



Franciscan Youth

NATIONAL FRANCISCAN YOUTH YOUNG/ADULT COUNCIL

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YOUTH FRATERNITIES VS. YOUTH MINISTRY

By Kathy Taormina, SFO
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This is a question I get asked repeatedly throughout the year: “Is it better to start a Franciscan Youth Fraternity or is it okay if I just invite a few youth to activities that the SFO fraternity already has going on?”

My first question back is, “Define *better*?”

My answer and the answer of the experts (the youth themselves) usually depends on their definition of better. What would be better for the SFO fraternity? What would be better for the youth? What would be better for the community, either the parish and/or civic community?

I have written, spoke about and demonstrated throughout the last ten years that the two most important factors in the Franciscan Youth movement are an open invitation and the acceptance by the SFO.

The youth need to know they are most welcome to just come and see what this “Franciscan Charism” is and how we live it to its fullness. They need to know they will be accepted for who they are, and where they are, on their spiritual journey to God.

Can those two elements be fulfilled by only being with the youth occasionally? Sure! Can they be attained by starting a YouFra fraternity and gathering consistently? Most definitely, but these are not the *ONLY* ways!

Youth ministry involves the whole person and the whole fraternity, sometimes even the whole Region! It is an ever-changing, dynamic, life-giving (and receiving)

proposition between people, involved in God and faith, and whose ultimate goal is to discover God’s purpose for their lives. Franciscan Youth ministry centers on a three-fold methodology: human, Christian, and Franciscan.

How we bring this about is not as important as bringing it about!

Starting a Franciscan Youth fraternity may be beyond the scope of your fraternity, but that does not mean that youth ministry cannot be started and experienced. Most youth will be open to the invitation, if they do not feel pressured into future decisions. Let them come and see us, living and experiencing our Franciscan way of life in the real world.

I have always said that we as SFO are not out to make “baby Franciscans,” but if we truly live our charism, we may open the way for the youth to be interested in a long-term relationship with God through Francis and Clare. We can be God’s instruments!

Most parishes have a CYO, Teen Life or other type of youth group. These groups usually need a chaperone for their service projects. Volunteer to be one! Make sure you wear your Tau Cross. One of the youth might ask “What’s the T for?” It’s an opening for dialogue. It just takes one person from your fraternity to get involved. Your participation with the youth means a lot to them even if they do not tell you.

Have a pizza party for the Altar Servers; hold a movie night; help with one of the youth fundraisers. When we have a fraternity social, we can invite youth. Have a retreat for them. We can also pray for them and be a good listener. Our youth today need positive encouragement from those of us who have “been around a bit.” We may not see anything immediately from our involvement, but it’s something that the youth will remember for a long time.

GET INVOLVED! The gifts are everlasting!

Emery Tang, OFM

On June 9, 2009, Fr. Emery Tang went to be with the Lord. He was 81 years old, 62 years professed, 57 years ordained. Some of the many things he will be remembered for are: Being with the “Hour of St. Francis” in the late 60’s; Co-authoring Listen, the Clams are Talking with Hugh Noonan, OFM; and being a noted Retreat Master for many years.