

1st Franciscan Youth (YouFra)

International Assembly

Introduction

The representatives of 25 National Franciscan Youth Fraternities, with their hearts open to the action and love of God and together with some of their National Assistants and representatives of several National Fraternities of the Secular Franciscan Order (OFS), as well as several members of the CIOFS Presidency, gathered together during the First YouFra International Assembly, that took place in Vilanova i la Geltrú (Barcelona-Spain), from 28th June to 5th July 2007. In communion with the Franciscan Family and on the way towards the preparation of the 8th Centenary of the beginning of the Franciscan charism we have selected, as a common theme for our reflection, the mandate of the OFS Rule: “From the Gospel to Life, from Life to the Gospel”. Starting from this theme, and bearing in mind the celebration of the 8th Centenary of the birth of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, during the assembly we shared our experiences of life and reflected upon:

- The life of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, her witness of motherly love and of merciful donation to the marginalized people of her time, the coherence and authenticity of her life,
- The place of the Young franciscans in the Church,
- The place of the Young franciscans in the Franciscan Family, and what following Francis means,
- Their vocational journey.

The assembly:

- defined YouFra, as the communion of the Youfra Local Fraternities existing all around the world, as an integral part of the Franciscan Family living the experience of Christian life in the light of the message of St. Francis of Assisi, and deepening its vocational journey in the midst of the Secular Franciscan Order.
- approved a regulation to orient the international activity of the Franciscan Youth.
- approved the following as conclusions:

Conclusions

- **The YouFra, present and future**
 - The YouFra and the Church

The YouFra commits itself to promote the Christian vocation through:

- A coherent and authentic witness, which is more convincing than words.

- The transmission of faith through attitudes of respect, listening, dialogue, true friendship, solidarity and service.
 - Its own experience and formation that helps in the task of evangelization.
 - Decisions and commitments that are coherent and definitive.
- The YouFra in the Franciscan Family
 - Recovering the spirit of Francis, the Young franciscan must be filled with a passion and love that places God in his/her first place.
 - If God is at the center of my life, I can also love and respect the other as he or she is, without discrimination of age, religion, culture or race.
 - It is important to abolish the barriers that I have within me so that I may see others as real brothers or sisters.
 - Being a member of the Franciscan Family, Youfra has and must take advantage of the opportunity to take the Gospel in a Franciscan way to all corners of life and be a light in today's world.
- The Eucharist for the Franciscan Youth
 - Like Francis, we too are called to recognize the sacrament of God's body in the Eucharist, and to live the Trinitarian experience on the basis of the Word and the Eucharist.
 - For the Young franciscans, the intimate relationship with Jesus and His word is fundamental in order to be able to live the Eucharist.
 - Minority, humility, innocence and poverty, are values that help to understand and live the Eucharist.
 - As Franciscans, we must celebrate the Eucharist in true community; prayer, formation and mission have no meaning without community.
- The YouFra in the future
 - The Local Fraternity must be strengthened as the place in which the evangelical life style to which the Young franciscan is called, can be deepened. Availability, poverty and fraternity must be fostered among its members. This will make the group grow and will support the sense of belonging to the YouFra.
 - The Franciscan Youth is not just another group; the YouFra Local Fraternity must be recognized by the Franciscan Family and in the church community. In order to achieve this, the presence in the Eucharist, the social works and the activities organized by the parish, the diocese and/or the Franciscan Family, are absolutely necessary. Furthermore, the YouFra must enrich itself through the knowledge of other youth church groups as well potentially being recognized as a juridical civil entity.
 - Ongoing formation must be enriched with spiritual retreats or other activities at the Regional or National level. The contacts

through internet with other YouFra realities can also help the growth of the Young franciscan or the group. The Local Assistant must promote a greater approach to the young members of the Fraternity.

- **Unification of Criteria**

- **Ritual**

- Rite of Initiation

- We propose a more streamlined rite that includes gestures and symbols.
- It is advisable that, before the rite, the Young franciscan has already received Confirmation.
- The rite will be celebrated during a time of prayer of the Fraternity.
- The Gospel and other YouFra documentation will be given to the Young franciscan.

- Rite of the Promise

- An adequate rite will be celebrated during Eucharist open to all the community.
- The Young franciscan will be given a Tau, possibly a specially designed one.
- Before the rite, the Young franciscan should to participate in a specially prepared spiritual retreat.

