

SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER (OFS)
2017 GENERAL CHAPTER
INSTRUMENTUM LABORIS

How should an Order like the OFS be managed at all its levels?

BACKGROUND

During the 2014 General Chapter, capitulars reflected on the theme “How should an Order like the Secular Franciscan Order (OFS) be managed at all its levels”, and were encouraged to lead a reflection within their respective national fraternities with all professed brothers and sisters in the OFS and Franciscan Youth during the following three years (2014-2017). Each national fraternity was to adopt a suitable method for this reflection, including the participation of its local and regional fraternities as it deemed appropriate, and was to collect the most workable and significant proposals along with the corresponding motivations. Questions were provided to assist in this reflection on the strengths, weaknesses and priorities of their respective national fraternities, as well as the strengths and challenges in the management of the OFS at the international level. However, the submission from each national fraternity was to focus on **identifying three priorities for the improvement of the management of the Order at the international level, and to present specific proposals to address each of these priorities.**

By June 2016, the deadline for receiving input from national fraternities, proposals had been received from 45 national fraternities¹. A number of other national fraternities also engaged in this reflection but their input was not received by the deadline and, as a result, is not reflected in this document. It should be noted that the response by national fraternities to this initiative has been one of the most extensive responses to any issue in the history of the International Council of the OFS (CIOFS).

To review these proposals, an Adhoc Commission was appointed by the CIOFS Presidency to integrate the most significant proposals into an *Instrumentum Laboris* which would be sent to all national fraternities for their study in preparation for the 2017 General Chapter. At this chapter, each of the concrete proposals contained in the *Instrumentum Laboris* will be presented to the capitulars for discussion and decision-making. The Commission was composed of Maria Consuelo De Nunez (Venezuela, chair), Doug Clorey (Canada), Marion Clorey (Canada), Attilio Galimberti (Italy), Ghislain Knepper (France), and Mary Stronach (USA). Members of the Adhoc Commission reviewed all of the suggestions received and synthesized these into 8 priority areas, each with concrete proposals for change.

¹ Angola, Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Burkina Faso, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Germany, Great Britain, Guatemala, Guinea Bissau, Honduras, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Korea, Lithuania, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mexico, Mozambique, Netherlands, New Zealand, Oceania, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland (German speaking), Togo, Ukraine, USA, Venezuela, Vietnam

CONTEXT

The purpose of the *Instrumentum Laboris* is to synthesize the priorities and specific proposals submitted by the national fraternities for the improvement of the management of the Order at the international level. While Circ. N. 7/14-20 suggests that national fraternities reflect on their strengths and weaknesses, and identify priorities for their individual national fraternities, only proposals related to the management of the OFS at the international level have been requested. It is also important to ensure that the principle of subsidiarity is respected in dealing with the area of managing national and regional fraternities, each having their own diversity and uniqueness.

The focus of the *Instrumentum Laboris* is on the management of the international fraternity. However, as Secular Franciscans, we must remember that our commitment, through profession, is to the entire Order; that is, to all levels of fraternity ... local, regional, national and international. In the formula of profession, we promise "to live all the days of our lives in the Secular Franciscan Order by observing its Rule of life". And, in Article 20 of our Rule, the Secular Franciscan Order is described as having four levels – local, regional, national and international – each having its own moral personality in the Church. This means that, at the same time, Secular Franciscans belong to their respective local, regional, national and international fraternities. Unlike hierarchical structures, the structure within the Secular Franciscan Order does not allow for "we" and "they" perspectives (for example, "we" at the local level, and "they" at the international level). We are all one and, when we speak of the international level, we include all Secular Franciscans. It is important to recognize this aspect in our reflection so that there is no misunderstanding of who is responsible for improving the management of the OFS at the international level. We all are ... every Secular Franciscan.

