

SPIRITUAL FORMATION FOR A ZEALOUS HEART

JOY

1) JOY: A SIGN OF CONTRADICTION

- Beneath the veneer of happiness and celebration of material wealth, power and pleasure, there exists a profound sadness, cynicism and inability to be truly joyful. Our western culture is looking for the secret of living with joy.
- The one who lives with joy in the midst of poverty, weakness and suffering is a sign of contradiction to the world.

2) WHAT IS JOY?

- *“Joy is the fruit of love. Joy fills the heart when it possesses the object of its love, when its desires have been fulfilled.”* (Fr. Emile Briere, *For uncomplicated Christians: Reflections on the power of Love*, St. Paul Editions, 1973, p. 43-44)
- The saints should be the most joyful people in the world.

3) WHY DO SO MANY CHRISTIAN SEEM JOYLESS?

- “Perhaps it is because they do not realized that they possess and are possessed by God.” (Fr Emile Briere, *ibid*)
- “If Christians want us to believe in their Redeemer, why don’t they look a little more redeemed?” (Neitzsche)
- Ex. Imagine a team of complaining, morose, frowning evangelists driving up in a hearse, singing a dirge of praise.
- Evangelization leads to union with God, the only source of true joy because He alone satisfies all our desires.
- “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.” (St. Augustine)

4) JOY IS NOT ONLY THE FRUIT OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE, IT IS THE RESULT OF A DECISION TO REJOICE.

- *“Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice.”* (Phil. 4:4-5)
- We are commanded to be joyful. How? Praise God in all circumstances!
- We can open the door to joy by an act of our will to praise God despite our feelings and circumstances. We can even praise God for every doubt, fear, worry, weakness and trial, not because these things are praiseworthy, but because we possess and are possessed by God who will get us through. The recovery of our joy comes from the rediscovery of this truth.

PRAYER: Ask for the grace of a joyful heart.

ACTION: Choose to smile at the people you pass on the street, meet at church, and work with