



MOVING FORWARD: IT'S UP TO US

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Many feel unable to move forward, stifled by current world problems that seem insurmountable. Feelings of depression, division, greed, fear, or apathy thwart our efforts to live our vocation authentically. Secular Franciscans have a choice: either to hide from troubles or, with the help of our Rule and Gospel, to seek ways of moving forward in spite of difficulties.

Young people face the same dilemma. Will they turn to God or have a crisis in faith? Will they joyfully serve or become stagnant with despair? Will they work for justice or wallow in selfishness? Secular Franciscans are called to inspire young people with the message that God cherishes them and desires to draw them into His embrace. Our witness and support will help them grow in an awareness that God is present and active in their torn world and has infused them with divine purpose.

In *Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium*, our bishops remind us that the mission of the Church is to form people who, “led by the spirit of the Gospel, might contribute to the sanctification of the world.” None of us need be alone in this challenge. By walking with young people in their journey towards holy maturity, we are gifted by their energy and enthusiasm. The bishops go on to say, “Our presence within the web of society can be a source of solace and strength in the face of enormous human need.” We can bring hope, especially to young people who want so badly for things to change. It is up to us to invite them into a Christ-centered life, which gives them the ability to influence the world with Gospel values.

Franciscan Youth and Young Adult (FY/YA) Animators or delegates from almost every OFS Region have been participating all summer in weekly Zoom gatherings for the purpose of discovering how we can fulfill this challenge. Presentations and conversations are lively, Spirit filled, supportive and enlightening. Those attending know we must reach out to our young people in solidarity as we all traverse the trials facing us, and we are discussing how best to do so. The FY/YA commission hopes our virtual gatherings have provided inspiration and tools to equip Regions with a common purpose and the skills necessary for undertaking this task.

We are encouraged that FY/YA Animators are confidently stepping into the world of youth and young adults, searching for ways to build relationships, open hearts, and share their gifts. If you are interested in (or are already) working with youth or young adults, the Commission and your Regional Animator would love to hear from you!

As this year's NAFRA theme states, we must “Journey together in love and compassion.” It's time to move forward, and it's up to all of us. Thank you for praying for our young people and for those who are walking with them.

The bishops have determined that successful outreach to young people will connect them with:

- 1) Jesus Christ;
- 2) The Church, by inviting and welcoming their presence in the Christian community;
- 3) The mission of the Church in the world; and
- 4) A peer community in which their faith is nurtured and strengthened.

(Sons and Daughters of Light: A Pastoral Plan for Ministry with Young Adults, USCCB)