

Intergenerational dialogue in the fraternity



**Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis
Consilium Internationale**

**FAMILY COMMISSION
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Intergenerational dialogue in the fraternity: relationship between secular young people and secular elders in the fraternity.

We continue proposing what was recommended at the 2014 General Chapter to strengthen the family life of OFS, and in this article we are inviting you to consider the relationship between secular young people and secular elders in the fraternity and how the intergenerational dialogue takes place.

To assist you in your reflections, we share articles from Familiaris Consortio – (FC), Christifideles Laici – (CL), Gaudium et Spes – (GS), Youth Synod 2018 – (YS), Koinoina, our Rule and General Constitutions – (GC) and testimonies from Phillipines and Mauritius on their experiences in their fraternities.

Begin by first reflecting on the witness of the family, “Since the Creator of all things has established the conjugal partnership as the beginning and basis of human society,” the family is “the first and vital cell of society.” (FC 42), that we may be enlightened on how to encourage interaction between the generations, that “we may all reshape our existence to find a project of life and a place of Church communion in which it should be possible for us to ‘learn the purpose and the way of living, loving, and suffering’” (GC 10, Emmanuela de Nunzio).

FAMILY – FRATERNITY LIFE, “a visible sign of the Church, a Community of love.” (Rule 22)

Within the family we discover the image of God in each brother and sister. “Inspired and sustained by the new commandment of love, the Christian family welcomes, respects and serves every human being, considering each one in his or her dignity as a person and as a child of God. It should be so, especially between husband and wife and within the family, through a daily

effort to promote a truly personal community, initiated and fostered by an inner communion of love. This way of life should then be extended to the wider circle of the ecclesial community of which the Christian family is a part. Thanks to love within the family, the Church can and ought to take on a more homelike or family dimension, developing a more human and fraternal style of relationships.” (FC 64)

There are cultures which manifest a unique veneration and great love for the elderly; far from being outcasts of the family or merely tolerated as a useless burden, they continue to be present and to take an active and responsible part in family life, through having to respect the autonomy of the new family; above all they carry out the important mission of being a witness to the past and a source of wisdom for the young and for the future. Other cultures, however, especially in the wake of disordered industrial and urban development, have both in the past and in the present set the elderly aside in unacceptable ways. This causes acute suffering to them and spiritually impoverishes many families. (FC 27)

The Church sees her path towards the future in the youth, beholding in them a reflection of herself and her call to that blessed youthfulness which she constantly enjoys as a result of Christ’s Spirit. In this sense the Council has defined youth as “the hope of the Church.”

In the letter of 31 March 1985 to young men and women in the world we read: “The Church looks to the youth, indeed the Church in a special way looks at herself in the youth, in all of you and in each of you. It has been so from the beginning, from apostolic times. The words of St John in his First Letter can serve as special testimony: I am writing to you, young people, because you have overcome the evil one, I write to you, children, because you know the Father.... I write to you, young people because you are strong and the word of God abides in you (1 Jn 2:13 ff)... Young people are and ought to be encouraged to be active on behalf of the Church as leading characters in evangelization and participants in the renewal of society. Youth is a time of an especially intensive discovery of a “self” and a choice of life.” It is a time for growth which ought to progress “in wisdom, age and grace before God and people.”(Lk 2: 5 2). (CL 46)

St John Paul II said .. I now address older people, oftentimes unjustly considered as unproductive, if not directly an insupportable burden. I remind older people that the Church calls and expects them to continue to exercise their mission in the apostolic and missionary life. This is not only a possibility for them, but it is their duty even in this time in their life when age itself provides opportunities in some specific and basic way.

The Bible delights in presenting the older person as the symbol of someone rich in wisdom and fear of the Lord (cf. Sir 25:4-6). In this sense the “gift of older people can be specifically that of being the witness to tradition in the faith both in the Church and in society (cf. Ps 44:2, Ex 12:26-27), the teacher of the lessons of life (cf. Sir 6:34; 8:11-12), and the worker of charity.

