

GUIDE FOR OFS FRATERNAL ANIMATORS

**YOUFRA Commission
CIOFS
2024**

Introduction:

The YouFra Comission of the CIOFS Presidency Council has assumed some challenges during this period of service; one of them is contemplating how to reinforce the accompaniment of the Fraternal Animator service, particularly within our OFS fraternities, by delving deeper into the role of the service and the importance of supporting the beloved youngsters of YouFra.

The first step was to review existing documents on fraternal animation while seeking out other materials related to this service. We have based this material on the CIOFS document "**Guidelines for Fraternal Animation**" (2011) and discovered that our neighbouring country of Brazil had crafted a very comprehensive and instructive "**Guide for Fraternal Animators**" (2016), thus, we sought proper permission from the National Council OFS and the National Council of YouFra, through its Minister and President, to use the material and share it, making modifications where necessary, particularly those specific to the organisation of this country.

We are grateful for the great generosity of giving us the freedom to adapt it to the global context, thereby enabling its use in all our countries. We are aware that the creation of this guide involved the contribution of numerous Fraternal Animators from Brazil, who were able to enrich the content developed here with their vast experience and knowledge gained through their service.

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CIOFS Fraternal Animator
2024

1. Fraternal Animation.

1.1 Mission and Service :

" The primary mission of the Fraternal Animator is to bear witness to the Gospel life manifested in their interactions with YouFra" (Guidelines for Fraternal Animation 3.1).

Firstly, it is beneficial for us to comprehend the significance of the term "fraternal animation". To animate is to provide encouragement, vigour, strength, to move, to motivate. Encouragement, in turn, according to the dictionary definition, signifies soul, spirit, mind, or courage, strength. These definitions already allow us to perceive the importance and the mission entrusted to the service of fraternal animation. Then the question arises: which soul/spirit should be given, promoted, fomented? And so we find the first risk of this mission: the "I", the thought that I am the one who animates and not recognising that it is my vocation given by God that impels me to animate.

The soul, the spirit, that the Franciscan needs to acquire is that of Christ, of the Spirit that moved Francis, that has moved the Franciscans throughout history and continues to move even in present times.

"When we speak of a reality that has 'spirit', we usually refer to an inner motion that impels, motivates, encourages, and gives meaning to personal and communal action. Evangelization with spirit is very different from a set of tasks lived as a burdensome obligation that is barely tolerated, or endured as something that contradicts our own inclinations and desires" (Evangelii Gaudium, chapter 5).

Thus teaches us Pope Francis in the Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel), stating that we need to return to the source, to Christ, to the way of being of the first apostles, a way that, later, resurfaced in the way of life of our Father Francis and the first friars, a "way of living and being" that we call the Franciscan Order.

The Order founded by St. Francis was the first to use the name "friars/brothers", pointing towards the true sense idealized by the saint of Assisi regarding the relationship that should exist among his followers. Our Secular Franciscan Order was initially named "brothers and sisters of penance". Thus, we perceive that the fraternal dimension is one of the most cherished aspects of our charism and requires very diligent cultivation.

We have a human dimension of fraternity that is fundamentally characterized by friendly behaviour towards others: empathy, solidarity, encounter, avoiding fights, intrigues, understanding others. All of this is very good and praiseworthy, but within the Franciscan Spirit, the "fraternal" mentioned goes a step further.

Pope Francis tells us in Fratelli Tutti: **"No one matures or reaches their fullness in isolation. By its very nature, love demands an ever greater openness to others, a greater capacity to welcome them, in an unending journey that draws us beyond the limits of our narrow horizons towards the broader horizons of universal belonging. Jesus told us: 'You are all brothers' (Mt 23:8)."**

And it is this "fraternal spirit" that must be cultivated by all Secular Franciscans, and especially by the Fraternal Animator, alongside the youth.

The mission thus consists of reflecting Christ to the youth. Being attentive and pointing out to the youth the signs of His presence in this world, in this time, in this age. Working so that the youth perceive in themselves the presence and action of the Spirit and learn to care for it, to cultivate it for themselves. For it is the fire of this Spirit that will ignite their hearts, transforming them into people who change the world, true evangelizers.

