

Celebrations in the Fraternity of the Franciscan Youth

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PREFACE

This document has a normative nature. At the same time, it shall be open to legitimate adaptation to different cultures.

I. The nature of personal and formal commitment made before God and the fraternity of Franciscan Youth

1. Franciscan Youth is the communion of all YouFra local fraternities existing around the world. It is an integral part of the Franciscan Family, living the experience of Christian life in the light of the message of St. Francis of Assisi and deepening its vocational journey in the midst of the Secular Franciscan Order. (*Cfr. Conclusions of the 1st YouFra International Assembly – Introduction; cfr. GG.CC. Art. 96.2*)
2. The members of Franciscan Youth, either individually or in a group, consider the Rule of the OFS an inspirational document for the growth of their own Christian and Franciscan vocation. After a suitable period of formation of at least one year, the candidate confirms this option with a personal pledge before God and in the presence of their brothers and sisters. (*Cfr. GG.CC. Art. 96.3*)

II. The celebrations that accompany the way of vocation in Franciscan Youth

3. The members of the Franciscan Youth deepen their own way of vocation in the light of the message of St. Francis. After their initial getting to know the fraternity, they incorporate themselves into the life of the fraternity with the Celebration of Admission. Later they confirm their way of vocation in YouFra with the Celebration of Promise. (*Cfr. YouFra: A Way of Franciscan Vocation, n. 19; 21; 22*)
4. In both celebrations the president of the local fraternity into which the young member is to be incorporated, or of the fraternity with which the youth commits to, will perform the welcoming. If there is no brother or sister in the local fraternity who has made his or her promise, as in the case of an emerging fraternity, the president of the higher level of fraternity will be responsible for the welcoming. When this is not possible, the minister of the local OFS fraternity or delegate will be responsible for the welcoming. The role and the presence of the spiritual assistant during the above-mentioned celebrations are means to guarantee fidelity to the Franciscan charism, communion with the Church, and union with the Franciscan family. (*Cfr. YouFra: A*

Way of Franciscan Vocation, n. 21, 28; *cfr. Conclusions of the 1st YouFra International Assembly*)

III. The Celebration of Admission into the Franciscan Youth fraternity

5. The time of admission into YouFra is a time of searching, of establishing initial contacts, of understanding and acceptance, which culminates in the decision to begin the time of formation. (*A Sample Draft of National Statutes*, Art. 24)
6. The Celebration of Admission into a YouFra fraternity precedes the period of formation for the Promise in YouFra. The celebration should be simple and modest. It is advisable that before the celebration, the young Franciscan has received the Sacrament of Confirmation. (*Cfr. Conclusions of the 1st YouFra International Assembly*)
7. The Celebration is conducted during a time of prayer in the fraternity and not during the Mass. After the celebration, the Gospel and other YouFra documents may be given to the youth. (*Cfr. Conclusions of the 1st YouFra International Assembly*)

IV. The Celebration of Promise

8. After a period of formation of at least one year, the candidate may confirm his or her decision by making a personal promise before God and in the presence of the brothers and sisters. The fraternity council makes the decision on the candidate's petition, and after making the promise, the young person is fully incorporated into the fraternity. YouFra members who have made their promises should remember to renew them each year, as it is defined in the National Statutes. (*Cfr. YouFra: A Way of Franciscan Vocation*, n. 21; *cfr. A Sample Draft of National Statutes*, Art. 27-28; *cfr. Conclusions of the 1st YouFra International Assembly*)
9. Before the Celebration of Promise, the candidate should attend a specially designed spiritual retreat intended for those preparing for this promise to enter into the YouFra fraternity. (*Cfr. Conclusions of the 1st YouFra International Assembly*)
10. Whenever possible, the YouFra promise should be made within the Eucharistic celebration and open to all the community. The young Franciscan will be given a Tau – possibly a specially designed one. (*Cfr. A Sample Draft of National Statutes*, Art. 28; *cfr. Conclusions of the 1st YouFra International Assembly*)
11. The nature of the promise in the fraternity of YouFra includes:
 - a) Renewal of baptismal promises
 - b) Personal and public acceptance to live the Gospel in the fraternity, according to the example of St. Francis
 - c) Acceptance of the OFS Rule as the document of inspiration
(*Cfr. YouFra: A Way of Franciscan Vocation*, n. 6; 21)
12. Members of the local OFS fraternity, if there is one, are to be invited to the Celebration of Promise, because the OFS is considered to be particularly responsible for YouFra and ought to be ready to share its experience of evangelical life with it.