They must always have a clear knowledge that one’s role in the Church and society does not stop at a certain age at all, but at such times knows only new ways of application.: “They still bring forth fruit in old age, they are ever full of sap and green, to show that the Lord is upright” (Ps 92: 15-16)... According to the divine plan, each individual human being lives a life of continual

growth, from the beginning of existence to the moment at which the last breath is taken.” (CL 48)

There are always difficulties in communication and understanding between generations, and even more so today, but we have been called by Vatican II, to work for a good world, to see the world as God’s creation, to make it a good living place for young and not so young. In our General Constitution we read in Article 24: 2, In the fraternity;(Rule 19) they should create conditions suitable for dialogue between generations.

Listening is an encounter in freedom, which calls for humility, patience, readiness to understand, and an effort to respond in new ways. Listening transforms the hearts of those who do it, especially when it takes place with an inner disposition of harmony and docility to the Spirit. It is not simply a source of information or a strategy for achieving a goal, but the way that God himself relates to his people. God sees the distress of his people and hears their cry; deeply moved, he comes down to deliver them (cf. Ex 3:7-8). The Church, by her listening, enters into the movement of God who, in his Son, draws near to every human being. (YS 6) The young want to be heard and are constantly called to make decisions that give direction to their lives; they want to be heard, acknowledged and accompanied. Many find that their voice is not considered worthwhile or helpful in social and ecclesial circles. In various situations, little attention is paid to their cry, especially that of the poor and exploited, and there is a lack of adults prepared or willing to listen to them.(YS 7) The young are focused on the future and they face life with energy and dynamism. But they are also tempted to concentrate on enjoying the present and sometimes they tend to give little attention to the memory of the past from which they come, in particular the many gifts transmitted to them by their parents, their grandparents and the cultural experience of the society in which they live. Helping the young discover the living richness of the past, treasuring its memory and making use of it for their choices and opportunities, is a genuine act of love towards them for the sake of their growth and the choices they are called upon to make. (YS 35)

In conclusion, we remind ourselves that we young and old are called to find the courage to be living and effective witnesses of the Gospel of Jesus, at all the stages of our lives and in whatever way that we live.

We read from our Spiritual Assistants who have challenged us in Koinonia (2019 - 2), ..The ecological challenge, the wars that are fought in the world, the consumption of drugs, marital crises, moral and spiritual decadence and the problems that lead to migration are further challenges on which the Franciscan youth and the Secular Franciscans are called to reflect both on a personal and collective level to find the most appropriate answers on how to propose the right way to the world, inspired and traced by the Gospel. What is the attitude of the young Franciscans and secular Franciscans with respect to these challenges? No one can escape their present and future consequences. It is the duty of everyone to take responsibility for building a new world, where moral values are respected and protected. It is necessary to seek together adequate solutions, ... Therefore through our intergenerational dialogue, with the love of Christ, we may be able to respond to the love of the Father, loving Him “with all their hearts, with all their soul, with all their might”(cf. Deut 6.5) and loving their neighbours “as themselves” (cf Mt

22:39). And in our fraternity life, we may be “a visible sign of the Church, a Community of love.”

OFS and YouFra Philippines – Earl Jonas Vosotros Serenio ofs

YouFra and OFS in our country are in good relationship, we were like a true blooded family member, we communicate directly with our concerns and suggestions in every meetings and activities. Most of the OFS are very welcoming with us YouFrans, they treat us like their own biological sons and daughters they even support us financially through our activities and fund raising. In every OFS Fraternity meeting we spend time eating together, sharing our daily experiences specially our blessings and problems, and we discuss and plan our activity based on the needs of the fraternity that would benefit the growth of individual as a faithful and fruitful individuals. Most of the OFS encourage us to be a good individuals, they are always there for us when we need someone to lean on and talk to.

