

PERSONALITY TYPES AND FORMATION

We will be better formation members the more we know about the people in our fraternities. Secular Franciscans, like people in general, come in all sorts of sizes, shapes and personalities. Different personality types learn in different ways and participate in groups in different ways. We will become better formation members the more we understand about how people operate.

EXTRAVERTS — INTROVERTS

These first two categories indicate how we tend to get our energy and interact with others. Extraverts tend to get energized through interaction with others and the world around them. When an extravert has a good weekend, he or she will seek out someone with whom to share the details. In this way, they “relive” and deepen the experience. Extraverts tend to think out loud, and so when dealing with extraverts, it is important not to push them too quickly to get to the point: they may not yet know what the point is. Extraverts may prefer community prayers, such as the *Liturgy of the Hours*. Extraverts do not necessarily mean to monopolize the conversation. His or her assumption is that everyone will just jump in. Extraverts approach discussions like the old joke about the Irish and fighting: “Pardon me, is this a private fight, or may anyone join in?” Sometimes you may have to gently remind an extravert that others may not jump in so readily. “Good point, Patricia. Let’s explore this point for just a minute. What do you others think about this?”

Introverts, on the other hand, tend to get energized through the inner world of concepts, ideas, and feelings. Introverts are not necessarily shy; however, they do not tend to share their thoughts and feelings as readily as extraverts. When an introvert has a good weekend, he or she will tell you only so much. You may have to dig a bit to get the details. Introverts tend to think inside their heads, and speak only when they know what they want to say. A rule of thumb is that introverts don’t speak until they know what they think, whereas extraverts don’t know what they think until they speak.

Introverts may prefer quieter, more contemplative forms of praying. When dealing with introverts in a formation group, it may be helpful to “encourage” them to speak, particularly if the extraverts are really on a roll. “James, you look like the wheels are turning in your head. What do you think about this?”

THINKERS — FEELERS

These categories indicate how we prefer to process information. Thinkers tend to process information through logical thinking. They value consistency of ideas and the flow of thought. Thinkers are often able to look at multiple sides of an issue because they can distance themselves from their own feelings about a subject. Many times thinkers will actually argue the side they personally disagree with, just to explore those possibilities. Sometimes it seems as though a thinker is not personally invested in an issue. This is not true. They just invest themselves in different ways. At times, they may need to be encouraged to express their feelings, to reveal what is in their heart.

Feelers, on the other hand, tend to process information through their personal value system. This does not mean that they do not think logically. Feelers value harmony, both internal and external. Feelers are strong in their commitment to what they feel is true and just. They may be more concerned about how some idea or policy will affect people than about how logical the idea or policy is. Sometimes it may seem as though they are too personally invested in an issue, and may need to be reminded to explore other sides of an issue.

Our fraternities need **extraverts and introverts, thinkers and feelers**. Without each, we would become lopsided. It is our job, as formation members, to help orchestrate these various instruments of God’s peace.