CELEBRATION OF ADMISSION INTO THE FRANCISCAN YOUTH

OPENING

The celebration begins with a suitable song, the sign of the cross and with a few words of greeting from the spiritual assistant who presides and exercises the role of the celebrant or, if he or she is not a cleric, of the prayer leader.

The President of the fraternity or delegate explains the meaning of the Celebration and encourages participation, using these or similar words:

President or delegate

The Lord has called us to live the Gospel way of life in fraternity as he showed it to St. Francis of Assisi. He brings us together today to receive those who, moved by the Holy Spirit, have asked to be admitted into the Franciscan Youth and want to begin their time of formation, which will culminate in their promise.

Let us call upon the presence of the Holy Spirit in order to help us witness to our brothers and sisters a proper Christian and Franciscan life.

Celebrant or Prayer Leader

Let us pray. Lord our God, you have sent your Son Jesus Christ to be for us the way, the truth, and the life. Grant that these young people, who are asking to be admitted into the Franciscan Youth, may hear the words of the Gospel fully and may observe them attentively like St. Francis. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

SHORT READING

A suitable reading may be chosen.

- 1) Rom 6:3-11 – “*Let us live a new life*”
- 2) Mk 1:12-15 – “*Repent, and believe the Good News*”
- 3) Eccles 11:7-10; 12:1 – “*Remember your Creator in the days of your youth.*”
- 4) Jer 1:4-10 – “*Say not, ‘I am too young’, To whomever I send you, you shall go; Whatever I command you, you shall speak.*”

The celebrant or the prayer leader may give a spiritual reflection.

CELEBRATION OF ADMISSION

The candidates express their desire to enter the Franciscan Youth. The president of the fraternity or delegate receives their request in these or similar words:

President or delegate

Would those who are asking to be admitted into the fraternity, please come forward, namely, N.N.

The candidates stand up answering one by one:

Candidate

Here I am!

Then, the candidates respond all together:

Candidates

Brothers and sisters, we here present ask to enter this fraternity of the Franciscan Youth, so that we may live more intensely and faithfully the grace and dedication of our baptism by following Jesus Christ, according to the teachings and example of St. Francis of Assisi. We want to be persistent and attentive listeners to God's Word and persistent in personal and common prayer. We want to enjoy God's love in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Eucharist.

Let Mary, Mother of Jesus and our Mother, recommend to the Lord our desires and prayers.

President or delegate

With joy in our hearts, this fraternity is pleased to accept your request and welcomes you to begin your time of formation.

Celebrant or Prayer Leader

The Church and the Franciscan Family, especially the OFS, acknowledge and rejoice with your sincere intentions. May the Lord give you peace and perseverance in this decision.

All: Amen. Thanks be to God.

Celebrant or Prayer Leader

Let us thank God for these brothers and sisters by praying together the Lord's Prayer:
Our Father, who art in heaven...

At the end of the celebration, the Prayer of the Franciscan Youth may be said. The celebration ends with the blessing of St. Francis and a suitable song.

If it is suitable, the president may give to each member the distinctive sign (the Gospel and other YouFra documents).

CELEBRATION OF PROMISE IN FRANCISCAN YOUTH

If possible, the promise of YouFra members should be done within the Eucharistic celebration. After the reading of the Gospel the president of the fraternity or delegate, invites those who are to make promises to present themselves and to express their intentions publicly.