It is also very important to note that the Fraternal Animator does not represent themselves to the youth, but rather the Franciscan fraternity to which they belong. It is not an individual mission, but a mission of the fraternity that the Animator assumes alongside the youth. Thus, the entire fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order desires to remain closely linked to YouFra. It is, therefore, **a mission undertaken by the entire fraternity and entrusted to the service of "Fraternal Animation"**. (Guidelines for Fraternal Animation, item 2.2).

In the Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*, it tells us in point 67: **"The clarity of vision of someone who has been called to be a father, pastor, or guide to young people consists in seeing the small flame that continues to burn, the reed that seems bent (cf. Is 42:3), but which has not yet broken. It is the ability to find paths where others see only walls, it is the skill to recognize possibilities where others see only dangers. This is the gaze of God the Father, capable of valuing and nurturing the seeds of good planted in the hearts of young people. Thus, the heart of each young person must be considered 'sacred ground', bearer of seeds of divine life, before whom we must 'take off our shoes' in order to approach and delve into the Mystery."**

The youth needs to have somewhere to look, especially when they need support, sustenance. They need a model of "how I want my life to be in the present and in the future". They need to see people who embrace their vocation, their gifts, and also their limitations. They need to see the reflections of the Father's love in this world.

Therefore, the Animator will be the one who, being close to the youth, will strive to increasingly awaken in their hearts the desire to embrace and follow throughout their lives the vocation they have received (Profession). They must serve as an instrument of communion between the OFS and the YouFra at all levels, participating and accompanying with great affection the daily life of the YouFra fraternity and each young Franciscan, creating a relationship where dialogue builds bridges and not walls, which is concretized, above all, with the following actions:

- **Collaborate closely with the YouFra Council and the OFS Council, working towards the integration between OFS and YouFra.**
- **Ensure appropriate Franciscan education that assists young individuals in centring their lives on the person and teachings of Christ, acknowledging that YouFra possesses specific organizational methods and training suitable for young people.**
- **Contribute to the spiritual growth of the YouFra Council.**
- **Facilitate the establishment of new YouFra Fraternities, particularly within OFS Fraternities where YouFra is not yet established.**

We can therefore believe that in this manner, young individuals with a calling for the Franciscan life (YouFra members) will discover in the Franciscan Order a treasure that they cannot find anywhere else, and will learn to love this wonderful heritage that our Seraphic Father Francis left us and that the Church entrusted to us. Top of Form

2 - Requirements for the Election or Appointment of the Fraternal Animator

"The OFS fraternities commit to providing YouFra fraternities with a fraternal animator who, alongside the spiritual assistant, ensures adequate secular Franciscan formation" (GGGG 97).

The reciprocal commitment between the OFS and YouFra invites us to undertake a very important service for the promotion of the secular Franciscan vocation: the Fraternal Animator. The responsibility of Fraternal Animation belongs to the entire OFS fraternity, which, through the example of its brothers and sisters, must create suitable conditions to foster secular Franciscan spirituality among YouFra members.

The Local OFS Council closest to the YouFra fraternity assumes this responsibility closely, organizing joint meetings guided by a Franciscan spirit of reciprocal fraternal communion and, especially, electing or appointing a suitable Brother/Sister to serve as the Fraternal Animator.

