



Digital Commons@

Loyola Marymount University
LMU Loyola Law School

Spiritual Essays

Center for Ignatian Spirituality

2009

Why Listen?

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, "Why Listen?" (2009). *Spiritual Essays*. 48.
<https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/spiritualessays/48>

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.

Why Listen?

Many good people, without clarity of intention, regularly listen to, or read, vicious criticisms of public figures. We know that love in every form always seeks the welfare of others, and brings peace, while the opposite – hate, however “mild” the varieties - seeks to diminish others, and brings agitation. We cannot judge the intentions of talk show hosts, commentators, or writers who tear down reputations and use manipulation of words to incite anger, but we are responsible for what we choose to hear or read as much as we are for what we eat or drink. We will not consume whatever offends our taste or causes sickness. Neither do we need to partake of words that have negative consequences upon our minds and hearts.

In meeting our appetite both for information that will help us, and entertainment that will re-create us, we can choose TV and radio programs to watch, books and magazines to read, that ultimately complement our values, rather than leading us into a zone of negativity. It is not so much the content, but our intention that is most important. Even the Bible has stories of wrong-doing, but when we read or hear them in a context of faith, we are not sickened in spirit. But if we read or hear words that move our emotions with anger, our thoughts with negative judgments, and our attitudes with arrogant superiority, we ingest them to our harm and send ripples of hurt, instead of help, into the world of people around us.

The decisions we make when we attend to what others say or write is a significant aspect of our relationship with God. We know the difference between saying a prayer while we are thinking of something else and listening to God when we clearly seek an answer of some kind. Parents know that their children are not really listening to them when they keep their eyes (and most of their attention) fixed on some occupation. The choice to listen to God can also range from half-hearted to complete focused attention. If we are clear about why we want to listen to God, or anyone else, we will hear much differently than when we sit down and wait for something – anything – to happen.

There is nothing in our lives that is either too great or too small to include in our daily interactions with God. If we have any concern for the effects upon us of some of what we listen to or read, we can ask God whether or not any particular or habitual media program or reading material is helpful or worthless for us at this time.

The major obstacle to asking for insight into our own propensities at any given moment is an unfounded fear that God would act like a self-righteous censor, and say "no" to anything that might be offensive to anyone, ever. Our experience belies the fear. God's love for us supports our learning and growth as humans through interaction with both beautiful and ugly realities. But, with full knowledge of the intentions of speakers and authors and of our present readiness to benefit or not from what we read or hear, God is the absolutely trustworthy illuminator of our intentions.

The question deserves our conscious, free decision: Why listen?