President of the fraternity or delegate

Let those who want to make (renew) their promise of living the Gospel in the fraternity of Franciscan Youth please come forward.

The president or delegate reads the names of the candidates.

The candidates after their name has been read, stand up and express their readiness by answering:

Candidate

Here I am!

Delegate of the group of candidates

We are a group of young people who want to share the experience of the Christian life in the fraternity of the Franciscan Youth (for one year) and in this way respond to the love of Jesus Christ. We want to be a community of faith, which has the Gospel as a guide, the Eucharist as the center, the Church as a mother and the poor and the humble ones as brothers and sisters.

All: Amen.

Homily

The celebrant gives a homily to those present drawn from the readings of the Mass. After the homily, the celebrant invites those present to pray.

Celebrant

Dear brothers and sisters, all of you long for a better world where love and joy reign. However, there are often not enough workers to build this better world. “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few”, says the Lord. Therefore, we thank God for this group of young people, which, in communion with the Franciscan Family, is ready to give its valuable contribution to this goal. We pray that God in his goodness may help you in witnessing to the love and joy of the Gospel in our world.

After a short moment of silence, the celebrant prays in these or similar words:

God, good Father, source of joy and strength for the weak, watch over these young people who, inspired by the example of St. Francis, are giving their youth to build a better world. Give them the grace to be strong and generous, through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Then follows the act of making the promise. The formula of the promise can be expressed either individually, or by one candidate speaking in the name of all (if there is a bigger group of young people).

Since there is one single formula, care should be taken to avoid confusion between those renewing their promise and those doing it for the first time.

Formula for the promise

I, N.N., by the grace of God, renew my baptismal promises and commit myself to the service of the Kingdom of God, following the example of St. Francis of Assisi and drawing inspiration from the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order. Therefore, I (renew my) promise to live the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in the fraternity of the Franciscan Youth (for one year) by observing its way of life. I promise to respond to every call of good, to take strength from the Eucharist, to recognize in the poor and humble ones the face of the suffering Christ, and to seek and do God's will. May the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and our Seraphic Father St. Francis help me on this journey. Amen.

Then the celebrant responds:

Celebrant

May the Lord confirm your decision and bless your youth! In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit! Amen.

All: Amen.

When all this is finished, the promised members may come forward to receive the suitable sign (the Tau which represents belonging to the Franciscan Family, or New Testament, or OFS Rule as a document of inspiration...) while a hymn may be sung. The signing of the document shall be done after the Eucharistic celebration. The Celebration of Promise can finish with the Prayer of The Franciscan Youth. The Mass continues with the Prayer of the Faithful.

CELEBRATION OF THE FRATERNITY'S ELECTIVE ASSEMBLY IN FRANCISCAN YOUTH

Celebration of the Elective Assembly starts with suitable hymn and the sign of the cross, after which follows the invocation of the Holy Spirit.

Spiritual Assistant

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

The Presider of the elections encourages in these or similar words:

Presider

Dear brothers and sisters, the Lord calls us today to be responsible: to choose several of our brothers and sisters who will, in the name of God, lead, animate and coordinate this fraternity of the Franciscan Youth. Let us call upon the Holy Spirit to guide us.

Hymn to the Holy Spirit or suitable song.

Come, Holy Ghost, Creator blest

Come, Holy Ghost, Creator blest,
And in our souls take up your rest;
Come with your grace and heavenly aid
To fill the hearts which you have made.

O Comforter, to you we cry,
O heavenly gift of God Most High,
O fount of life and fire of love,
And sweet anointing from above.

You in your sevenfold gifts are known;
You, finger of God's hand we own;
You, promise of the Father, you
Who do the tongue with power imbue.

Kindle our senses from above,
And make our hearts overflow with love;
With patience firm and virtue high
The weakness of our flesh supply.

