



ACCOMPANYING YOUNG PEOPLE: LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD

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The National Franciscan Youth and Young Adult (FY/YA) commission was formed in 1995, and members have contributed articles to the *TAU-USA* since its inception in 1996. In looking back at the very first FY/YA commission article published, it is interesting to note that right from the start, the intention of the commission has been to motivate Secular Franciscans to understand our role in accompanying youth. Young people, our society, and our Church have all changed dramatically. In this 100th issue of the *TAU-USA*, however, the current commission points out that the responsibility to accompany young people in their journey has not changed.

The opening of the 1996 commission article, written by Mary and Anthony Mazotti, states, “Spiritually motivated and dedicated youth are not formed in a vacuum. They are lifted up by those going from Gospel to life and life to Gospel.” Our Bishops recently stressed that in this pluralistic, confusing world, walking with young people toward wholeness and holiness is essential. They state in the final document of their 2018 synod on young people, “Being present, supporting and accompanying the journey towards authentic choices is one way for the Church to exercise her maternal function... Service of this kind is simply the continuation of the way in which the God of Jesus Christ acts towards his people: through constant and heartfelt presence, dedicated and loving closeness and tenderness without limits.”²

As Secular Franciscans, we are called to this same mission. Isn't that what fraternity is all about? Neither Jesus nor Francis sent their disciples out to spread the gospel alone. We work together, and our efforts would be blessed with young people by our side.

The 1996 *TAU-USA* article also said, “The Church recognizes that there is a great hunger among youth for deeper meaning and purpose to their lives. There is a strong desire among many of them to make the world a better place, to save it from its seemingly bent to self-destruct.”³ The current commission agrees and

believes we all need to rise to the challenge in offering young people opportunities to discover and utilize their gifts.

Our charism leads us to incorporate social justice action. Young people realize it is imperative to be “hands-on” in working for change. They are eager to offer their time and talents and to assume responsibility. We find young people at the forefront, seeking creative ways to combat social and environmental diseases, discrimination, racism and violence that permeates our world.

Recently, Pope Francis recognized this hunger and exhorted young people to view their lives as mission. He tells them they should refrain from asking “Who am I?” They will find more meaning in life by asking “For whom am I?”⁴ Don't we all strive to know God's plan for us? To seek purpose in our work? Walking with a young person is an important step toward holiness, not only for the youth, but for those who serve them. Through formation, fraternity, and service, we all grow in our faith. “In a world marked by diversity of peoples and variety of cultures, 'walking together' is fundamental if the initiatives of solidarity, integration and promotion of justice are to be credible and effective,”⁵ whether in 1996 or 2020.

NATIONAL FRANCISCAN YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT COMMISSION

The FY/YA Animator Training,
previously scheduled for September 10-14,
in Belleville, Illinois, has been postponed until
further notice.

We will contact you when there is a new date.

¹ Wicks, William, *A History of the Secular Franciscan Order*, Vol. III, Smoky Valley Printing, Lindsborg, KS, 261

² Young People, *The Faith and Vocational Discernment: Final Document of the Fifteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops*, 91

³ Wicks, William. [Ibid? some fuller citation?]

⁴ Young People, *The Faith and Vocational Discernment*, 69

⁵ Ibid, 126