

ANSWERING THE CALL: WHY SOME SAY YES

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Our Secular Franciscan vocation challenges us to nurture our spiritual lives, be bearers of peace, work for justice and bring hope to others. As an Order, this daunting task takes vision and organization and requires the gifts of many. So why do we say “no” or “I can't” when asked to serve?

As part of the planning team for the 2011 NAFRA Chapter, my responsibility included working in the background during the week. I looked forward to meeting our leaders and assumed they would be retired, have perfect health and family situations, unlimited income, incredible leadership skills, be computer savvy, etc. etc. My mind reeled with the list of qualifications they must have! Instead, I met brothers and sisters who said “yes” to the call, in spite of their hardships and busy daily lives. None had every qualification I had imagined! So why did they say yes?

“Someone asked.”

The most common answer: “Someone asked me to.” Obviously we take our talents into consideration when discerning, but often someone else sees something in us that we miss. One suggested, “Prayerfully consider when invited, and encourage each other to recognize God given gifts. By saying yes, I have discovered so much about myself!”

“I love my Franciscan family and wanted to help.”

The *Servant Leadership Handbook* (pg.13) states “Shared leadership is the common denominator that keeps a family in proper balance and harmony.” Many leaders said they simply knew they were needed. One shared, “Our regional minister felt overwhelmed with responsibilities and prayed someone would step forward. It wouldn't have been right to say no — what a gift it's been to take an active part in this work.”

“God nudged me out of my comfort zone.”

Many admitted they had fears but trusted the Holy Spirit and were surprised when elected. “God wouldn't give me more than I can handle,” one gentleman said. “He has faith in me that I often don't have in myself.” If we stay strong in our relationship with God, we can hear his call and have the courage to answer. “I've never been disappointed, even though I was petrified,” said another. “Being a regional minister has taken me out of myself and into the big OFS family. We're not alone!”

“I must be crazy like Francis!”

My favorite answer. But what a good kind of crazy! Don't we all crave Francis' zeal and unswerving devotion? Saying yes will undoubtedly stretch us, but what a gift to truly help our Order become instruments of peace, by sharing our time and talent.

As Francis lay dying, he told his brothers, “I have done what is mine to do; may Christ teach you what is yours.” An essential part of the OFS charism is that of service. Our fraternity provides encouragement, strength, challenge and opportunity to grow closer to God. We are unified by our vocations. What our leaders advised will also hold true within our fraternities, and our regions. So consider saying yes to the call, and discover how you can be a gift to your big Franciscan family.