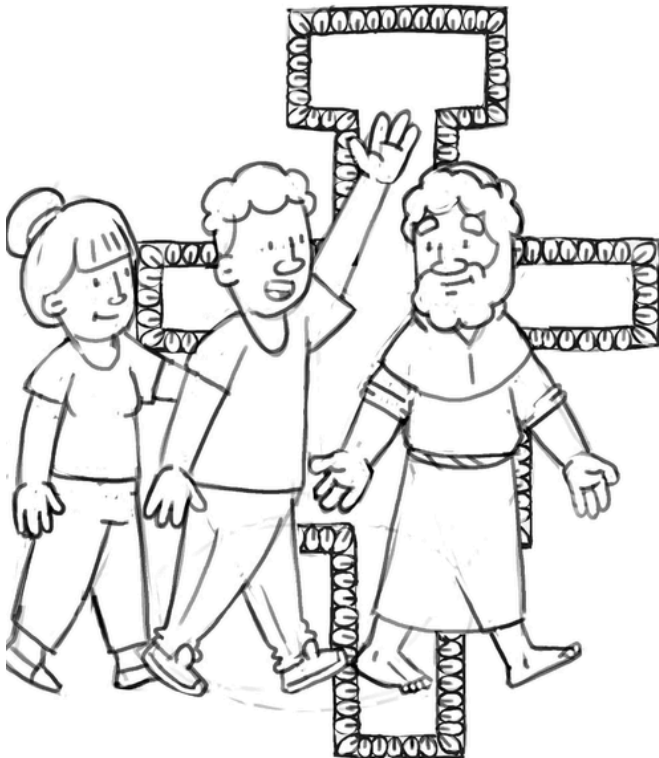
Therefore, the Fraternal Animator, through their example of life and, above all, their presence, on behalf of the entire OFS, alongside the YouFra fraternity, promotes their total dedication to this service fraternally entrusted to them.

But, how does this process of indication, election, or appointment occur? What are the necessary requirements to be a Fraternal Animator? In some countries, YouFra must formally request a Fraternal Animator from the respective level OFS Council in writing, indicating preferred names. The OFS Council, in turn, selects one of the proposed individuals in its elective chapter, and if it is not possible to select, designates another brother/sister for the role, and must send this appointment in writing to the YouFra Council.

"In the event of no OFS fraternity within the same parish boundary, the YouFra Council must send its indication to the nearest fraternity in their city, and if this is not possible, inform the OFS Council of the immediately higher level to ensure the presence of a brother/sister to assume this service.

With the election or appointment, the Fraternal Animator becomes a member of both the OFS Council and the YouFra Council at each level. It is important to note that the OFS fraternity council must observe some basic requirements that are necessary for a brother/sister to be proposed for the role of Fraternal Animator. These are:

- **Being a professed brother/sister in the OFS.**
- **Being active in their local fraternity.**
- **Being witness to their secular Franciscan vocation.**
- **Being dynamic, available, and open to dialogue.**



National statutes may establish different ways to elect or appoint the Fraternal Animator according to the realities of each country, always considering what is established in international documents.

3. Participation of the Fraternal Animator in Various YouFra Fraternal Meetings

"Fraternal animation is synonymous with accompaniment, as its main task is to be alongside youth in their journey of Franciscan growth, which also presupposes the human and the Christian" (Incorporation of YouFra members into the OFS, 2).

Just as local, regional, and national OFS fraternities have their schedules of meetings and chapters, YouFra also has its own moments of similar nature to live the Franciscan charism and strengthen fraternal bonds.

The Fraternal Animator, in turn, must be present at these moments when the YouFra fraternity gathers, playing a relevant role of collaboration, and encouraging the leadership and autonomy that should be a distinctive feature of young Franciscans.

Additionally, the Fraternal Animator must be attentive not to impose on YouFra members a mode of work and experience of the charism that does not fit the demands of youth but, on the contrary, be open to the dynamic development of activities specific to YouFra fraternities.

3.1. In Fraternal Meetings

YouFra fraternities must come together for YouFra members to experience Franciscan spirituality together with moments of prayer, formation, and fellowship, in addition to relevant announcements and occasional pastoral activities undertaken by the fraternity.

The Fraternal Animator, on their part, must subtly ensure that the meeting is well-prepared, awakening in each YouFra animator the desire to contribute dynamically and spiritually with their part in the fraternal gathering.

It is important to emphasize that the Fraternal Animator must be present at some of the YouFra fraternity meetings to demonstrate the attention and affection of the OFS towards YouFra members and the entire spiritual journey undertaken. It is recommended that, in their absence, a professed brother/sister of the secular Franciscan fraternity be designated to be present alongside the young Franciscans.

