



The YouFra Strategy

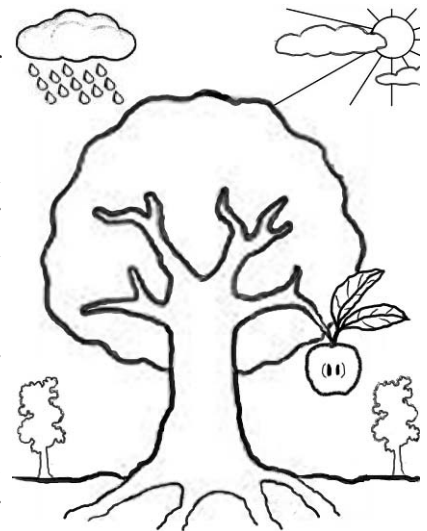
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“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you.” "Ah, Lord God!" I said, "I know not how to speak; I am too young." But the Lord answered me, “Say not, ‘I am too young.’ To whomever I send you, you shall go; whatever I command you, you shall speak.” [Jeremiah 1:5-7]

We begin with this quote from Jeremiah, because it captures so well the relationship between God and the young people God is calling to the Franciscan Charism. Throughout history, God has chosen and called forth people from every walk of life to be Gospel people. This has always included young people: Jeremiah the prophet, Josiah the eight year old king, Mary the pregnant young adult, and of course, Clare and Francis of Assisi. The whole Franciscan movement began primarily as a youth movement; it was young people who were most open to the radical Gospel life modeled by Francis and Clare, and it was these young people that God called to the Franciscan orders.

In the same way, young people are already flocking to the Gospel life as it needs to be lived today through commitments to the Franciscan Volunteer Ministry, Franciscan Mission Service, Francis Corps, YouFra, and now the Franciscan Earth Corps. Young people are also seeking out secular opportunities to serve and make a difference through work with immigrants, poor people, peace and justice advocacy, and youth conservation corps that engage in environmental conservation work. It is through these secular opportunities that they often live out their Call, but they miss out on the explicit experience of coming to know the One who Calls. It is our Franciscan responsibility to reach out to and engage these young people whom God is calling to Franciscan life. Now is the moment. Now is the time.

At last summer’s Confab, we shared the image of a tree producing fruit. This is the image for the YouFra Movement. The trees surrounding our tree are the current needs and challenges of our world and our young people. The roots of the tree include our Catholic and Franciscan heritage, our YouFra documents, and even our knowledge of human development. We are deeply rooted in these, and we draw on them to give us vision, meaning, understanding, and wisdom. The trunk is all our capacities as a Secular Franciscan Order: our people with their training/ skills/talents/education, our support network and structure, our financial and other resources, our time, our labor and prayers, and our fraternal communities. The branches are our initiatives, formation experiences and activities that we bring to youth to draw them into our Franciscan life. The sun and rain are the constant nurturing and graces of the Holy Spirit. The clusters of leaves are the young people we engage, and many of them will blossom into flowers. The fruit that grows is the service to the world, the “fruits of our labor,” the impact young people (with Secular Franciscans) have in the world. These impacts will always generate new seeds, new life, new hope, new possibilities, including the *next* generation whom God will call.



And now for some Good News! The draft of the national YouFra strategy has now been completed. The framework was initially drafted by participants at the Franciscan Summer Confab in 2013, and was revised and

edited by the National Franciscan Youth and Young Adult Commission. The draft was recently disseminated through the Franciscan Young Adults member webspace on BigTent and through the NAFRA-L email listserv to get comments. (If you are a regional or local Franciscan Youth Committee Chair, you should already be active on the Franciscan Young Adults webspace. If not, email Rob Breen and ask to join). All interested Secular Franciscans are now invited to provide feedback or suggestions for revisions to this draft YouFra strategic plan. A final edited version will be submitted to the National Council in the fall of October 2014 for approval. If approved, we will begin implementation, and will need to identify Secular Franciscan leaders to assume responsibility for components of the strategy. To comment on or provide feedback for revisions to the draft national YouFra strategy, send comments in an email to Ríobart (Rob) Breen, OFS, at fec@anamduan.org. (If you did not receive a copy of the full text, you can request an electronic copy at this same email address). Comments on the draft strategic plan should be submitted by **June 1, 2014**. An outline of the strategy is printed below. (This is only an excerpt and NOT the full draft).

The National Franciscan Youth and Young Adult Commission has also been drafting the YouFra Handbook and the initial formation process for YouFra members, and both of these documents now are in rough drafts. The intent is to have final drafts done by the fall of 2014.

Outline of the Draft Strategic Plan for Franciscan Youth in the U.S.

Vision: The Secular Franciscan Order in the United States will rebuild a Franciscan Youth (YouFra) movement throughout the United States. This will be done primarily by regional fraternities and councils working with local fraternities.... The initial YouFra focus will be on young adults (ages 18 to approximately 28)....

Long Term Goal: Within the decade, there is a national YouFra movement and network of young adults in YouFra fraternities...

National Short Term Goals: Train regional and local Secular Franciscans to create, animate, and mentor YouFra fraternities; Train YouFra leaders to eventually take over responsibility for building the basic YouFra organizational infrastructure; Develop a YouFra Fraternity Handbook; Develop new YouFra initial formation and ongoing formation curricula

Goals for Regional and Local Franciscan Youth Commissions

YouFra Communication and Outreach: Establish a YouFra social marketing and web committee; Develop a YouFra website; Create a directory of contact information of existing YouFra groups and member contact information; Reach out to young adults, especially in the Hispanic (Spanish speaking), black and African, Native American, Asian and new immigrant communities

YouFra Formation: Train OFS animators, YouFra leaders, and Spiritual assistant in how to use YouFra Handbook and Initial Formation Guide; Develop YouFra Servant Leadership Manual; Develop additional YouFra ongoing formation materials

YouFra Structure and Capacity Building: Recruit and train OFS members as YouFra Animators; Develop general OFS local fraternity training for supporting and promoting YouFra fraternities; Recruit and train Spiritual Assistants for YouFra; Develop a financial strategy for funding YouFra

YouFra Events and Activities: Create a calendar of seasonal and annual local, regional and national events; Plan and implement YouFra activities (in collaboration with YouFra leaders) including: Retreats; Service projects; Pilgrimages; Nature hikes/camping; Gardening; Overseas and domestic mission work experiences; Music concerts; Online journal/blogs