

ST. FRANCIS AND THE STIGMATA

Celebrating the 800th Anniversary of the Stigmata of St. Francis

An Exercise for Healing Ourselves and Others

In the Stigmata of St. Francis, we contemplate the two emotions that our Father Francis must have experienced when he received the wounds of Christ:

Extreme Pain

Extreme Joy

As Catholics and Franciscans, we are called to join our sufferings to the sufferings of Christ. For some, this concept is easily understood. For others, it is not.

How can we witness our Franciscan faith to others if we do not understand this concept? How can we heal others' suffering if we come from a place of suffering ourselves? Can we heal others if we, ourselves, are not healed?

These are all questions that require meditation and discussion. Perhaps, some will decide that they cannot heal others when they are suffering themselves. What is the alternative decision? Can we heal others with the understanding that comes from our own suffering? Can the strength that God gives us to endure our own sufferings, hardships and griefs help us to strengthen and heal others in theirs?

This exercise has two parts and can be used in your Fraternity Gatherings during Ongoing Formation. You might choose to use it in small groups or in the privacy of your own home. The first page is an example of what each letter of "**STIGMATA**" might represent in **Extreme Pain** and **Extreme Joy**. The second page can be filled in with your own general or personal ideas. You may want to meditate and/or share in discussion.

Israela M. Garcia, ofs

S

SORROW: How could someone hurt me so much?

SALVATION: Lord, I unite my suffering to yours.

T

TORN: Why do I feel like my heart has been ripped from my chest?

TENDERNESS: Lord, help me to treat others with kindness.

I

IGNOMINY: How could they lie about me like that?

INDULGENCE: Lord, thank you for granting me forgiveness.

G

GRIEF: How could God take my loved one from me?

GRACE: Lord, grant me the graces of wisdom and understanding.

M

MISERY: Why can't I live a "normal" life?

MERCY: Lord, be merciful to me for my ingratitude.

A

ANGER: Why do I become angry when things don't go my way?

AGREEABLE: Lord, help me to rid myself of selfishness.

T

TROUBLED: Why am I afflicted with anxiety?

TRUST: Lord, reveal to me your abiding peace.

A

AVARICE: Why do I feel like I never have enough?

ALMSGIVING: Lord, help me to give of myself to others.

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