

# January 2015 Staff Meeting Faith Formation

## A Call to Joyful Prayer

### Slide 1

By now we have all heard about Pope Francis and his Christmas message to the Curia. Pope Francis worried about those who suffer from “the malady of the funeral face.” Symptoms include brusqueness, arrogance, and a “sterile pessimism.” His suggested remedy? A dose of prayerful humor in the form of St. Thomas More’s plea for good digestion and calm life:

### Slide 2

“Grant me, O Lord, a sense of good humor. Allow me the grace to be able to take a joke and to discover in life a bit of joy...”

### Slide 3

In Margaret Guenther’s exploration of the relationship between prayer and play in her grace-filled book on spiritual direction, *Holy Listening*, she quotes the anonymous 14th-century author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* mocking the stiff and overpious: “Sometimes their eyes look like the eyes of wounded sheep near death...Far better a modest countenance, a calm, composed bearing, and a merry candor.”

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Six centuries later Pope Francis echoes that advice to the funeral-faced: “An apostle must make an effort to be courteous, serene, enthusiastic and joyful, a person who transmits joy everywhere he goes. A heart filled with God is a happy heart which radiates an infectious joy.”

### Slide 5

Guenther suggests that a touch of playfulness in prayer grounds us and reminds us that God is in the everyday as much as in the spiritual heights. St. Thomas More’s prayer begins somewhat impishly with a request to the Lord for good digestion, and, oh, by the way, some food to digest would not go amiss. In his *Exercises*, St. Ignatius encourages us to speak to Jesus as one friend to another. Do I love God enough to banter with him, as we might with a friend? Or perhaps I should ask if I’m certain enough of God’s love for me that I would risk bantering with God in my prayer?

### Slide 6

We might recall those times when we were children walking to the park after school on a crisp fall day to swing on the swings. Can you still remember the delight when you figured out how to pump and could go higher and higher without anyone pushing. It felt like flying. And there was the heady risk of it all. Would you bounce out of the swing? Would you go so high you would fly over the top bar? Could you stop without ruining the tops of your shoes? There is a wild joy to this sort of play.

We might ask ourselves: Am I willing to abandon myself to such wild joy in prayer, to live with such a wild love of God that it infects those I meet?

Pope Francis suggests we might pray for the grace.

A short prayer reflection: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DtEPakoUjnk>

Adapted from:

[http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/20356/wild-joy/?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+dotMagis+%28dotMagis+-+Ignatian+Spirituality%29](http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/20356/wild-joy/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+dotMagis+%28dotMagis+-+Ignatian+Spirituality%29)