

2024 ST ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY REGION FORMATION CONFERENCE



A Journey Toward Franciscan Joy

The devil rejoices the most when he can snatch away spiritual joy from a servant of God. He carries dust so that he can throw it into even the tiniest chinks of conscience and soil the candor of mind and purity of life. When, however, the soul is wretched, desolate and filled with sorrow, it is easily overwhelmed by its sorrow or else it turns to vain enjoyments.

We can discover spiritual joy through the example of others in fraternity.



But when spiritual joy fills hearts the serpent throws off his deadly poison in vain. The devils cannot harm the servant of God when they see he is filled with holy joy.

Joy is not in the absence of sorrow, but also is found in suffering.

It is recognizing God's presence with us always.

Example of Rose, my Formation Director who was always cheerful and encouraging



The poor have much to teach you. You have much to learn from them.

- St. Vincent de Paul

Our apostolates can be a place to find true joy. In mine I found:

- Witness of the recovering alcoholic who lost ‘everything’, but lives with gratitude
- Witness of the young mother providing for her two young children, who finds peace attending mass
- Witness of the struggling alcoholic who still touched the lives of people in her rooming house in a positive way



A sense of community will make them joyful and ready to place themselves on an equal basis with all people, especially with the lowly for whom they shall strive to create conditions worthy of people redeemed by Christ

- No one is perfect, we don't earn our salvation, it is a free gift from God given to all.
- Recognize my own brokenness, but God loves me anyways and can still work through me.
- Easy to identify with the poor and marginalized, when I keep in mind that I too, in my own way, am poor and marginalized.



My grace is enough for you, for in weakness, power reaches perfection and so I willingly boast of my weaknesses instead that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 2 Corinthians 12:9

- Accepting of my “shadow self”
- Francis and St. Paul tell us the good God does through us we don't own and thus should not boast.
- Embrace our sins, failings, brokenness, desire for power. Forgive these in *ourselves* and in *others*.
- Poverty, not perfection. Who is good but God alone?
- Overcoming oneself is the path to true and perfect joy



Overcoming ourselves: Being willing to accept out of love for Christ “all suffering, injury, discomfort and contempt.” - St. Francis

We have been called to heal wounds, unite what is fallen apart and to bring home those who have lost their way. - St. Francis

Embrace that fruit of the Holy Spirit (JOY) that nothing and no one can ever take away, not even death.



Have caution in not allowing yourself to be struck down by adversity, nor becoming vain by prosperity.

- St. Clare

- Recognizing God already loves us for who we are and not any good that we do. *Our desire to do his will* even if we are not perfect at it, is *already* doing his will and true joy.
- Seeing the good in everyone as our rule calls for
- Forgiving in myself my faults and forgiving others for their faults.
- **Judge no one. Do not add to anyone else's burdens**
(Romans 14: 12-13, 17-19)
- Offer up suffering and hardship in solidarity with the suffering of Jesus on the cross. In this way suffering is redemptive
- Live each day with *Praise* and *Profound Gratitude*

Closing

Loving God, There isn't any one of us that you do not call into being with every breath.

Thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Help us share with one another the perfect joy that comes from knowing the extent of your love for us.

Amen



Reflections

Is there someone – family, friend, SFO fraternity member over the years that taught you something about Franciscan joy? No need to identify the person, but what was the lesson that you learned?

Joy is not the absence of suffering. Joy is the presence of God. How has this been true for you in your life?