We underline that, due to what is expressly provided in documents dealing with Fraternal Animation, the secular Franciscan brother/sister must pay special attention, together with the Spiritual Assistant, to the formation of the fraternity, establishing, for this purpose, a close relationship with those responsible for the YouFra fraternity Formation.

3.2. In YouFra Council Meetings

Being the Fraternal Animator a reference for the Franciscan youth, especially in aspects of leadership and commitment to the experience of the Franciscan charism, it is important to consider that YouFra Council meetings are privileged moments to foster, in each of the YouFra members designated for services, responsibility and a sense of belonging to the fraternity.

The Fraternal Animator must also convey the experience gained in their secular Franciscan journey, ensuring that the schedule of activities for the various fraternal services is developed with the necessary balance for their proper development and in accordance with proposals from the higher-level councils.

Furthermore, it is important to communicate to the YouFra Council the activities that will be carried out by the Secular Franciscan Order so that the YouFra fraternity can organize to be present at such events, promoting the communion that should be a distinctive sign throughout the Franciscan Family.

3.3. In Assemblies and Chapters of YouFra

Regarding the participation of the Fraternal Animator in the Chapters, Assemblies, the Fraternal Animator must present the report of their service carried out alongside the YouFra fraternity, so that it is recorded in the minutes of the meeting and duly archived in the official records of their fraternal actions.

Additionally, they must pay attention to the presentation of reports from other services to make observations that allow for future individualized dialogue with council members with the aim of improving fraternal work.

In the event of an Assembly or Congress, the Fraternal Animator shall have the right to vote on all matters except elections, being counted in the quorum, and therefore, their presence is indispensable. In case of a manifested impossibility, they must meet with their Minister of the respective OFS Council to indicate a professed Franciscan brother who will replace them with the proper authorization.

It is important to clarify that all expenses derived from the participation of the Fraternal Animator are the responsibility of the Secular Franciscan Order, and this responsibility cannot be transferred to the Franciscan Youth.

In addition to these attributions, the Fraternal Animator must subtly ensure that the young people responsible for the Assembly/Chapters are attentive to all the needs that arise from the organization of such a significant moment for the fraternal journey, as well as to perceive that their presence manifests the love of the OFS towards the YouFra.

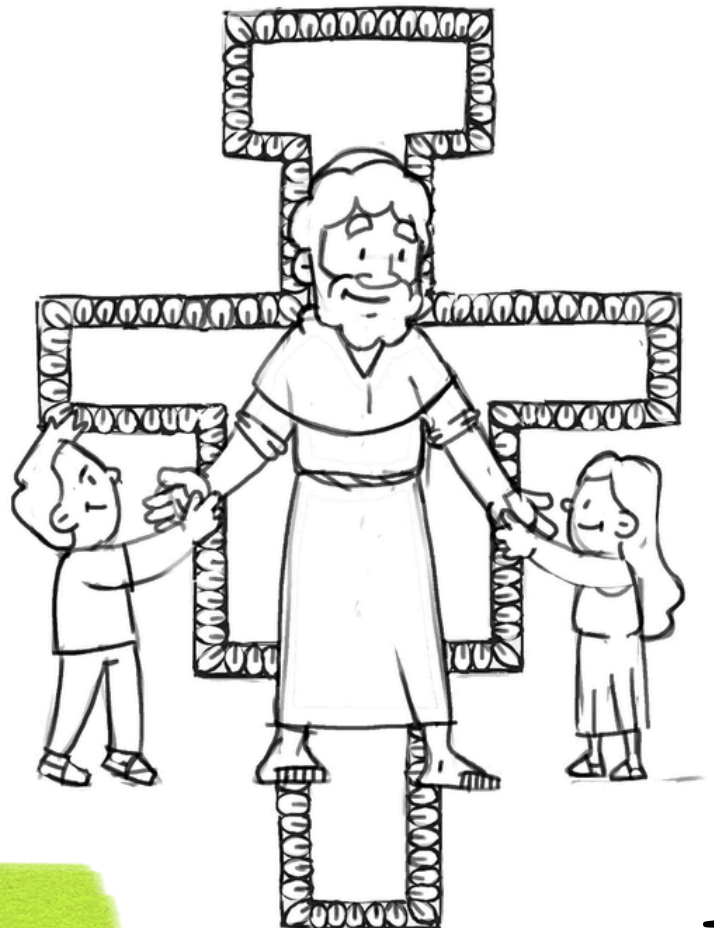
4 – The Fraternal Animator, member of the YouFra Formation Team.

