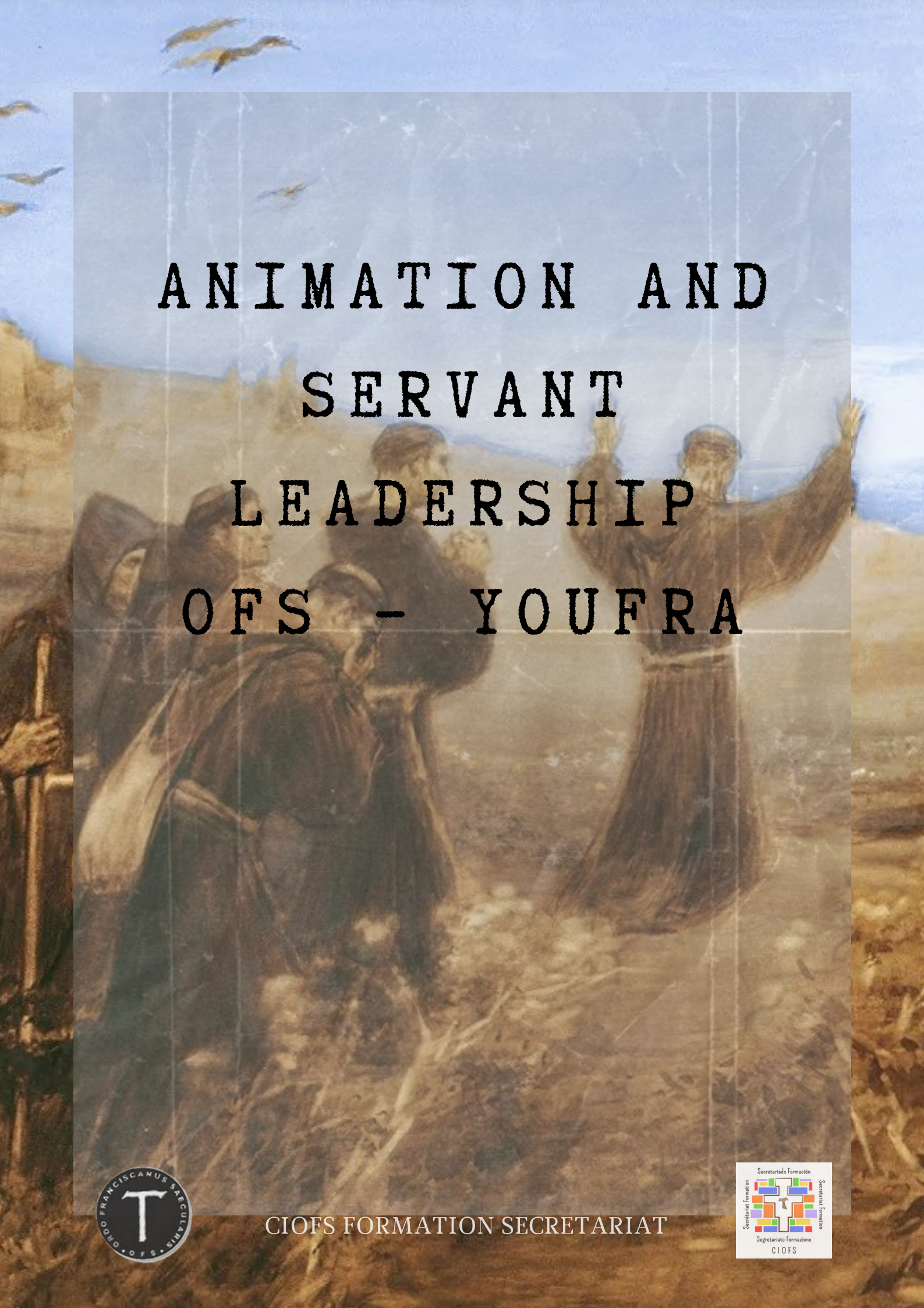


ANIMATION AND SERVANT LEADERSHIP OFS - YOUFRA

CIOFS FORMATION SECRETARIAT

PRESENTATION

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Secular Franciscan Order and Franciscan Youth, Peace and Good.

