



Digital Commons@

Loyola Marymount University
LMU Loyola Law School

Spiritual Essays

Center for Ignatian Spirituality

2008

Holy Selfishness

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, "Holy Selfishness" (2008). *Spiritual Essays*. 31.

<https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/spiritualessays/31>

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.

Holy Selfishness

We spend much time and effort on behalf of a variety of persons, whether in direct or indirect service, from setting the table at home to putting in a day of work. We do not make ourselves the center and focus of all that we think and do all day. Self-preoccupation cannot fulfill us, nor can it bring us happiness. But without a proper care for ourselves, we will have nothing to offer for the sake of others.

Love of neighbor is just about impossible without love of self. Those who do not believe that they are loved can perform deeds of kindness or assistance to others in imitation of role models, but they usually have little inner joy or enthusiasm to support habits of helpfulness. When we accept that we are loved, we respond naturally by loving others. If we desire to make a positive difference in the lives of others, we need to stay in touch with our own experiences of receiving attention, respect, and love.

Our capacity to help others depends upon the belief that we are worthy of love. We can doubt that anyone, including God, can love us; we can refuse to accept it, we can focus on a negative self-image, take on a mind-set of false guilt, and otherwise deny the presence of honest loving regard that comes our way. Or, with an attitude of holy selfishness, we can decide to take in all that is offered us, not just for our sake, but for those we will be enabled to love.

With some honest reflection, we might wonder who could really love us as we are, with our flaws, weaknesses, and habits that we do not approve of in ourselves. But honesty requires that we respect and love ourselves as God and others love us, not based on our goodness or our good deeds, but on the mysterious and undeserved choice by which we are loved.

We have reason for making a daily inventory of signs that God loves us. We should let God do what God wants to do. We honor God if we accept "being picked for the team" rather than to refuse, on the grounds that we are not good enough. In letting God love us directly and through others, we find energy and motivation to love both God and neighbor.

Love of God is an "acquired taste," no matter how strongly the concept might have been presented to us. As we come to acknowledge the experiences in our lives that manifest God's love for us, our interest grows in responding, in loving back. If we are good friends with

parents, we are usually well-disposed to their other family members. As we grow in our love for God, we will grow in love of God's family members, our neighbors.

Holy selfishness is quite compatible with self-sacrifice. Becoming consciously aware of the extent to which we are loved leads us out of ourselves to spontaneously and courageously take care of the needs of others, even at cost to ourselves. God's goodness overflows into our being created in His own image. All the goodness we can find within ourselves – the love with which we are loved – will, in our human expressions, benefit others as the positive results of our holy selfishness.