As a result, the *Instrumentum Laboris* is being forwarded to all national fraternities for their further reflection. Firstly, it is being sent to affirm and respect the contribution that each national fraternity has already made to this reflection. Secondly, it is being sent so that national fraternities can review the priorities and concrete proposals that have surfaced through this reflection. National fraternities, through whichever means they deem appropriate within their respective realities, will need to determine which of the proposals they are prepared to support, and what resources, financial and human, they are prepared to offer to implement these proposals. With this information, strategies will then be developed to implement each of the proposals chosen. It must be clearly stated that it is not the responsibility of the International Presidency to implement any of these proposals on their own and with existing resources; only with the infusion of sufficient resources from the national fraternities can these proposals be implemented. It can also be said that an underlying theme of all proposals in the document is to create a better sharing of the work on the international level with all members of the Order who have the relevant competencies – elected and non-elected. During the 2017 General Chapter, International Councillors from the various national fraternities will bring the views of their respective national fraternities to the General Chapter and come prepared to make decisions on behalf of the entire Secular Franciscan Order.

MANAGEMENT OF THE ORDER

Over the centuries, the Secular Franciscan Order has adapted to the times, passing from a fragmented organization to a unified and centralized organization. Although much progress has been made, some challenges remain to be addressed by the OFS in its growth as a unique Order within the Church. Many of these challenges have been identified over the years by the International Presidency, by national fraternities during the course of visits and chapters and, more recently, by capitulars of the 2014 General Chapter during their reflections on how to better manage the OFS. In general, these challenges can be categorized into three broad categories:

- understanding the nature of the Order (objectives),
- establishing an organizational structure that will allow it to operate in conformity with its nature (organization), and
- developing modalities for choosing leaders who are available and capable (people).

These three categories – objectives, organization and people – represent the essential elements that are considered when assessing the management of any organization.

From its very beginning, the Secular Franciscan Order has been known as an Order of “penitents”; however, there is not always a good understanding of the Order’s nature and identity, including the commitment by its members to conversion and to reaching out to others. This has been the subject of several General Chapters and always results in emphasizing the need for formation as a top priority of the Order.

It should also be noted that the life of Secular Franciscans is lived within the context of a local fraternity and that local fraternities are grouped within a regional, national and international structure (GC, Art. 29). It is clear that one of the unique aspects of the Secular Franciscan Order, as a secular Order, is its immersion in the world; its members live in the ordinary conditions of the world and within the context of their families, work places and society at large. Because of this uniqueness, some of the organizational models that have been utilized within the OFS have not been effective, especially those models that have been specifically designed to meet the needs of religious communities. The lack of permanent structures has also contributed to instability in supporting the functioning of the Order and its activities.

The life of fraternities is also influenced by the quality of its leadership. Regrettably, the OFS often experiences a lack of prepared and available persons to lead the fraternity at all its levels, often exacerbated by the lack of adequate training for leadership offices, and by the inherent time challenges faced by Secular Franciscans in making themselves available to serve the fraternity while living a secular way of life with a multitude of family and occupational responsibilities. The lack of involvement by non-elected members of the fraternity who are experienced and skilled also contributes to the imbalance and uneven distribution of workload within the fraternity, often leading to the physical and mental exhaustion of those who serve. In addition, there is often a lack of continuity between those leaving and those entering offices in the fraternity, and the sharing of experience between both.

Another management challenge is the insufficient attention paid to communication and to the

establishment of effective relationships with other fraternities and organizations. And, all of these challenges are further complicated by the lack of financial resources, at all levels of fraternity, which constrains the implementation of improvements within the Order.

PRIORITIES AND PROPOSALS

In reviewing the submissions from national fraternities, the following priority areas have been identified:

1. Formation
2. Fraternal Life
3. Building a Fraternal and Evangelical World
4. Leadership
5. Communications
6. Finance
7. Spiritual Assistance
8. Franciscan Youth

For each of these priority areas, concrete proposals have also been put forward. The following sections of the document present the priority areas and their respective concrete proposals.

