

**NATIONAL STATUTES OF THE FRANCISCAN
YOUTH/YOUNG ADULTS OF THE U.S.A.**

RATIFIED OCTOBER 18, 2008

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Chapter 1: Nature

1. The Franciscan Youth/Young Adults (FYA) of the United States is the fellowship of young people who feel called by the Holy Spirit to make, in fraternity, an experience of Christian life, in the light of the message of Francis of Assisi, deepening their vocation within the realm of the Secular Franciscan Order (SFO).
2. FYA belongs to the Franciscan family as an integral part of the SFO and considers the Rule of the SFO as the inspirational document for the growth of its own Christian and Franciscan vocation, both individually and as a group.
3. In as much as FYA belongs to the Franciscan family, its pastoral care and spiritual assistance is entrusted to the First Order and to the Third Order Regular (TOR).
4. In view of the FYA's vital and reciprocal communion with the SFO, which considers itself to be responsible for it, the fraternal animation of the FYA is entrusted to the SFO.
5. The FYA operate in groups called fraternities at various levels: local, regional and national. Each of these fraternities should be accompanied in their journey of human and spiritual growth by a SFO fraternity.
6. The FYA is open to Catholic Youth (ages 14 to 17) and Catholic Young Adults (ages 18 to 35).
7. In the United States of America the FYA is governed by the universal law of the Church, by the General Constitutions of the SFO, by the National Statutes of the United States of America (Article 27) and by these Statutes, approved by the National Fraternity Council of the SFO in the United States.
8. It belongs to the National FYA Council to make clarifications regarding specific matters and strive to find solutions to particular situations not taken up in these Statutes.

Chapter 2: Life and Action

9. The form of life of the FYA is this: to observe the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, following the example of Francis of Assisi who made Christ the inspiration and center of his life (SFO Rule 4).
10. The FYA are to seek the living and acting person of Christ in all people, in Sacred Scriptures, in the Church and in liturgical activities (SFO Rule 5).
11. Buried and risen with Christ in Baptism, which makes them living members of the Church, let the FYA become witnesses and instruments of her mission among all, announcing Christ in words and in deeds (SFO Rule 6).
12. Moved by the Gospel, let them conform their way of thinking and acting to that of Christ, through a radical inner conversion, which is to be renewed constantly by reconciliation (SFO Rule 7).
13. The FYA must strive to make the life of prayer and contemplation the soul of all they

are and do. They are to participate in the sacramental life of the Church, particularly in the Eucharist, and to join in the liturgical prayer of the people of God (SFO Rule 8).

14. The FYYA should show their love for Mary by imitation of her attentiveness to the Word of God and her openness to the Spirit (SFO Rule 9).
15. The FYYA are to fulfill the duties of their state in life and to seek a balanced relationship with earthly things, simplifying their material needs and desire for power. Let them take a firm stand against ideologies and attitudes that place material well-being over and above Christian values (SFO Rules 10 & 11).
16. Let them identify with all men and women, particularly with the poorest ones following the example of Francis of Assisi. Let them join with others to promote fraternity among all nations, and let them take a clear stand whenever the dignity of others are trampled upon through any form of oppression or indifference (SFO Rule 13).
17. Let them assume, in the spirit of service, their social and civil responsibilities proper to their state in life (SFO Rule 14).
18. Let them live in their own family the Franciscan spirit of peace, fidelity and respect for life, and let them strive to make it the sign of a world already renewed in Christ. Let them strive to affirm the value of fidelity and respect for all life, from the moment of conception until natural death, and bearing in mind all the many circumstances that we the people of God find ourselves in during our lifetimes (SFO Rule 17).
19. Being aware that peace is to be built up without ceasing let them seek opportunities to actively engage in the promotion of peace and justice in their surroundings (SFO Rule 19).
20. Let them show respect for all creatures, animate or inanimate, which "carry the imprint of the most High" and let them try by all means to reduce, reuse and recycle the treasures of our earth (SFO Rule 18).
21. Let them exert constant efforts to bring others joy. May they minimize anxiety, pessimism and hopelessness to foster a climate of faith, acceptance and hope (SFO Rule 19).

Chapter 3: Formation

22. Membership in the FYYA takes place through three phases of formation: Initiation, Formation for the Promise, and Deepening One's Vocation, according to the programs, methods and contents formulated by the National Youth/Young Adult Council.
23. **Initiation** into the FYYA is a period of time for searching and discovering which culminates with the decision to begin the period of formation. The duration of this period can be between 3 to 6 months according to the discernment of the Fraternal Animator, Formation Director and Spiritual Assistant.
24. To begin the period of **Formation for the Promise**, a petition is submitted in writing by the individual to the local FYYA fraternity. The conditions for the admission to Formation are to be Catholic and to live in communion with the Church.
25. The period of **Formation for the Promise** is the time to know and live the Gospel

according to the example Francis of Assisi, within the local FYYA fraternity. This period of time should be determined by Fraternal Animator, Formation Director and Spiritual Assistant of the FYYA fraternity. It must be at least one year but not more than two. At the beginning of this stage, any acceptable Franciscan symbol is given, except for the Tau Cross, which is the distinctive sign of the SFO.

