



THE SPIRIT IS A MOVIN'

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“The Spirit is a movin’ all o-o-ver, all o-o-ver this land.” Remember that lovely song from back in the day? Admitting this will give evidence to the age of most of us—but it’s still a great song, and very appropriate for our times.

The Franciscan Youth and Young Adult Commission (FYA) has spent this past year and a half introducing Regional FYA Animators to the whys, ways, and means of reaching out to young people. Eleven virtual training sessions and monthly follow-up presentations have strengthened regions and fraternities in their understanding of what is necessary to fulfill our responsibility in spreading the Gospel to our younger Catholics. The Spirit is definitely moving us in the right direction.

Many have shared, however, that they simply don’t know what they should do next with all the information. We claim formation is a process — we start with information; tackle the task of formation, in the hopes of experiencing transformation. That transformation cannot happen if we don’t invite the Holy Spirit for help and guidance. We’ve shared a basic sequence of stages in stepping into the world of youth and young adults, but a sense of fear and a lack of confidence still linger. Perhaps what’s missing is a dependence on the Holy Spirit as our navigator in this adventure!

Living a Gospel life is not easy. We pray the words from Francis in our fraternity gatherings, that we be “cleansed and enlightened interiorly, and fired with the flame of the Holy Spirit.” I’m sure that was the goal of the *Memoriale Propositi* 800 years ago. Penitents were expected to follow a detailed list of rules to take the desire for holiness and gospel living seriously. Upon reflection, we can relate what is found in the antiquated list of instructions to the essentials from our 1978 Rule. Perhaps the clothing rules apply to the call

for humility and detachment; rules about fasting, partaking of the Sacraments, and stringent prayer point us to the need for a deep relationship with God; and instructions relating to care of the sick and burying the dead, even in our times, lead us to an understanding of service and the love of neighbor.

We can especially appreciate nowadays this plea to the Holy Spirit in our endeavors toward living our vocation and sharing it with young people. Pope Francis encourages us in the Apostolic Exhortation, *Christus Vivit*, addressed to young people and the entire people of God, to ask the Holy Spirit for guidance every day. He reminds us that what we need will come, if we let ourselves be prompted by the Holy Spirit.¹



The theme of calling on the Spirit is also evident for our young people preparing for the YouFra International Gathering and World Youth Day in Portugal in August 2023. The theme is “Mary rose up and went with haste” (Lk 1:39), which recalls the “yes” of Our Lady and her rush to meet her cousin Elizabeth. “*Há Pressa no Ar*” the event’s theme song, means “There’s a rush in the air,” and the lyrics express the joy we experience in allowing God’s Spirit to lead the way.

Pope Francis says of the theme chosen that the words and the truths of faith grow “under the action of the Holy Spirit. Mary’s “yes” led her to total availability to receive the Son of God in her life, which allowed her to be transformed. “Our simple prayer should be, ‘Lord, what you want, when you want, how you want.’”²

We are called to answer “yes” in reaching out to young people. Those who rely on the Lord “Shall renew their strength...shall run and not be weary...” (Is 40:31) In your endeavors, “may the grace of the Lord Jesus be with all.” (Rev. 22: 21

¹ Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit*, To Young People and the Entire People of God, (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2019)

² Pope Francis, General Audience, Nov. 18, 2020