1. FORMATION

Formation can be defined as the action of forming or process of being formed. Within the context of the Secular Franciscan Order, the formation process aims to foster human, Christian and Franciscan maturity so as to be able to live a full Gospel life in the manner of St. Francis of Assisi. By its very nature, formation is a life-long process which aims to sustain the witness and commitment of Secular Franciscans in the world (GC, Art. 50.1).

Formation continues to be the Order’s top priority and “plays an essential role in both conversion to Christ and deepening our Secular Franciscan vocation. The lack of authentic conversion is, by far, one of the most serious problems we are confronted within our Order ... formation, both initial and ongoing, should be accessible to everyone, and national fraternities should engage in this uppermost priority.” (Conclusions of the 2014 General Chapter). While an enormous amount of energy has been expended on creating formation materials and offering formation courses (especially to formators), there has been an overall lack of continuity in the Order’s efforts, plagued by the lack of resources, both human and financial. To address these challenges, the following concrete proposals are presented:

Proposal 1 – OFS International Office of Formation

It is proposed that a permanent International Office of OFS Formation be established which would be staffed with personnel skilled in responding to the formation needs of the Order. This office would be responsible for:

- coordinating the work of both initial and ongoing formation at an international level so as to deepen the Secular Franciscan's sense of belonging to the OFS and identity so that the Order can fully undertake its mission in the world;
- developing a library of resources on a variety of subjects that would support the formation process, resources that would be available both online and in hardcopy; national fraternities could then develop their own programs of initial and ongoing formation, based on their own specific and unique realities, using the library of resources to support their programs (focus by this office would be less on creating programs and more on creating a variety of resources that could be used by national fraternities to create their own programs);
- exploring and developing the most modern of methodologies that could be used to make formation resources more accessible and dynamic (for example, the use of online courses and webinars);
- assisting in formation conferences / workshops, held in conjunction with national or General Chapters or with continental gatherings and congresses; and
- exploring other sources of Franciscan formation and collaborating with like-minded organizations so as to leverage expertise both within and outside the OFS.

It should be noted that the need for a formation manual for candidates has also been underlined in the submissions from national fraternities; however, these would be better constructed by national fraternities based on the specific programs that they eventually create and that would be adapted to their specific needs and circumstances.

2. FRATERNAL LIFE

The local fraternity is “the basic unit of the whole Order” and “the privileged place for developing a sense of Church and the Franciscan vocation and for enlivening the apostolic life of its members (Rule, Art. 22). All of the other structures of the Order, whether regional, national or international, should aim to support the life of the local fraternity and the fraternal life of the brothers and sisters. National fraternities have repeatedly underlined that the focus of managing the Order must be on the animation and guidance of local fraternities but, regrettably, the life of the local fraternity is often lost in the governance of the Order. The regional, national and international levels of the Order are meant to support the animation and guidance of the life of the local fraternity but, often, become a burden that achieves little. Each level carries with it a significant commitment of time and resources (people and finances) which often translates into few benefits for the members of the local fraternity.

On a global scale, the physical size of some countries, the distances involved in travelling within and between countries, the cultural differences within and between countries, the variety of languages and dialects used, and the political environment in which life is lived by Secular Franciscans are all significant challenges in managing an Order like the OFS. Although all Secular Franciscans belong to the same Order, the way in which their lives are lived varies greatly. A more decentralized structure is necessary that accommodates for these differences and the challenges that they present. As Pope Francis states in his encyclical “*Evangelii Gaudium*”, there is a “need to promote a sound ‘decentralization’ ” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 16). He also states

that “excessive centralization, rather than proving helpful, complicates the Church’s life and her missionary outreach” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 32).

Proposal 2 – Creating a Decentralized Structure for the OFS

It is proposed that a review be undertaken of the structures of the Secular Franciscan Order as outlined in the General Constitutions, with an openness to modifying the General Constitutions, where necessary, to create a more decentralized structure that reflects the secular nature of the Secular Franciscan Order and its members. Along with creating a more decentralized structure, a more flexible governance structure should be adopted for the Order that focuses specifically on animating and guiding the local fraternity.