YouFra and OFS are working together in every apostolate, especially during 3rd Sunday of November, we commemorate the feast day of our Patron Saint Elizabeth of Hungary through a Nationwide Simultaneous Feeding Apostolate, this activity is to promote a strong relationship to all Franciscan entities and one-way of our expression of our love to our extended brothers and sisters in Christ.

Some YouFra do home visitation to some of the OFS members especially those who are sick, they even stay overnight, help clean the house, cook food and most especially create good memories.

As a result of this good fraternal experience, there is an increase of numbers of the YouFra who undergo OFS Formation and some who join the priesthood and religious life. The OFS are very thankful to us young, because not only is there an increase in the quantity of members but there is the enjoyment and excitement of the collaboration of new ideas in the Fraternity.

The greatest factors we have as one Fraternity is the essence of living the word of God through the example our Seraphic Father Francis of Assisi, being true and committed in the mission God has given us and serve others with unconditional LOVE.

OFS and Youfra Mauritius – Michat Legrand Raout ofs

For Mauritius, the YouFra form part of the local fraternities. Many of them have their parents or one of them in the OFS fraternity. Thus, strengthening their family relationship. This is quite typical in Mauritius and an African context that grandparents, parents, siblings, youth and children form part of the fraternity. The formation is done sometimes together and sometimes apart as there are some topics more relevant to one or the other.

Family is still important in Mauritius but with the constraints of life it becomes difficult day by day for families. The youth search for this love, concern and support from adults but nowadays adults need to work a lot to make a living. Thus, they are absent. Youth are left on their own and they fall prey to drugs and alcohol.

Moreover, many activities are done together as we have a fraternal bond. Activities together are outings in nature or at the beach. At the end of the year, there is a party organised by my local fraternity (YouFra and OFS) for the poor families in our parish. Then, there are the prayers, feasts and end of year celebrations that we do in the fraternity with our families as well as sisters of the FMM (Franciscaines Missionnaire de Marie) and spiritual assistant - lately it was Hervé Sylva (OFS) and now it is Fr Krisnah (OFM).

The OFS also invite the youth's families so that they know what is being done in the fraternity and where their children are going. We invite families for the Novena of St Anthony of Padua. In some fraternities, there are fund raising activities such as a dancing ball where families are invited and involved. There are also various activities done by the parish where both OFS and YouFra work together. Through all these, some parents as well as youth decide to enter the fraternity later on.

The youth have no problem in this relation with adults both share respect, communicate and try to understand each other in the fraternity. Both try not to be judgemental. They share among them the love of Christ. Youth can easily confide in adults. Even the adults encourage the youth and help them in their studies. They even try to guide them on the proper path. A project was even created at national level to help the needy youth in our fraternity to get finance for tertiary education.

However, like all family both may differ on certain matters or opinions but at the end they both understand each other and work together. I must say that this is a Family experience within the fraternity and in a way, this is really living as a family where there are good and bad times. It must be said that this relationship has taken some time to be created and it is not created on the spot as each and every one comes from a different background. It is not easy for some youth to become OFS but if they find what they are searching for within the fraternity they will do their best to continue.

Considering all the above, reflect on the questions below with discussion in your fraternity:

1. In what ways has your fraternity created conditions suitable for dialogue between generations?
2. What are the challenges that prevent you from having a dialogue with the youth/elderly?
3. Is the Order infiltrating into your families, is it being passed on to the younger generations? Are the times and venues of fraternity meetings preventing young people from joining your fraternity, as times are not suitable for them with their young families?
4. What activities does your fraternity have that include the family?
5. If you have no young people in your fraternity, what may the reasons be, and how could you promote the Order to young people?
6. Does your fraternity have a connection with Youfra?

Let us finish the session by praying together.

Prayer to the Holy Family

Jesus, Mary and Joseph in you we contemplate the splendour of true love,
to you, confidently we come.

Holy Family of Nazareth, make our families
also the Cenacle place of communion and prayer,
genuine schools of the Gospel and small domestic churches.

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