



ORDO FRANCISCANUS SAECULARIS

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Prot. N. 3054

To all OFS and Franciscan Youth International Councilors  
To all OFS National Councils  
To all Franciscan Youth National Councils

Dears OFS and YOUFRA brothers and sisters,

Peace and all good:

In this, the third installment that we are sending all our fraternities, we suggest that you reflect on our local fraternity, and use the General Chapter's 2014 proposal that invites us to *“Animate OFS Fraternities and (invite them) to organize family events and to share, in general, “the important moments of family life” (Const. 24), taking the opportunity to also share with YOUFRA and their families.*

For 2018, the theme that we propose that you reflect on and commit to is:

**“SHARE THE IMPORTANT MOMENTS OF THE FAMILY LIFE” (CCGG 24)**

With this theme we suggest that you strengthen the link between family and fraternity, through formation, gatherings and sharing our lives.

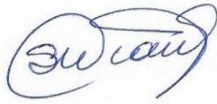
The Presidency Council asks you to continue celebrating the Day of the OFS-YOUFRA Family on April 28 of each year (or a date close to that date to commemorate the feast day of Blessed Luquesio and Buonadonna, the first Secular Franciscan family).

This year will be the World Meeting of Family in Ireland during the month of August. "The Gospel of the Family: Joy for the World", we will share the materials for the preparation of this important event for our Church.

Every two months we publish on the webpage on [www.ciofs.org](http://www.ciofs.org), material that our brothers and sisters can use to learn about the Conclusive Documents of the Synod and the Encyclical Amoris Laetitia (AL).

This theme for 2018 is a guideline, and each fraternity should evaluate and reflect on it based on your own needs. We ask that the fraternities inform the CIOFS Secretariat and the Family Commission before October 2018 of any initiative you have taken because of suggestions made here.

May the Lord bless you and may the Holy Family accompany us on our family initiatives



Silvia Diana, OFS  
Presidency Councilor  
Family Commission



### **ANUAL THEME 2018**

**“SHARE THE IMPORTANT  
MOMENTS OF THE FAMILY  
LIFE”**

**Family Commission : Silvia Diana,  
Jenny Harrington,  
Fr. Francis Dor OFM Cap.**



Translation: Mary Stronach OFS

***The General Constitutions Art. 24: 2. say:***

- the spirituality of the family and of marriage and the Christian attitude towards family problems should be a theme for dialogue and for sharing experiences;***
- they should share the important moments of the family life of their Franciscan brothers and sisters and they should give fraternal attention to those - single, widows, single parents, separated, divorced - who are living in difficult situations;[...]***

### **WORK PROPOSAL:**

We have conceived a work : SEE, JUDGE AND ACT.

#### **1. SEE :**

The life experiences of our brothers and sisters that we can share in fraternity

***Testimony of Eugenia Grundel y Fabrizio Martínez (OFS Uruguay) :***

*Since family is a gift of the Lord, we want to share with you how St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order from Nuevo París, Montevideo (Uruguay)*

*We get together in the homes of the brothers and sisters of the community. Some meetings have been in our home. This allows our children to experience these Franciscan meetings and allows them to grow in their vocation and (possibly) their desire to be part of the Franciscan family... Some Franciscan encounters have taken place at the Monastery of the Poor Clares, located in a rural area. There, the children enjoy time with nature and they become very sensitive to the lives of Clare and Francis. They especially enjoy listening to the stories of Francis with the birds and the wolf of Gubbio, among other stories.*

*For us, trying to maintain a balance between "being family" and "being Secular Franciscans is a joy but also a great challenge that becomes a commitment ..." And when the road gets blurred, we always have as our "north star" trying to be a home like the one that the Holy Family had in Nazareth...*

### **Testimony of Jane DeRose-Bamman (OFS EEUU) :**

*We all have many "hats" that we wear. I am wife, daughter, engineer, civil servant, OFS, volunteer, cook, cleaner, handiwoman, bookkeeper.... Some "hats" or roles pair seamlessly, while others are a little difficult to merge or overlap. Family and fraternity are two areas of our lives that need to be merged.*

*My husband, Brian, is not a Franciscan. He will attend fraternity gatherings with me when there are parties or special feast days, but he doesn't feel called to formally committing to the OFS way of life. So does my living my vocation while being married to him force him to also live as a Franciscan? Or does his not being a Franciscan make it harder for me to live my vocation? The answer is yes to both questions. My OFS vocation influences our choices (household size, products we use, recycling, vehicles we purchase, charitable giving, volunteer activities). And on the other hand, my prayer life can be affected because I am "on my own" for morning and evening prayer most of the time and get distracted. Also, my willingness to serve (level of comfort in putting my name on the Council ballot) is affected by the potential time commitment. Brian and I certainly talk about God working in our lives and know the importance of allowing God to lead. Although we don't share the Franciscan vocation on a formal level, the fraternity is blessed by Brian's presence and his willingness to help when needed. I am blessed by discussing my vocation with Brian at home. Some of it is rubbing off on him, as on occasion, Brian has told me: "that isn't very Franciscan." I certainly hope he was teasing...but sometimes he was challenging me to take a look at my actions or my words.*

