



THE QUINQUENNIAL A BOOST FOR THE FRANCISCAN YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT COMMISSION

by Kathleen Molaro, OFS

Reflecting recently on our years as a FY/YA commission, I wondered whether we had succeeded in addressing the initial theme we had chosen to help us move in an appropriate direction—to “Unite, Ignite, and Invite.” (*TAU USA*, Spring, 2018, Issue #94)

We talked and listened to attendees at the Quinquennial, both during our presentations and at our booth. The enthusiasm proved encouraging and affirmed that our commitment since the beginning has led us to a stronger YouFra awareness and presence.

Have we united?

We discovered that we have, in fact, united people, especially through our virtual gatherings. Although for half our years together, we had met only with boxes around our faces, we have obviously made connections and built relationships. What excitement to finally be face to face. When folks asked if our zoom meetings would resume, they validated for us the advantage of being united in purpose, in prayer, and in understanding the goals when working with younger Catholics. The commission could tell from our conversations with ministers, animators, and interested people that there is a clearer understanding of what young people need, how we can build relationships with them, and what methods work for today’s youth. Even though each situation is unique, those of us who have spent time together are united in our basic mission. Our struggles, concerns, and roadblocks are similar across the United States, but we are united in our desire and willingness to move forward in reaching out to young people.

Have we ignited?

There is an enthusiasm now that we didn’t notice several years ago. At the beginning of our term, and even after a few years, we still sensed the discouragement, fear, apathy, and powerlessness in our quest. Our work, again especially through the virtual gatherings, has gradually helped us “ignite”

enthusiasm and courage. We didn’t talk to a single person who said, “Why bother,” or “It’s impossible.” As we’ve said all along, this is God’s work. We are simply His hands and feet, His voice, His messengers. We won’t get discouraged or give up if we remember who is in charge and in the center of all we do. How could we not be on fire with the Holy Spirit? If you attended the evening of Taizé prayer or the concert with Jesse Manibusan, or participated in making blankets during the service project, you would have witnessed how joyful our young people were to serve in this way. Their enthusiasm was infectious and, at least for the commission team, affirmed that we are on the right track as far as igniting passion for stepping into the world of young people.

Have we invited?

Now for the third part of our goal—to invite. We have invited regions, individuals, and fraternities to get involved, to attend our on-line trainings, prayer services, and networking opportunities. But we find this is our weakest area of growth. It is time to be courageous and invite young people into a gospel life. They are hungry for a deeper relationship with God, and we can walk with them in that journey. YouFra is not only possible, but also a beautiful way to nourish that hunger.

Through our presentations in this coming year, we intend to invite a larger and more varied audience. When we discuss how to plan Catholic social justice activities for young people, we will invite Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation animators. When we bring to your attention topics important to younger Catholics, the invitation will extend to Formation Directors. If how to plan meaningful prayer experiences is the evening’s presentation, Spiritual Assistants will be welcome. We’re hoping with this plan Ministers and FY/YA Animators will be more supported in their efforts.

We appreciate your help in fulfilling our dream to unite, ignite and invite.