26. A petition to make the Promise in the FYYA is to be submitted at the end of the **Formation for the Promise** in writing by the youth to the Fraternal Animator, Formation Director and Spiritual Assistant of the local FYYA fraternity.
27. The Promise in the FYYA is a formal act by which the young person is fully incorporated in the **FYYA** fraternity. If possible, the Promise in the FYYA should be made within the Eucharistic celebration; ideally this could occur at the young person's home Parish.
28. The Promise marks the beginning of a period of ongoing formation intended for **Deepening One's Vocation**, for discovering and for translating into daily life the inspirations of the SFO Rule, in order to verify one's vocation and discern an appropriate response to God's call.
29. Since the FYYA is a vocational journey and a time for verification that by its very nature is temporary, membership ends when the person reaches the age of 36.
30. Members of the FYYA who wish to profess in the SFO must observe the provisions of the Rule, of the General Constitutions, the National Statutes and the Ritual of the SFO (GC 96.4). Profession in the SFO continues the daily conversion that began in the FYYA fraternity. The Promise made in the FYYA has the same spiritual effect as profession in the SFO.
31. The Promise of a Franciscan Youth or Young Adult, in a recognized FYYA fraternity, may be deemed equivalent to the SFO Orientation and Inquiry phases of SFO Formation; thus a Promised Franciscan Youth or Young Adult may become an SFO Candidate within the SFO Formation Process.

Chapter 4: Organization

The Local Fraternity

32. The local FYYA fraternity is the primary cell of the FYYA, the place where brothers and sisters meet and have their experience of Christian life in the light of the message of Francis of Assisi. The members of the fraternity meet regularly, for example weekly but not less than monthly, to live together their relationship with God and with one another. It is necessary that the meetings combine moments of prayer and formation with moments of action and recreation. The meetings are to be organized in such a way that they contribute to the insertion of the FYYA fraternity into the Franciscan family and into the local Church.
33. The recognition of a local FYYA fraternity is made by the Regional Executive Council of the SFO that corresponds to the region in which the FYYA fraternity is to be established. The Regional Executive Council must inform the National Youth/Young Adult Council of the recognition. The FYYA fraternity will request competent secular leaders and religious superiors for fraternal animation and spiritual assistance (GC96.6). The record of the recognition is to be kept in the archives of the FYYA fraternity and its sponsoring local SFO fraternity. A copy is to be furnished to the Regional Executive Council and the

National Youth/Young Adult Council.

34. Each local FYYA fraternity maintains a vital and reciprocal communion with a local SFO fraternity from which it seeks fraternal animation and with which it interchanges a FYYA representative with a SFO Council representative (GC97.4). The fraternal animator and the local SFO representative can be one and the same person.
35. When the local FYYA fraternity reaches five Promised members or above, it is animated and guided by a Council composed of a President, a Vice President and at least one councilor. These can be elected for a period of no more than three years. According to the needs of each FYYA fraternity, more officers may be added. They enjoy the right to vote only if elected by the local FYYA fraternity. The representative of the local SFO Council and the Spiritual Assistant are also members of the Council. The SFO representative and Spiritual Assistant have neither active nor passive voice in the elections to the different offices. The President, or delegate designated by the Council, represents the local fraternity in the Council of the local SFO fraternity (GC 97.4).

The Regional FYYA Fraternity

36. The Regional FYYA Fraternity is the union of all local FYYA fraternities in a given territory that coincides with the Regional SFO Fraternity.
37. The Regional FYYA Fraternity is animated and guided by a Council composed of a President, Vice President and at least one Councilor—all elected by the Regional FYYA Fraternity for a period of not more than three years. If necessary, the Regional FYYA Fraternity may add other officers who will enjoy the right to vote only if the Regional FYYA Fraternity elected them. The representative of the SFO Regional Council and the Regional Spiritual Assistant are also members of the Council. The Regional President, or a delegate designated by the Council, represents the Regional FYYA Fraternity in the Council of the Regional SFO Fraternity.
38. The Regional FYYA Fraternity meets at least once a year; it is presided over by its President. The Elective Assembly of the Regional FYYA Fraternity meets once every three years; it is presided over by the National President of the FYYA or his/her delegate. In the Regional FYYA Fraternity, the following have an active voice: the Regional FYYA Council and from each local FYYA fraternity, its President or delegate. Everyone who has made his or her Promise in the FYYA may be elected to any office. The SFO representative and Spiritual Assistant have neither active nor passive voice in the elections to the different offices.

The National FYYA Fraternity

39. The National FYYA Fraternity is the union of all the Regional FYYA Fraternities, which exist in the territory of the United States of America. It is animated and guided by an Executive Council composed of a President, Vice President and at least three Councilors, all elected by the elective assembly of the National FYYA Fraternity for a period of three years. If necessary, the National FYYA Fraternity may add other officers who enjoy the right to vote only if the National FYYA Fraternity elects them. The representatives of the National Fraternity Council of the SFO, or its delegate and the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants, or their delegate are members of the National FYYA Council. The President, or a delegate chosen by the National FYYA Council, represents the National FYYA Fraternity in the National Fraternity Council of the SFO.