During the General Chapter of the Secular Franciscan Order 2021 the theme Servant Leadership was presented and it was assumed as one of the priorities to continue our formation in this dimension of service. This priority stated:

" Servant Leadership. Additional focus on servant leadership, sharing tools from Instrumentum Laboris and Br. Michael Perry's talk on the main theme, provided excellent tools for local fraternities to use (modules, templates, training format/outline, simple language). Create a grant fund that can support various actions related to implementing the suggestions".

The CIOFS Presidency approved to animate this priority by accepting the proposal that the Formation Secretariat prepare two themes. For the year 2023 the theme is "Serving in fraternity, leadership and animation". For the year 2024 the theme will be "Servant leadership in the writings of St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi".

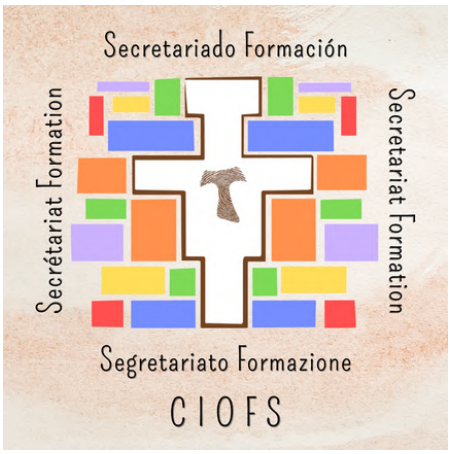
During the International Assembly of YouFra held in Mexico in the year 2022 this work "Serving in Fraternity, Leadership and Animation" was presented together looking at the challenges for us YouFra and OFS in this dimension of service that our charism proposes, this work was presented by our Br. Tibor Kauser OFS, General Minister and by our Sister Ailén Lucia Natali YouFra- OFS (Argentina), member of the International Formation Team YouFra.

The formation secretariat asked these brothers and sisters to integrate this presentation, to update it, in order to share it with all the OFS and YouFra fraternities.

We hope that this material will respond to the priority given and that it will be useful for the formation of our brothers and sisters.

We think that to continue reflecting and forming ourselves in the leadership of service is a necessity for our instances of animation which are our councils at the different local, regional and national levels. We also think that our councils should strengthen dialogue, communication, and the great challenge of forming a fraternity of service in the time that it is our turn to animate our brothers and sisters.

Fraternally,



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November 2023

ANIMATION AND SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Ailén Lucia Natali YouFra-OFS
YouFra International Formation Team
Tibor Kauser OFS
Minister General

After some years and different spaces lived in the Secular Franciscan Order and the Franciscan Youth at the international level, we want to bring some reflections and summaries on the topic "Animation and Servant Leadership".
What is it, how should we be leaders, what is our vision as Secular Franciscans? The answers to these questions are not unique nor are they already established, but from these points that we share we can see what this theme is about in our many local, regional and national fraternities.

WHAT DOES IT GENERALLY MEAN TO BE A LEADER?

If we seek or think about the definition of a leader, we can say that it is “a person who acts as a guide or head of a group,” and “in order for his/her leadership to be effective, the rest of the members must recognize his/her abilities.” A leader is able to “encourage the members of a group to work together toward a common goal.”
A leader is one who guides a community or a group of people, or a group that is not yet a community, that desires to move forward in the same direction, because they have common objectives, common tasks, a common spirituality.

WHAT IS SERVANT LEADERSHIP?

We know that there is no single way to be a leader, and that many times the idea of a leader is viewed with negativity.
In our Franciscan spirituality, a spirituality that lives and journeys in fraternity as a community, speaking about leadership is speaking about service, servant leadership. This is why our leaders are called ‘ministers’.