*So thank God for those gentle reminders calling me back to trying to live the Rule every moment of the day. Peace and good!*

### **Testimony of Pablo Corva (YouFra Argentina) :**

*I began my experience in the Franciscan Youth being very young, when I was 11 years old, so the companionship and help of my parents was always very important. They were never part of the OFS and neither a part of Youfra because they disapproved both thanks to me. Never the less, they knew it was something that made me and my two brothers happy.*

*When I was younger, I probably never got a full understanding of how much they favored us being in Youfra. First of all, economically when we had to travel or in more simple cases when they took me to the parish on Saturdays when I was little. But more than anything they gave us the freedom to choose to be in Youfra.*

*My house was always open for dinners, gatherings, preparation of Chapters, for Council meetings. At the same time, they were always a part of our activities. Whether it was a mass, a community dinner, a prayer at the parish or another madness that we tried out. Maybe they didn't always want to participate in all of those things, but they knew how happy we were seeing them there. They were there with me when I did my promise as an "Heraldo", my promise as a "Juglar", when I did my Promise in Youfra and when I was elected local President for the first time in my fraternity and the continue to be next to be nowadays. When I was little I wanted them to be part of the OFS...as I grew up I got to understand that it wasn't necessary because they were living the Youfra experience side by side with me. My family and the parish were never separated things, Youfra and family were always one. Today I thank God for that gift.*

*Finally, I must say that OFS and Youfra also became my family. Today many OFS brothers are my adoptive uncles and aunts, my brothers from "juglares" are like little brothers that I love and take care of with all my heart. Thanks to Youfra I have a beautiful family and thanks to my family I can say that I am Franciscan. Peace and good for all.*

### **Testimony of Rosa de Galimberti (OFS Italia) :**

*Secularity is found in the family in all its forms: as children, as parents, as spouses. Thus, the choice of having a charismatic life like the OFS creates a pillar in the family with the same identity. It is therefore impossible to separate the two experiences and it is unthinkable to live two separate realities.*

*Each one of us is a member of the Fraternity to which he belongs, each having our own specific identity as part of the human condition. Viceversa, whatever role or level of service is lived in our Franciscan Fraternity, comes in fact, from one's own daily, concrete experience, exactly from being father, mother, son or brother in real life.*

*The vocational choice can only enrich and develop existential reality, spiritually and relationally. It is therefore extremely important to create moments of openness and contact between the Fraternity as a body and its members' families. (The mother of a friar is the mother of all the brothers ...) (FF 1606 - Perugia Legend 56). The ideal of Francis to be "... the children, brothers and mothers and spouses ..." of the Lord (FF178 / 2 Letter to the Faithful - First Review - Chapter I, 5) is transferred to the experience of having a loving and fraternal relationship between people, who are only seemingly strangers to each other, as well as the way to deal with the poor and the*

least (among us) through the affective power of fraternal and maternal love." ( "... as a mother loves and nourishes her own son, so....") (FF32 – Unofficial Rule Chapter IX - 10).

*The natural family should not consider the Fraternity as a closed and private place to which the family member gives so much time, life and a part of himself/herself, rather it should be a place which is open and where we meet, with an open environment where we are welcomed, find understanding and growth.*

*Fraternity, as such, by taking into account the living conditions and relationships of its members, can likewise increase its ability to get involved in social reality, enriching itself with emotional sensitivity and concrete attention. Encouraging opportunities for encounter and sharing between the fraternity and the families of its members is therefore an enriching motive for growth and development of the very sense of fraternity, for the mutual growth and extension of the common good: the joys and sorrows of each and everyone, to live more deeply in fraternal communion.*

*It is opportune and exquisitely Franciscan therefore to imagine opportunities to create and develop occasions and situations, so that birthdays, parties, anniversaries and even illnesses, accidents, physical, material, and spiritual needs can be lived intensely as members of one body. (GGCC 24,2)*

### **Testimony of Agnes Lim (OFS Korea)**

**Sharing in Fraternity:** *Helping a poor sister or brother in the fraternity is not easy. Each member does one's best, given the situation of each, and lives with the sense of self-respect. Each member's life should be respected by the other members. Material help for the poor sister or brother may develop into a relationship of being the "helper" and the "helped," and this relationship is not desired among the members in the fraternity. It's more important to share as brothers and sisters.*

*In our fraternity, we concentrate on experience sharing, spiritual sharing, and reflection sharing in every meeting and we have meals together. And when anyone is sick, we visit the brother or sister and show our genuine concern and unity in prayer.*

**Sharing in the Family:** *The most important point in sharing in the family is the order in the family. Parents should have authority and this develops when parents love and respect each other and do their daily duties well and set a good example. Parents grow, nurture, and educate the children with love. Parents should make sure that nothing happens to worry the children. Parents should understand the children and listen to the children and teach the children with dialogue. Dialogue, understanding, respect, and care should be there in the relationship between parents and children. One thing that is most important in the family is continued prayer together or prayer for each other depending on the situation.*

### **Testimony of Frank Quiróz (OFS Costa Rica) :**

*Our Rule of Life tells us: "...become witnesses and instruments of your mission among men, announcing Christ with your life and with the word." This word is not only*

to proclaim the teachings of Our Lord, but also to invite, as Jesus invited the apostles in Mt. 4, 19: "Jesus, called to them: 'Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.'" As fishermen or sowers (as he taught us in the Parable of the Sower), we are called to imitate Christ, inviting persons who are around us to get to know the loving hug that God has for each of us. Among these human beings, we will find our beloved family with whom we share our daily life.