40. The National FYYA Fraternity meets at least once every two years; it is presided over by its President. The Elective Assembly of the National FYYA Fraternity meets once every three years; it is presided over by the National Minister of the SFO or his/her delegate. The following have an active voice in the Elective Assembly of the National FYYA Fraternity: the National FYYA Executive Council and the Presidents, or the delegates, of the Regional FYYA Councils. All who have made their Promise in the FYYA are eligible to be elected, and at least two members elected to the National FYYA are to be professed SFO (GC 97.3). The SFO representative and Spiritual Assistant have neither active nor passive voice in the elections to the different offices.

Elections

41. FYYA elections shall take place according to the norms of the National Statues of the SFO, Articles 10 through 15, except as indicated below.
42. Before the election of each office, the President of the Elective Assembly shall invite the voters who have active voice to nominate candidates for the various offices. An election conducted with a closed list of candidates is invalid. More than one-half of the number of those eligible to vote constitutes a quorum.
43. For the election of all offices at all levels, an absolute majority is required. An absolute majority is more than half of the votes of those present. These are cast by a secret ballot. If two ballots are unsuccessful, a third ballot is conducted in which only the two nominees who obtained the highest number of votes are candidates, or if there were more than two, the first two to make the Promise. If in the third ballot there is a tie, the one who made the Promise first is considered elected.
44. The Presidents and Councilors at all levels can be elected only for two consecutive terms. The offices of President of two different levels as well as the offices of President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer at the same level are incompatible.
45. The President at any level coordinates the activities of the fraternity, convokes and directs the meetings of the Council, and represents the fraternity in the functions of other fraternities and organizations.
46. The Vice President cooperates with the President in the performance of their duties, carries out whatever tasks are assigned by the Council, substitutes for the President if the President is absent and assumes the duties of President when the office is vacant.
47. The Secretary keeps the minutes of the meetings, looks after the archives of the fraternity and takes care of the correspondence. Together with the President, the secretary signs the official minutes of the fraternity.
48. The Treasurer keeps the inventory of temporal and financial matters, and renders an account to the Council. Together with the President, the treasurer signs the financial report of the fraternity.
49. The Councilors are elected by the assembly to perform the tasks assigned to them. Together with the President and Vice President, they are responsible for the animation and guidance of the fraternity.

The Formation Director

50. The Formation Director, along with the Spiritual Assistant and the FYYA Council, is to guarantee adequate lay Franciscan formation for the needs of the world of the youth, according to the existing realities in the USA. The Formation Director and the Fraternal Animator may be one and the same Secular Franciscan (GC 96.5 & 97.2).

The Fraternal Animator

51. The Fraternal Animator is to seek the best possible means of fostering the vitality of the FYYA fraternity, ready to communicate the experience of Gospel living to the members, and helps them advance in the path of human and spiritual growth. The Fraternal Animator and the Formation Director may be one and the same Secular Franciscan (GC96.6 & 97.2).

The Spiritual Assistant

52. The Spiritual Assistant bears witness to the Franciscan spirituality and to the fraternal affection of the friars towards the brothers and sisters of the FYYA. They promote the fidelity of the FYYA to the Franciscan charism, communion with the Church and union with the Franciscan family. They cooperate particularly in the formation of the FYYA (GC96.6 & 97.2).

Chapter 5: Protection of the Franciscan Youth and Young Adults

53. As our youth and young adults are the most important gifts God has entrusted to us, and they bear the imprint of the Father, therefore, the SFO Fraternal Animators, the Spiritual Assistants and all other adults who come in contact with our Franciscan Youth are to comply with any, and all local diocesan rules, guidelines and certification requirements in regard to working with youth within their respective diocese. The Secular Franciscan Order of the United States will not tolerate any type of abuse towards our most vulnerable of members be it, but not limited to verbal, physical, psychological or sexual. Refer to the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, composed by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), and the Hope and Healing Program composed by the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM).

Chapter 6: Additions and Modifications

54. The Statutes for Spiritual and Pastoral Assistance to the SFO governs the pastoral and spiritual assistance of the fraternities at all levels, with the proper adaptations.
55. Until such time that an elected National FYYA Fraternity Council is established, modifications of these National Statutes of the FYYA in the United States may be suggested by the National Youth/Young Adult Council. To become legally binding, such modifications must be approved by the National Fraternity Council of the SFO.

APPROVED ON MAY 30, 2008 BY THE NATIONAL YOUTH/YOUNG ADULT COMMISSION, SFO-USA.

APPROVED ON JUNE 6, 2008 BY THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL, SFO-USA.

APPROVED AND RATIFIED ON OCTOBER 18, 2008 BY THE NATIONAL FRATERNITY COUNCIL, SFO-USA.