The following are some of the practical consequences that could result from adopting a more decentralized structure at the international level:

- creating a structure that has fewer levels of bureaucracy and that simplifies the life of the Order and its outreach to those in need;
- creating permanent structures at the international level that support a decentralized manner of operating and offer continuity in supporting the life of the local fraternity and the fraternal life of the brothers and sisters;
- grouping national fraternities from within the same geographic area, and organizing international gatherings that bring these national fraternities together periodically;
- reaffirming the need for fraternal and pastoral visits as an essential element of animating and guiding the Order;
- developing a strategy around fraternal and pastoral visits that focuses on national fraternities that require support and ensuring that there is a continuity in this support provided, rather than focusing on the legislative requirements to preside at national chapters every three years and to conduct fraternal and pastoral visits every six years;
- delegating visitors to national fraternities who are skilled and experienced Secular Franciscans from neighboring national fraternities (also delegating presiders at national elective chapters from neighboring national fraternities);
- identifying specific areas of the international fraternity that require specific support as a result of their unique and challenging circumstances (eg. China Project, Africa Project)
- providing practical support to brothers and sisters, not only spiritually, but also materially for those experiencing difficult circumstances; and
- developing guidelines and procedures for the twinning of fraternities at all levels – national, regional and local.

3. BUILDING A FRATERNAL AND EVANGELICAL WORLD

The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order calls Secular Franciscans to observe the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of St. Francis of Assisi, who made Christ the inspiration and the centre of his life with God and people (Rule, Art. 4). Similar to the life of St. Francis himself, the life of Secular Franciscans tends to oscillate between developing an internal spiritual life while also developing an external life which reaches out to others with concrete actions. Secular Franciscans do not live their lives for themselves, but rather live it in an outwardly direction towards people in need. The OFS Rule is clear on this point. “Secular Franciscans, together with all people of good will, are called to build a more fraternal and

evangelical world so that the kingdom of God may be brought about more effectively” (Rule, Art. 14). Individually and collectively, Secular Franciscans are to be in the forefront in promoting justice by the testimony of their human lives and their courageous initiatives (Rule, Art. 15). In this regard, initiatives that promote justice, peace-making and care of creation are central to living out the Franciscan charism. For this reason, fraternal life should include a specific focus on JPIC (Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation) and its works.

However, while concrete actions in the area of justice, peace and integrity of creation are essential, developing an internal disposition through prayer is also a prerequisite to any initiatives that are directed towards building a more fraternal and evangelical world. “As Jesus was the true worshipper of the Father, so let prayer and contemplation be the soul of all they are and do” (Rule, Art. 8).

Proposal 3a – OFS International Secretariat for JPIC

It is proposed that a permanent International Secretariat for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) be created within the OFS which would be staffed with personnel skilled in this domain. This Secretariat would be responsible for:

- coordinating JPIC activities within the OFS, and working closely with other JPIC organizations within the Franciscan Family; for example, the Inter-Franciscan Commission for Justice and Peace (Romans VI) and Franciscans International (in conformity with the Statutes of the International Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order, a member of the Presidency would support the work of this Secretariat in the field of justice, peace and integrity of creation);
- monitoring international issues of particular interest to the OFS and providing responses to these international issues; examples could include issues around refugees and immigrants, wars and conflicts, and environment and climate change (with over 300,000 members worldwide, the OFS has the possibility of exerting significant leverage to advocate for justice, peace and integrity of creation);
- initiating JPIC projects in which all members of the OFS could participate, thereby linking the work of the OFS world-wide; combating illiteracy among vulnerable populations including women and children in rural areas could be one of the organization’s outreach priorities; and
- acting as a focal point for the OFS during natural disasters and coordinating disaster assistance with the appropriate agencies, directed to both Secular Franciscan and others in the affected areas.

Proposal 3b – Praying Together

It is proposed that the work of JPIC be complemented by regular calls for intercessory prayers across the OFS in support of specific outreach activities. These requests for prayer would provide a basis for engaging fraternities in praying together with the OFS worldwide.