Inviting our family to share our Fraternity is an opportunity to reflect Christ through a brotherly embrace, of being able to establish closer and deeper ties with Our Father and thus, with each one of the members of our family. It is the opportunity you give to discover Jesus through our Franciscan charism. It is a moment to connect with God through prayer, formation and manifest in concrete actions what has been learned, not only in fraternity but within our own family.

"Have faith in the Lord Jesus and you will save yourself and your family. (Acts 16, 31). I invite you to strengthen our family ties. A fraternal hug. Peace and All Good.

### **Testimony of Patrick Macharia (OFS Kenya) :**

In our fraternities there quite a few couples who are both Secular Franciscans and we do house to house visitations to know one another better and each family

Family life is the main and foremost human institution that God first instituted on earth. Family life is sacred and this means sex is sacred when is done first after man and woman consecrates their matrimonial life with the marriage sacrament, otherwise sex outside the wedlock is a sin and abuse of sacred institutions. Marriage life is not an easy life each one of us need God graces.

Every time people who are intending to marry they need a very experienced and settled couples to journey with them throughout the courtship period and the early days of their marriage. Remember also family life is very interesting when each other accept one another and understand each other weaknesses and strength areas of life.

It's always advisable every couple to join marriage couples groups so that they may be able to journey easily with other couples. In Kenya we have different groups within the Catholic Church. Personally I am married to Gladys and we have been blessed with 3 children Veronica Clare, Francis and Bridget. we have been married for 19 good years. both of us do business together. We stay in Eastland north part of Nairobi, we are not rich but not poor. We are able to feed, shelter, clothe and educate our children among others –

### **Testimony of Balázs Paczolay, (OFS Hungary) :**

I received a vocation in order to become a "simpleton". This world, in Hungarian, means at the same time a profound issue, the veneration of life and of nature we received from God and also being fool or silly. To me this is "Franciscan simplicity". It means life the Creator has given to a man and a woman in the shape of a child on one hand and evangelical life on the other, that has to be lived within a community: in family, prayer groups, parish community, in a team, at the workplace... In all this, I have to live simultaneously the selflessness that means always being ready to listen to my "thirsty" brother or sister, to devote my time, my living space and, if needed, my

material gifts. I have to admit, it often seems that offering money is not always the hardest thing. However, according to my experience, money is not the thing our neighbours lack the most: they are seeking esteemed attention.

In our local fraternity, according to the agenda, we meet once a week. However, as we live in a small town we often run into each other in the grocery, in the church, in school, at the doctor's and last but not least at each other's anniversaries – all this bring us much closer to each other. I believe that in a real secular fraternity brothers and sisters share each other's' lives. Praising God in the fraternity, rejoicing together and supporting each other in difficult times – all these are elementary in the life of an OFS fraternity. Praying together keeps us on the same vine, without joy we would not be able to spread de Good News (the Gospel). Mutual support reminds me of availability, of being at the others' service: accepting the ones struggling with problems or illness wherever, whenever, with open heart, with spread arms.

While I give thanks to for the Franciscan way, which is not an easy one to walk on –nevertheless it is a good one – I would add: this way is “just” a good opportunity for us to follow God, while marriage is a sacrament. Therefore, I prompt everyone to live his/her family life in great love, in fidelity and as a priority. In case you have any conflicts with your spouse, first clarify and discuss them with him/her. In case your child has an important question, first discuss it with him/her, give him/her guidance and only after this you shall go to the fraternity. “In their family they should cultivate the Franciscan spirit of peace, fidelity, and respect for life, striving to make of it a sign of a world already renewed in Christ” (Rule 17).

## **2. JUDGE:**

### **Enlightenning ourselves in fraternity... Material for reflection.**

- *Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation AMORIS LAETITIA 183,315,316,324.*

## **3. ACT**

### **Committing ourselves in the fraternity**

- A- Why do you think it is important to develop a relationship between your family and your local fraternity? (Each brother/sister should have a personal response.)
- B- Do we have gatherings during the year with our families and our local fraternity? If so, what are they?
- C- How can we strengthem the family-fraternity connection?
- D- What concrete action can we accomplish in 2018 in order to strengthem this family-fraternity connection?

## **CELEBRATE:**

**Let us share the Prayer to the Holy Family and may each person carry with him/her today a photo of his/her family that will be offered up during prayer, presenting each member of the family.**

January 2018.