



FRANCISCAN YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT COMMISSION REPORT

by Kathleen Molaro, OFS FYYA Commission Chair

As Catholics, and especially as Franciscans, how can we assist young people in their desire to grow closer to God, serve the world in meaningful ways, and find purpose in life? In what ways can we help them experience the transformative power in choosing Gospel lives? Where do we need to be and what do we need to do to fulfill our Baptism and Profession promises?

To examine such questions, 15 of us from around the country traveled to Missouri this August for a Franciscan Youth and Young Adult workshop the National Executive Council initiated and facilitated. We gathered to pray, reflect on various documents, discuss what we've learned from past commissions, and discern future goals. The days were packed with powerful work and an amazing, joyful spirit. We left feeling motivated, confident, and hopeful.

I agreed to be the FYYA Commission Chair because I trusted in the energy and enthusiasm I had witnessed at that gathering! All across the country, we have Franciscan brothers and sisters with great gifts, valuable experience, and determined attitudes. There will be many ways for you to get involved.

Mark Carroll from Ohio and Akisha Townsend Eaton from Tennessee have joined me as the core commission, along with Kathy Taormina from Minnesota, who will serve as our Spiritual Assistant. As the word "commission" implies, however, all Secular Franciscans are sent forth together on this mission. The FYYA Commission is here to serve you and has already begun the work, but unless individuals and fraternities take our Rule and Constitutions seriously, that we "accompany youth on their journey" (GC: Art. 97), our efforts will not bear fruit.

Br. Richard Contino, OSF, shared during our gathering, "We must be ready, willing, and determined to offer our young people and each other life preservers of faith and practice, with a Franciscan perspective and alternative in the world that is so lacking today." The FYYA Commission will meet in the beginning of December to continue our work, but we also invite participation from you.

What you can do now.

1. Pray! Pray! Pray! Robert Montoya, from Santa Maria de Las Montanas, told me he's been lighting a candle every Sunday for the FYYA Commission. Great idea. Thank you, Robert.
2. Seek a FYYA contact person for your region. This would be someone who is willing to receive and disseminate information. Communication and networking is vital.
3. Keep your eyes, ears, and hearts open to those who might eventually serve as FYYA Spiritual Assistants and Animators (as opposed to the contact person, an Animator would work more directly with youth). No names yet, as "job" descriptions will come soon, and training will be available later, but at least be thinking about who in your region might be willing.
4. Start discussing the presence of youth/young adults in your area. Do you have access to college students? Are there young adults in your parish? High school youth groups, catechism or Catholic school students? Are there existing programs you could tap into? What type of connection is feasible for you to make? Our goal is to eventually network with one another to share ideas and resources.

We are called to "develop appropriate means for growth in Franciscan and ecclesial life..." (Rule, art. 24). The time is ripe for a renewal of purpose and courageous action in the area of Franciscan Youth and Young Adults!