Now… What is servant leadership? We can say that:

- It is the kind of leadership that guides and animates. Guidance and Animation
- It is about the person who has a role of authority, but not power
- It is the servant way of leading a fraternity
- It is hierarchical, but it is collegial, it is for the community, it is fraternal.

The term “leader” from the perspective of Jesus Christ, is an invitation to all of us who can contribute to the building up of the kingdom of God, offering gifts, talents and life itself to others. Whoever understands that the leadership of Jesus Christ is open to all, demonstrates having a heart willing to serve for the building up of our Church and our presence in the world today as a servant leader.

And why do we need servant leaders?

- Because the fraternity (as a human community) is a social reality, a group of people whose life and activities have to be coordinated, otherwise it ceases to be a fraternity.
- One of the leader's tasks is to form and protect the fraternity.
- Another task is to help the fraternity to fulfill its goals, its vocation.

EXAMPLES OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP (BIBLE, CHURCH, FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY)

JESUS: who came into the world to serve, to give himself entirely to others. He gave his life of service to others so that the brothers and sisters would know his love. From his place as leader, he influenced many brothers and sisters who were encouraged to follow him, and thus the Church was born, a Church that is still alive today.Jesus fully exercises his authority, without being possessive, manipulating or seductive: all he wants is for his brothers and sisters to grow.

The life of Jesus remains deeply attractive and inspiring today; For all people it is an enticement that challenges. The Church knows that this is due to the fact that Jesus lives in deep connection with God, the Heavenly Father, and with every human being.

MARY: whose “yes” transformed reality, because by begetting and bringing the son of God into the world, she was the protagonist of this great story. And when her son died, she, from her formation through her own life, was a leader who guided the people that today are us: the Church. We take from her that "mother" attitude, through constant presence and necessary proximity.

Mary waits because she trusts, because she trusts she moves and runs to announce what she has witnessed, she serves. Pope Francis says: the Mother of the Lord is a model of young people on the move, not immobile in front of the mirror contemplating their own image or "caught" in the nets. She was totally outward-looking.

Her hope makes her go out of herself.

S**AINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI:** *being very young and full of dreams, he heard the call of Jesus to be poor like Him and to rebuild the Church with his testimony. He renounced everything with joy and is the saint of universal brotherhood, the brother of all, who praised the Lord through his creatures* (CV 52). Although his first encounter with God was from a personal, individual place, he was the leader that the brothers and sisters chose to follow God, using his example as their heart to restore the Church, making him their reference in living a path of searches and dreams from the perspective of Jesus Christ.

One of the most fascinating facets of Francis is his joyful disposition, his concept of religion as a celebration and his great capacity for playfulness and celebration. Whoever sings celebrates, whoever celebrates respects, and whoever respects does not destroy.
He understood that the Gospel is extraordinarily sublime and that the real man is fundamentally weak, which is why he demanded nothing from anyone, but demanded everything from himself. (Francis and you. Antonio Merino).
Francis always accompanied the brothers with closeness, dialogue, listening, presence, encounter and above all by making every word he proposed a reality.

SAINT CLARE OF ASSISI: a female leader who, in the time when she lived, decided to break with stereotypes and the idea of "it has to be done this way" to give herself totally to God. And that impulse made her become a leader for so many sisters and brothers who saw in her the courage to leave her comfortable life, the courage to give of herself completely.

Within our Church and our Franciscan Family, we can find many names of brothers and sisters who, through their leadership and service to the kingdom of God, have left their mark:

- Saint Peter
- Saint Bonaventure
- Saint John of Capistrano

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SERVANT LEADER

What should a leader be or what should a leader have?