- Others

- In both rites, the welcoming will be performed by the president of the Local Fraternity into which the young member is intending to be incorporated or of the Fraternity with which the Young franciscan commits himself or herself (Cfr. *YouFra, A Way of Franciscan Vocation*, art. 21). In the case that there is no brother or sister in the Local Fraternity that has performed his or her promise as in the case of an emerging Fraternity, the president of the superior level, or when this is not possible, the Minister of the Local OFS Fraternity, will be responsible for the welcoming.
- Each year, the Young franciscan that has made his or her promise will remember or renew this promise during a rite with his or her own Fraternity.

- **Formation program**

- The young people who decide to make a promise must have completed a period of specific formation which, in the last few weeks, includes a spiritual retreat (*YouFra, A Way of Franciscan Vocation*, art. 21).

- Inclusion of social projects in formation programs which help to make the commitment more “realistic”.
- Inclusion of gatherings with other fraternities on the Regional, National and International level to complement the formation that the young people receive in their fraternity.
- Creation of a specific program for the formation of Assistants and the involvement of Religious in YouFra.
- Creation of a specific program for the formation of fraternal animators.

○ **Vocabulary**

List of names proposed to be used by YouFra.

Services in the fraternity:

- President
- Vice President
- Responsible for formation
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Councillors

Guidance and animation:

- Council
- Assembly
- Elective Assembly

Meetings:

- Gathering

• **Fraternal animation**

- The fraternal animator is responsible:

- To be present and accompany of the YouFra fraternity, helping its young members to progress in their human and spiritual journey.
- To communicate his or her fraternal and evangelical experience as an example for the youth.
- To coordinate work with the other fraternal animators at the different levels.
- To foster the YouFra in the OFS Fraternities as well as in the Franciscan and ecclesial communities where it does not exist as an option for young people.
- To establish connections and bridges between YouFra and OFS.

- To collaborate in the organization of gatherings.
 - Characteristics of the fraternal animator:
 - Dynamic
 - Constant
 - Spiritual
 - Formed
 - Open to dialogue
 - Respectful
 - Able to listen
 - Youthful Spirit
 - Having the charisma to relate with young people
 - Open to learning
 - Situations that require special attention by the fraternal animator:
 - The goodwill to accept the mission.
 - Freedom from other engaging commitments.
 - The capacity to fulfill his or her task with sense of responsibility.
 - Capacity not to impose his or her will on the youth.
 - No confusion between his or her mission and the tasks of the YouFra president or the Spiritual Assistant.
 - Engagement of the OFS with the YouFra project and action as an element of communion.
 - Not to direct the group in an exclusive way towards the OFS.

- **Children and adolescent groups**

- The Assembly renews its will to carry on with the animation of Franciscan children and adolescent groups, in a shared way with the OFS, with the assistance of the religious. We propose the creation of mixed coordinating commissions at the National level and direction at the Local level.
- The Franciscan children and adolescent groups are a complement to the catechesis that the children and the adolescents must attend; these groups must in no case whatsoever be seen as a substitution. They must be open to all the children of the church community accepting children that come out of non Franciscan families.
- Parents must be encouraged to participate in their children's growth as persons and as Christians in the "House of God".
- We propose the elaboration of adequate formation material for the animators, as well as the sharing of experiences with the animators of other groups.

- **Others**

Following the concrete indications presented by its members, the YouFra International Assembly takes the following decisions:

- About those responsible for formation

Those responsible for formation at the different levels (Local, Regional and National), given the importance of their service, will be elected in the corresponding Elective Assembly, immediately after the election of the President and the Vice-President.

- About civil status

In those countries where marriage excludes membership in YouFra, and in the case of a brother or sister who decides to change his or her civil status, while performing any kind of service in the Fraternity for which he or she has been elected by the brothers and sisters, he or she may remain within the YouFra until the end of his or her service.

- About creation

Given the impossibility to establish on a common project in safeguarding creation, due to the different realities in which the YouFra brothers and sisters live, we commit ourselves to carry out concrete actions at the Local, Regional and National level that show our bonds of fraternity towards the whole of creation.

- About music

The International YouFra will try to find a hymn capable of identifying us as Young franciscans and that may help us feel that we are part of a “Universal Fraternity”.

Finally we thank the Lord for all the benefits we have received, through the wonder at His Love for each and every one of us, that has allowed us to create and live a strong communion of hearts and objectives. We have committed ourselves to keep in contact with each other and our respective National fraternities, as well as the YouFra International Councillors, in order to keep our experiences and decisions alive and so that these may be fruitful with the help of Francis, Clare and Elizabeth of Hungary.

Vilanova i la Geltrú, 5th July 2007