



YOUFRA NEWS: WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE UNITED STATES

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There are individuals, fraternities, and regions all across the United States who are taking our OFS Rule, Article 24 to "foster communion among members," seriously, especially with our young people.

The main way Secular Franciscans are inviting our younger generations to explore and embrace a Gospel life is by giving witness to them. Fidelity to our faith, generous lives of service, joyful and hopeful attitudes, and authentically living our vocation in their presence are all ways to ignite their passion to do the same. Our young people need encouragement, inspiration, and support in their journey towards holiness. This gift of sanctifying grace to the youth and young adults has taken many forms.



Young people enjoy opportunities to engage in ecumenical creation.

Involvement as Individuals

There are many individuals who are reaching out. For instance, Heather Cherniak, from St. Elizabeth of Hungary Region, feels that young adults need authentic relationships. Among other involvement, she also organized the "Holy Spirits," a Franciscan program similar to Theology on Tap. Mark Carroll, in addition to acting as Minister of St. Maximilian Kolbe region, has given a presentation entitled *Francis: The Man, the Knight, and the Saint* and sometimes delivers pizza to the youth at their evening gatherings. Kelly Moltzen, Our Lady of Angels Region, although a busy young adult immersed in the world of justice and peace, planned and hosted a "Come and See" for young adults and wrote an inspiring testament about

her experience at the YouFra International Gathering in Panama.

Fraternity-Sponsored Events



Some fraternities are working together to reach out to youth with one-time events—a wonderful and much appreciated way to step into their world. For example, a fraternity in Montana, Our Lady of the Rockies Region, recently hosted a group of 55 youth and their adult leaders who had traveled from Northern California on the last night of their long journey to work for Young Neighbors in Action, a week-long mission/immersion experience for young Catholics. The fraternity not only housed them, but fed them a wonderful dinner. The fraternity in Paradise, California, in St. Junipero Serra Region, whose town was destroyed by fire, worked with young people replanting the Franciscan garden and landscaping around the church. Animators have shared about dramas, transitus commemorations, and feast day celebrations, which young people have participated in and sometimes planned themselves.

Fraternity Youth/Young Adult Apostolates

A few fraternities have an ongoing ministry to youth or young adults. For instance, fraternities in the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis region provide meals and stock a food pantry at universities in Georgia. Another local fraternity in that region brings pizza to a parish youth group and does an annual presentation about St. Francis. St. John's Fraternity in Fresno, California, helps Newman Center students once a month by providing a meal at their gathering. They don't participate in the gathering other than to work in the kitchen, but members share that the young adults often end up helping them in preparation or clean-up. Conversations and sharing their lives happens with dishtowels in hand! Although these fraternities aren't directly mentoring, their gift of time still offers a chance to build relationships, share their faith in a casual setting, and demonstrate true servant leadership.

Regional YouFra Support

The optimal way of establishing YouFra is through the

support of a whole region. “It takes a village” rings true as we struggle with gaining momentum in bringing Franciscan spirituality to the younger generation. There are a handful of regions that are actually working toward establishing (or already have) YouFra groups. Our most recent request for establishing a YouFra comes from Arizona. Brother Scott Slattum, OFM, has been providing evenings of faith sharing, community building, and leadership training for many young adults. Some of those he has worked with for over a year are now asking to form a YouFra. They are all in their twenties, are mostly post graduate students from University of Arizona, and are seeking a deeper way to explore and live their faith and build a Franciscan community. In the Five Franciscan Martyrs Region, Janice Novello has a group of 11 people on her committee to start Franciscan-based youth groups. The hope is that they will eventually

lead to established YouFra groups. She and her team are working in many ways with younger youth. One of their goals is to develop a Franciscan summer camp experience for elementary age children. Wouldn't that be a fun thing to share across the country!

Don't Give Up!

Keep familiarizing yourselves with the documents. Prepare and motivate your fraternities and regions to take advantage of the soon-to-be-released formation sessions and retreat options. Unite. Ignite. Invite.

As we used to say back in the sixties, “Keep on truckin'!” Don't give up on your goals. Or perhaps even more apt, “Keep the faith.” With God, anything is possible! The accompanying pictures speak volumes about ways we are bringing the Gospel to young Catholics in the United States.



Young people engage in their faith through drama and liturgies. Some have even written their own scripts or participated in planning special liturgies.



There are many ways to encourage service. This group of youth visit a local Assisted Living facility



Youth examine a “peace Pole,” and spend the day exploring ways to become peacemakers.



After their devastating fire, Paradise folks work with a group of youth replanting their Franciscan Garden.