4. LEADERSHIP

The international fraternity is guided and animated by the International Council of the OFS (CIOFS) with its seat in Rome (Italy), by its Presidency and by the General Minister (GC, Art. 69.2). The International Council, convened in General Chapter, is the highest governing body of

the OFS with legislative, deliberative and elective powers (GC, Art. 70.3). The Presidency of the International Council of the OFS is constituted within the International Council, of which it forms an integral part (GC, Art. 70.2), and is responsible for coordinating animating and guiding the OFS at the international level (GC, Art. 73 (b)). The leadership of the OFS therefore rests with the International Council and, on a day-to-day basis, with the International Presidency. It is essential that communications between the International Presidency and the International Councillors be regular and effective.

The following proposals are therefore directed to the International Council and Presidency.

Proposal 4a – Membership

In order to properly manage and lead an organization, it is essential to understand its membership. It is proposed that a concerted effort be made to collect information on membership in the OFS, including demographic data. An international registry of all permanently professed members of the OFS would be the heart of such information. Already, some national fraternities have developed such registries. As a minimum, an online directory of all local fraternities within the International Fraternity should be established with a specific email contact for each local fraternity. Ultimately, all communications from the International Presidency could be directed to this specific contact within each local fraternity, with a copy to the International Councillor. Collecting this kind of information would also enhance the linkages between local fraternities and the international body, create a network to connect different levels of fraternity and enhance the overall sense of belonging within the OFS.

Proposal 4b – Training Leaders

It is also proposed that materials suitable for the training of leaders be developed (Minister, Vice-Minister, Secretary, Treasurer, Formator, JPIC Co-ordinator, Youth Co-ordinator, International Councillor). These materials should be made available electronically (online) and in hardcopy, and could be used by national and regional fraternities to properly train leaders.

Proposal 4c – Creating Pool of Expertise

It is also proposed that a pool of Secular Franciscans who have acquired extensive experience in serving the OFS be created and utilized. To-date, the work of managing the OFS at the international level has been too centralized and limited to only a few people. It is time to utilize the expertise of Secular Franciscans across the world in supporting the operation and management of the Order. The engagement of non-elected members of the OFS in its operation and management is key to being able to better manage an Order such as the OFS. These skilled resources could be retained to:

- work in some of the permanent offices that are being proposed in this Conclusive Document;
- preside at national elective chapters, conduct fraternal visits and perform various studies and projects of interest to the OFS; and
- provide support to national councils in resolving problems at the national level.

Proposal 4d – Collaboration within Franciscan Family

The Secular Franciscan Order is part of the broader Franciscan Family, one among many spiritual families in the Church who recognize that they are all called to follow Christ in the

footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi (Rule, Art. 1). The above proposals are directed primarily to leadership within the OFS. To be effective leaders, however, there must also be ongoing and regular communications with the rest of the Franciscan Family. On a day-to-day basis, this is a fundamental responsibility of the International Presidency. Participation in dialogue with the Conference of the Franciscan Family (CFF) and coordinating actions and activities with the Conference are required in order to support our membership in the broader family. It is proposed that common initiatives with the Franciscan Family be identified and pursued so as to increase the level of cooperation.

Proposal 4e – Administration and Promotion

To support the efficient administration and promotion of the OFS, the following practical tasks and actions are proposed:

- developing and distributing a template for annual reports submitted at various levels of fraternity;
- assembling activity reports from national fraternities and making them available (online);
- providing clear direction and expectations to national councils when conducting fraternal and pastoral visits;
- developing a more efficient and timely process for revising / approving National Statutes;
- developing protocols and procedures for handling appeals and petitions from national fraternities; and
- developing guidelines for vocational promotion across the OFS, including the possibility of organizing a world-wide “Secular Franciscan Day” to promote the OFS and make the Secular Franciscan vocation known.

5. COMMUNICATIONS

Communications plays a critical role in all facets of an organization, both communications within the organization (internal) as well as communications outside of the organization (external). Effective communications are essential to building and maintaining relationships within the organization, establishing effective teams, facilitating innovation, contributing to the growth of the organization and ensuring transparency and sense of trust in the organization.