Far from us drive the foe we dread,
And grant us your peace instead;
So shall we not, with you for guide,
Turn from the path of life aside.

Oh, may your grace on us bestow
The Father and the Son to know;
And you, through endless times confessed,
Of both the eternal Spirit blest.

Now to the Father and the Son,
Who rose from death, be glory given,
With you, O holy Comforter,
Henceforth by all in earth and heaven.

Amen.

SHORT READING

A short reading from Sacred Scriptures or from the writings of St. Francis may be chosen.

- 1) Col 3:9-17 – “*Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience... And over all these virtues put on love.*”
- 2) Mt 5:1-12 – “*How happy are the poor in spirit, the gentle, the merciful.*”
- 3) Mt 11:20-30 – “*You have hidden these things from the learned and the clever and have revealed them to mere children.*”
- 4) Lk 10:1-9 – “*Start off now; I am sending you.*”
- 5) Lk 1:26-38 – “*Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.*”
- 6) John 13:1-15 – “*If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet.*”
- 7) Writings of St. Francis: *The Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters in Penance*
- 8) Writings of St. Francis: *Letter to All the Faithful*
- 9) Writings of St. Francis: *Unconfirmed Rule of 1221*, chapters 22 and 23

The spiritual assistant addresses those present with some encouraging words.

Presider

And now, after the invocation of the Holy Spirit and the reading we have heard, without any personal interest, you will choose the ones who will act for the benefit of this fraternity. Do you promise to vote according to your conscience, in full freedom, and for the benefit of the fraternity?

All: We do.

The election process follows by electing president, vice-president and the members of the Council, as defined in regulations of the elections.

PROCLAMATION OF THE ELECTED MEMBERS

Newly elected members approach the presider and the spiritual assistant. After an official proclamation of the results of the election, the presider asks for their acceptance.

Presider

Do you accept the service that the fraternity has entrusted to you by the election process and by the will of God?

Elected member

I do.

Presider

May the Lord give you his grace that you may humbly serve this fraternity in the ways entrusted to you.

All: Amen.

The spiritual assistant says this prayer:

Spiritual Assistant

Lord of Heaven and Earth,
who invite your people to collaborate in your plan of salvation,
assuming that they will become builders of Thy kingdom,
which is based on love, peace and self-giving to neighbor,
bless these our brothers and sisters
elected for the service of councilors and servants of this fraternity.

Let them be filled with your Spirit in order
to penetrate into the truth of your Word,
to lead their brothers and sisters on the path of perfection,
to animate when indifference occurs,
to encourage in moments of uncertainty, and
to be, in everything and always, heralds of Thy kingdom.

You gave them the example of our Seraphic Father Saint Francis,
give them now the strength that they may continue to be like him:
simple and caring, poor and generous,
spiritual, joyful witnesses,
bearers of peace and good wherever they go.

We ask this through the intercession of
Blessed Mary and her son Jesus Christ
Who lives and reigns forever and ever.

All: Amen.

The celebration ends with the Prayer of The Franciscan Youth, followed by the blessing of the Seraphic father St. Francis and a suitable song.

PRAYER OF THE FRANCISCAN YOUTH

Lord Jesus Christ,
you who are the light and the joy of our lives,
give us, we humbly ask you,
your Spirit of poverty, to protect us from all evil;
give us your Spirit of humility and simplicity
to free us from bondage to ourselves.

Give us wisdom and a generous understanding of the cross
so that we love only you, and with you and in you,
love all creation, all people and things.

Above all, Lord, give us pure hearts and bodies
so we are able to seed joy wherever we go,
to seek the good and be against evil;
that we help our brothers and sisters, in whom you are present,
to do good every day and be closer to you.

Look, O Lord, at our hearts and souls, which are ready to respond
to your every call.
Give us your joy so that we may be jubilant heralds of your kingdom.

This is what we ask of you, Lord,
with your mother and our mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary,
and with our Seraphic Father,
whom we have chosen as guide for our journey.

Amen!