In the fraternal animation service, the secular Franciscan must participate and cooperate in official meetings and in the elaboration and execution of the formation program.

As has been repeatedly emphasized in this guide, it is important to emphasize that the responsibility for the presence and concern for the Franciscan Youth is not exclusive to the Fraternal Animator alone, but of the entire fraternity of the OFS. In turn, the presence of the Fraternal Animator, regardless of their age, should be a reason for celebration and joy, demonstrating their life centered on the secular Franciscan charism and their willingness to dialogue.

The primary role of the Fraternal Animator is to collaborate, united in testimony and crowned with the accompaniment of the YouFra fraternity, awakening in each young person "the desire to be OFS." As indicated in the document "Incorporation of YouFra members into the OFS" (Incorporation of YouFra members into the OFS), **"Fraternal Animation is synonymous with accompaniment, as its main task is to be by the side of youth in their path of Franciscan growth, which also presupposes the human and the Christian"**, when they feel called to experience Christian life in fraternity in the light of the message of St. Francis of Assisi.

It is worth noting that the Fraternal Animator is part of the YouFra Formation Team, together with the Spiritual Assistant, and that they must also work together with the OFS member and YOUFRA member who accompany franciscan children and franciscan adolescents.



4.1. In the time of formation for those initiated in YouFra

The Fraternal Animator is a reference for the Franciscan Youth regarding what it means to be a member of the Secular Franciscan Order (OFS). Hence the need for each YouFra Fraternity to have a Fraternal Animator elected in chapter or appointed by the OFS fraternity council to which it belongs, with the aim of ensuring "a better understanding of the secular Franciscan vocation and of the Fraternity to which, naturally, the YouFra members will join".

It is true that this initial stage is the responsibility of the young Franciscans who have already gone through it, which, however, does not exclude the need for participation and attention from the Fraternal Animator, as they are part of the Formation Team, as mentioned earlier.

In the case of a Youfra fraternity still in formation, it will be the responsibility of the Regional YouFra Council to ensure that the formation of the Initial Formation Stage proceeds properly. In turn, it will be the responsibility of the local OFS Council to indicate a brother to serve as Fraternal Animator, who will contribute to the development of this formative stage.

Being an active presence, showing interest in developing means for young people to remain in the YouFra fraternity, creating together with the Formation Team a schedule that covers from formation to leisure and fraternal conviviality, are some of the responsibilities of the Fraternal Animator.

It is important that from the initiation stage, the Fraternal Animator subtly seeks to awaken the secular Franciscan vocation, pointing out the path of the OFS as a path of sanctification. The Fraternal Animator is a reference for the Franciscan Youth regarding what it means to be a member of the Secular Franciscan Order (OFS). Hence the need for each YouFra Fraternity to have a Fraternal Animator elected or appointed by the OFS fraternity council to which it belongs, with the aim of ensuring "a better understanding of the secular Franciscan vocation and of the Fraternity to which, naturally, the YouFra members will join".

4.2. During YouFra Formation Time

To be able to carry out a more faithful service to the Franciscan Youth, the Fraternal Animator must be familiar with all existing documents on YouFra and pay special attention to formation, collaborating with the fraternity officials: the YouFra Council, particularly the formation officer and the spiritual assistant.