Proposal 5 – OFS International Office of Communications

It is proposed that a permanent International Office of Communication be established and staffed with professionals possessing the requisite skills in communications, website management and publishing. In some cases, the office may have to retain professional staff on a contractual basis to ensure quality work. This Secretariat would be responsible for:

- developing an international communication strategy for the OFS;
- performing media relations and issuing News Releases on specific events providing the OFS with a common voice that reflects its Franciscan vocation and mission (e.g. refugee crisis, natural disasters, etc.);
- managing the CIOFS website and social media;
- developing promotional material for the OFS (eg. posters, flyers, videos, etc.);
- publishing an international newspaper (electronic and hardcopy); and
- creating and maintaining a database of international and national contacts.

An essential part of the work of this office would be to determine the best tools for communicating with the OFS, given the diversity of its membership and availability of technology.

6. FINANCES

In conformity with the Statutes of the International Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order, the Presidency of the International Council appoints a Treasurer and establishes a Finance Commission responsible for the financial and patrimonial management of the International Fraternity. The presence of a Treasurer and Finance Commission is essential to the effective and efficient financial management of the Secular Franciscan Order at the international level, and is endorsed by national fraternities. However, to ensure a greater transparency the following are also recommended:

Proposal 6 – Financial Strategy and Plan

It is proposed that the International Council develop a financial strategy and plan for the international fraternity which includes both revenue generation strategies and expenditure management controls; the financial strategy would strive to balance the distributions of financial resources between administrative/management requirements and outreach initiatives to national fraternities in need. It is further proposed that this financial strategy and plan be presented and approved by the Order's General Chapter.

The following practical tasks would form part of the work of developing a financial strategy and plan:

- creating, in collaboration with the Office of Formation, a training module that explains article 25 of the OFS Rule, the responsibilities of each member of the Order, the co-responsibilities of each level of fraternity, the inequities of financial resources across the Order and the procedures to use when managing fixed assets/patrimony;
- explaining and stressing the importance of being accountable for financial decisions taken by the chapters of higher level fraternities (regional, national and international) and ensuring that International Councillors, along with their respective National Councils, assume the responsibility for implementing decisions taken at General Chapters regarding the finances of the Order;
- developing an approach to revenue generation that includes not only contributions from national fraternities but also donations, bequests and specific fundraising projects for specific initiatives; new sources of funding should be sought from foundations, benefactors and businesses (consideration should be given to retaining a professional fundraising company to raise funds for the OFS);
- developing an approach to travel that focuses on essential travel, decentralization of resources and minimizing the carbon footprint of the OFS; this approach would include specific criteria that ensures appropriateness of all expenditures associated with travelling to national fraternities for chapters and visits and pays special attention to fraternities with limited financial means; and
- providing detailed financial reports to national fraternities on a regular basis (at least quarterly) so as to engage the international fraternity as a whole in the sustainable financial management of the Order.

7. SPIRITUAL ASSISTANCE

In their reflection, national fraternities acknowledged and expressed their appreciation for the generous service provided by spiritual assistants to both the Secular Franciscan Order and to the Franciscan Youth (YouFra) spread out across the world. However, in managing the OFS, it was also acknowledged that the spiritual and pastoral care of the Secular Franciscan Order is entrusted by the Church to the Franciscan First Order and the Third Order Regular (TOR) and that this duty is exercised by their General and Provincial Ministers. It is these Franciscan Major Superiors who are responsible for the quality of spiritual assistance and pastoral care, and for the specific preparation of the Assistants so that they will be suitable and well-prepared (Statutes for Spiritual and Pastoral Assistance to the Secular Franciscan Order, Art. 5).

It should be noted, however, that the OFS is interested, willing and available to assist the Major Superiors in supporting spiritual assistants in exercising their duties and responsibilities. This would include participation in formation courses for newly appointed spiritual assistants, and the overall training of spiritual assistants regarding their service to the OFS.

