that we must all use specific words or forms of expression. God relates with each of us as we are at this present time. Not one of us has ever been turned away because of the language we use, or because of how we use that language.

God relates with us in any and all of our languages, but does God have a language that is different from all of ours? Teens and clubs and interest groups sometimes use expressions that only the members of

their groups know. But we are all members of God's group, so there are none with whom God would have reason to use a language that would exclude others. Rather, as our experiences verify, God has particular ways of communicating with us that go beyond language, and are unique to God: Only God can use the language to address us, yet all of us can understand it.

To recognize God's language most easily, we can consider some of the ways that we perceive God's love: from metaphorical smiles and hugs, to experiences of interior warmth that become even physical warmth, and especially peace, sometimes deep peace, and even at times a peace that becomes sleep or the nearest thing to sleep while we are still awake. In addition, some of our heartfelt desires we can recognize as being at the same time ours, yet also God's.

Which language does God use? Love.