Again, we emphasize the presence of the Animator in the YouFra Formation Team, noting that all brothers working on the team must understand the importance of a fair distribution of tasks, typical of joint work, so that the Fraternal Animator, specifically, is equally available to perform their main function: being the link between YouFra and OFS fraternities, as well as guiding this formative process.

It is important to note that this formative stage is also the specific responsibility of the YouFra fraternity, which does not prevent the Fraternal Animator from being invited or expressing their willingness to lead some of the meetings.

Care for the Franciscan charism, at all times, must be paramount in the Fraternal Animation service, as well as encouragement for coexistence between the two fraternities. It is important to promote shared moments, whether celebratory or formative, with the Fraternal Animator, together with the Councils, stimulating these moments. **"The ultimate goal behind the accompaniment of the fraternal animator is for the Franciscan Youth to feel accompanied by the OFS at all levels".**

4.3. New YouFra youngsters in the OFS

It is essential that our OFS fraternities awaken to the reception of young people, recognizing them as a sign of hope and continuity in the experience of the secular Franciscan charism. It is indispensable that, in this approach, the OFS fraternity shows itself open to youth, avoiding imposing the time and reality of an already structured and consolidated fraternity on young people who approach with characteristics typical of the youth stage.

It must be taken into account that, as previously stated, collaboration, testimony, and accompaniment must guide the action of secular Franciscans with youth, facilitating the path for this conquest, fulfilling the responsibility of the OFS Fraternities to "take care of the vitality and expansion of the YouFra Fraternities, and accompany young people on their path of human and spiritual growth with proposals for activities and thematic content".

Specifically regarding the Fraternal Animator, it is important that they possess a special capacity for welcome, which enables, through their attitudes, the congregation of many young people around the Franciscan charism of life, based on courtesy that "is a sister of charity, which extinguishes hatred and fosters love". For this, the Fraternal Animator must awaken their creativity, always guiding young people according to the Franciscan charism, and it is valid to seek in youth themselves the answer to doubts that may arise in this welcoming method, emphasizing that good hospitality will never be forgotten by a young person approaching the fraternity.

4.4. During the YouFra-OFS Dual Belonging Time

Together with the Formator (or formation team) of the local OFS fraternity, the Fraternal Animator should accompany the YouFra member towards Profession. This training stage is the specific responsibility of the Secular Franciscan Order and should be carried out under the guidance of the Fraternal Animator who knows the YouFra youth.

It is important for the Fraternal Animator to transmit all the formative content planned for this stage with methods and pedagogies suitable for the youth stage. They must simultaneously work on the Rule and General Constitutions of the OFS.

It is important to highlight that, with admission to the OFS, the YouFra member also becomes a member of the OFS fraternity, so that, during this formative stage, they must participate in both YouFra and secular Franciscan fraternity meetings. The Fraternal Animator is especially responsible for this significant phase of transition and vocational maturation.

Special attention must be paid in this stage regarding the continuity of the YouFra fraternity, which must seek the renewal of its members, as young professed Franciscans also become part of the OFS.

The service of Fraternal Animation is a gift and a privilege that must be performed with dedication and perseverance to allow mutual enrichment for YouFra, OFS, and the Franciscan Family in the development of a common mission in the Church and society.

5 - Participation of the Fraternal Animator in the OFS Council

"A representative of the YouFra, designated by its Council, is part of the corresponding OFS Council; a representative of the OFS, designated by its respective Council, is part of the YouFra Council at the same level. The representative of the YouFra has the right to vote in the OFS Council only if they are a professed secular Franciscan" (Art. 97.4, of the CC.GG.).

"To ensure a close relationship between the OFS and the YouFra, the General Constitutions of the OFS require that a representative of the OFS, designated by its own Council, be part of the YouFra Council. It is important not to confuse the representative of the OFS with the Fraternal Animator. However, experience has shown that it is useful and possible for such a representative of the OFS and the Fraternal Animator to coincide, in order to better achieve mutual vital communion." (Guidelines for Fraternal Animation 4)

Likewise, the President of the YouFra is also an active member of the respective OFS Council at their level, even with the right to voice and vote on all decisions if they are professed. In case the YouFra member is not professed, they are still guaranteed the right to participate in Council meetings with the right to express themselves.