Major Superiors are also encouraged to include their responsibility to the OFS in the formation programs of their friars and the responsibility of the First Order and Third Order Regular to engage with the OFS as an integral component of the Franciscan Family.

National fraternities also pointed out the need for better connections between the General Spiritual Assistants and the National Spiritual Assistants, especially through the creation and distribution of circulars that support and encourage spiritual assistants in their respective ministries.

8. FRANCISCAN YOUTH (YOUFRA)

The Secular Franciscan Order is called to share its experience of evangelical life with youth who feel attracted to St. Francis of Assisi and considers itself to be particularly responsible for the Franciscan Youth. (GC, Art. 96).

Essential to the commitment of the OFS to Franciscan Youth is the development of a relationship between Secular Franciscans and members of the Franciscan Youth, and their respective fraternities. It is recognized that the development of relationships requires a willingness on the part of both parties to spend time together, and to share vocational journeys with each other.

In its reflection, national fraternities acknowledged the richness of YouFra documents that are already available to support the establishment, formation and guidance of Franciscan Youth, including:

- YouFra – A Way of Franciscan Vocation
- YouFra Formation Program
- Sample Draft of YouFra National Statutes
- YouFra International Regulations
- Conclusion of the 1st YouFra International Assembly – Spain 2007

- Incorporation of the YouFra members into the OFS
- Guidelines for Fraternal Animation
- Guide for the Establishment of a New Fraternity of Franciscan Youth (YouFra)
- Conclusions of the 2nd YouFra International Assembly (Croatia, 2014)
- Celebrations in the Fraternity of the Franciscan Youth

It is important for fraternities to realize that today's YouFra is different from the YouFra of the past. The above documents are helpful aids in understanding the nature of YouFra and how best to work with Franciscan Youth.

Proposal 8 – Engagement with Franciscan Youth

It is proposed that greater strides be made by the Secular Franciscan Order in sharing its experience of evangelical life with youth by:

- developing a formation module for use by Secular Franciscans that would outline the call of the OFS to share its experience of evangelical life with youth and its overall responsibility for Franciscan Youth;
- encouraging local fraternities to reach out to youth who may be seeking an experience of evangelical life in the manner of St. Francis (all available technological means should be employed in reaching out to young people, including social media, blogs, etc.);
- organizing special activities for young people, and even children, in order to share its experience with them and to promote the creation of YouFra fraternities in their localities;
- organizing joint gatherings, activities and events in those areas where there are YouFra fraternities so as to provide opportunities for getting to know one another better and, through these activities, strengthen their awareness of belonging to the whole Franciscan Family; and
- exploring opportunities to collaborate with YouFra members in areas of responsibility in which they have a particular competence; for example, development of websites and engagement in social networks).

While some may think of Franciscan Youth as the “future” of the Franciscan Family and the Franciscan charism, the Secular Franciscan International Presidency has been reminded on many occasions that Franciscan Youth is part of our “present” reality and that the OFS must continually seek opportunities to work with YouFra as one of its particular ministries.

IN CONCLUSION

The reflection of national fraternities on how an Order like the Secular Franciscan Order (OFS) should be managed at all its levels has resulted in the identification of eight priority areas and, for each of these priority areas, concrete proposals to support a more efficient and effective management of the Order. Each of these concrete proposals associated with formation, fraternal life, building a fraternal and evangelical world, leadership, communications, finance, spiritual assistance and Franciscan Youth could contribute to a strong renewal of the way in which fraternities are animated and guided. These proposals could be instrumental in giving life and breath (“anima”) to the structures of the OFS and, together, guide the Order forward with concrete actions to build a more fraternal and evangelical world.

As the Order prepares to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Pauline Rule of 1978 (*Seraphicum Patriarcha*), it is opportune to reflect on the application of the Rule and how it is to be lived by Secular Franciscans. Let us be well prepared to go out into the world following Christ in the footsteps of St. Francis and St. Clare.