



Singing our Theme - “Celebrate Youth”

By Elaine and Jan Parker

We are excited to have already heard from some fraternities how they are living out this year’s theme of “Celebrate Youth”. In just six months when we gather again as a National Fraternity we will acknowledge and celebrate ALL the ways our fraternities took this theme to heart – in fact we would like to sing about it! To make this happen, we will need to hear from you.

By September 1st we ask that each local fraternity submit to their Regional Minister a few sentences summarizing their response to this year’s theme. With the help of some SFO troubadours we hope these sentences can be put into song (or at least compiled in a little book). This “theme song” will be sung with pride at our NAFRA gathering in October.

Why a theme?

Choosing a theme for this year is something that everyone at our last NAFRA gathering supported. The idea behind a theme is this:

- A theme is an issue of importance, not that other issues are not important or that this is “the” most important issue, but a theme is chosen for a reason.
- A theme unites local fraternities across the country as we focus on a common idea.
- A theme excites and motivates as it encourages us towards a specific goal.
- A theme is an ongoing blessing as it is recurrent – it is there in our thoughts and actions “off and on” throughout the year.
- A theme provides us something “concrete” to celebrate.

So far this year our theme is like the first few notes of a beautiful musical piece. The first notes have been played and it is up to each fraternity to add notes until, measure by measure, the song is completed. We await “your measure” so that we will be able to hear the entire song this coming October.

Ideas to “Celebrate Youth”

As a National Fraternity, we have responded by donating to the Franciscan Mission Service thus sponsoring Nora Pfeiffer who is serving in Bolivia. In this issue of the TAU you can read how St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity in St. Louis reached out to students on a service trip. In both of these outreach endeavors please note that youth were made aware of the Secular Franciscan Order and what we are about. This is so important! In our work with youth we need to plant those seeds of “awareness of the SFO” and let the Holy Spirit take it from there!

How is your fraternity responding to this year’s theme? Still searching for an idea of how to “Celebrate Youth”? In addition to the suggestions on the FYYA website, consider the following:

- Make an appointment for several members of your fraternity to talk with a parish Youth Minister about how to support the youth in that parish.
- Give financial support to a youth for a retreat or service trip, and then ask that they come and talk at your next SFO gathering.
- Host a “Feast of St. Francis” coloring contest or give a peace award.
- Chaperone a youth event, or work side-by-side with youth on a service project and share with them about your SFO vocation.
- For your ongoing formation read and discuss Articles 96 and 97 of our SFO Constitutions that deal with Youth.

Let’s all jump on the bandwagon so that come this October we will be able to sing how we “celebrated youth” in 2010. We would not expect new Youth Groups to be formed by that time, although we never rule out miracles, but we do trust that each local fraternity will report on how they have responded to our theme. So let our song be sweet and let our song be strong, for our future is to be found in our Youth!

NATIONAL FRANCISCAN YOUTH
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