For this reason, the Fraternal Animator and the President of the YouFra have the right to be summoned to the meetings of the OFS Council, as well as to the Chapters, at their different levels, being the responsibility of the OFS to cover the necessary expenses for the participation of the brothers who hold these two positions.

Regarding ordinary meetings, a special time must be allocated for the Fraternal Animator to inform the respective OFS Council about their activities with the Franciscan Youth. Additionally, they must guide the other councilors on possible doubts that may arise regarding the organization chart and the functioning of the YouFra.

The participation of the President of the YouFra in the meeting of the OFS Council at the respective level is also very important, with the aim of strengthening ties between the OFS and YouFra fraternities, exchanging experiences that foster the spiritual growth of the YouFra journey, keeping the Council updated on the activities of the YouFra fraternity, and motivating the development of common meetings and schedules with interconnected activities.

6. Other Relevant Documents

To be able to carry out a broader service in the Franciscan Youth, the Fraternal Animator must be familiar with all existing documents on YouFra and pay special attention to formation, collaborating with the fraternity officials: the YouFra Council, the formation officer, and the spiritual assistant (point 3.1 of the Guidelines for Fraternal Animation).

There are numerous documents that address the relationship between the OFS (Secular Franciscan Order) and the YouFra (Franciscan Youth), as well as others that specifically deal with the function of Fraternal Animation, serving as a guide for the action of the entire OFS in relation to young Franciscans, especially for the secular Franciscan brother designated for the service.

It is important to understand that documents should not be seen only as strictly legal, but we must give spiritual application to what is defined there in the form of rules. In other words, everything contained in the documents must be experienced to ensure communion between the OFS and the YouFra, as well as the preservation of the secular Franciscan charism.

Taking into account that the documents are not an obstacle to living the charism but rather jointly approved texts based on the evolution of the path between the OFS and the YouFra, we will address in a slightly more detailed way those that are most relevant for the Fraternal Animation service.

6.1. Guidelines for Fraternal Animation

These guidelines have an international character and, therefore, correspond to a orientation that should guide the relationship between YouFra and the OFS worldwide. Their development is the result of the International Chapter of the Secular Franciscan Order, held in 2008 in Hungary, where secular Franciscans from around the world discussed the need to create a document that would guide and facilitate the understanding of the service of Fraternal Animation. They consist of seven chapters, starting with the introduction; moving through the function of Fraternal Animation; the role of the Fraternal Animator and their characteristics; how their relationship with YouFra should be; how their relationship with the OFS should be; how their relationship with the Spiritual Assistant should be; and finally, presenting the conclusions of the international guidelines. These guidelines for fraternal animation were approved on October 22, 2011, during the meeting of the CIOFS Presidency in Brazil.

Conclusión:

As you can see, the path of fraternal animation has already begun a long time ago, and in many countries like Brazil, efforts have been made to strengthen this service, and we still need to reinforce the understanding of the mission and the role of the fraternal animator. It is necessary to rediscover the importance of the service of fraternal animation. Again, gratitude to so many fraternal animators, formators, and assistants who dedicated their lives to part of this work.

Pope Francis in the Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit* tells us:

"Sometimes I have seen young trees, beautiful, raising their branches to the sky, always seeking more, and they seemed like a song of hope. Later, after a storm, I found them fallen, lifeless. Because they had few roots, they had spread their branches without rooting well in the earth, and thus succumbed to the onslaughts of nature. That is why it pains me to see that some propose to young people to build a future without roots, as if the world began now. Because 'it is impossible for someone to grow if they do not have strong roots that help them to be well supported and anchored to the earth. It is easy to "fly away" when there is nothing to hold on to, nothing to cling to' (179).

**The Franciscan charism is a great root,
which has grown for 800 years,
and it is our responsibility to be
the support on which
our YouFra youth can lean.**

**We continue walking together
as brothers and sisters.**

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