- be prayerful, ready to listen to the Holy Spirit
- have a profound sacramental life, particularly devoted to the sacrament of reconciliation and the Eucharist
- be willing to correct oneself, that is, live a penitential life
- have a spirit of service
- have a spirit of responsibility
- be able to see the big picture, but also be dedicated to individuals
- have ideas, vision, dreams
- have leadership skills
- be prepared to listen, but also to act
- be capable and open to dialogue
- be able to evaluate a situation
- see everything through the lens of the Bible, based on the teaching of Jesus
- be ready to recognize sins and accept failures
- The most important thing is to love those for whom you are a servant leader, as Jesus *“loved his own in the world and loved them to the end”* (Jn 13:3).

What should a servant leader not be or should not have?

- Don't be afraid to be imperfect, no one has ALL the good skills and knowledge,
- Don't be afraid of failure, don't be afraid of resistance, (but keep in mind, that stubbornness is not resistance)
- Do not be afraid to try to convince others, to stand up for the good, the right, and guide others towards it.

CURRENT CHALLENGES FOR LEADERSHIP

SERVANT LEADERSHIP IN THE OFS:

We will take up the aspects presented by Michel Perry OFM at our General Chapter OFS 2021, of a Franciscan model of leadership that can serve in our quest to promote authentic servant leadership in our Order:

(1) Servant leadership takes place in the context of a learning community/fraternity; it
is fundamentally an interpersonal exercise, the development of skills that bring leader and follower, Minister and member, closer together. While individual skills-building can promote better organizational and management qualities, a good Franciscan leader is someone who remains deeply connected to the life of each of the members of the fraternity, learning from them even as he/she teaches'.

(2) Servant leadership requires a deep sense of humility borne in the crucible of crises, the recognition of one's limitations and sinfulness and the joyful acknowledgement that everything and everyone is a gift from God. We have only to look to the journey of leadership experienced by St. Francis. His was a process of trial and error, learning as he and the brothers did the gospel, did penance.
When Francis fell, he did not simply get back up on his own; he was pulled back up by God and by the brothers. Servant leadership knows when to step back and allow God, working through the fraternity, to take the lead.

(3) Servant leadership always seeks to communicate the central values of gospel life by way of example, embodying these values in a way that does not call attention to her/him but rather that enables all brothers and sisters to want to progress along the way of holiness of life (pope Francis: attraction by witness). Something a 6th/5th century B.C.E. Chinese philosopher and founder of Daoism once wrote continues to speak to us today: —A leader is but when people barely know he exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: —We did it ourselves.

(4) Servant leadership does not shrink from its responsibility to recognize and sanction elements of the life of the fraternity that are negative, sinful, or do not promote growth in holiness of life. Good Ministers – servant leaders – accomplish this task by demonstrating genuine care, recognizing the fragility of each person, while, at the same time, reminding the sister or brother that he/she is created in the image of God and is inhabited in the hearts of each and every sister and brother, as Francis writes in his second Letter to All the Faithful, in his Admonitions and elsewhere. It is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in all who have embraced the way of penance, the gospel life that gives us the courage to confront and overcome all adversity together in the believing, serving, and loving fraternity of OFS/OFM/the Church, on the road with all of humanity and creation.

SERVANT LEADERSHIP IN YOUFRA:

In the first International Guidelines for Franciscan Youth we were told that *“youth fraternities have their specific organization and formation plans appropriate to the needs and pedagogy of world youth, according to the existing realities in different countries.”*

And I want to highlight something that is very important to me: the YouFra Movement is a movement for young people animated by young people. We are accompanied and cared for by the OFS, we are assisted by religious men and women, by the Franciscan Family, but the experience and movement of our Franciscan Youth depends on the young people, the YouFra, on us. If we want our Franciscan Youth to remain alive, to move forward and to be a presence in the world, it depends on the YouFra members. And how to accompany so many young people who dare to live with YouFra as their ideal?

From the current leadership of the YouFra Movement today, it is necessary for us to look at our young people and *“accompany them to make valid, stable and well-founded decisions, it is, therefore, a service that the vast majority feels the need for. Being present, supporting and accompanying the journey to make authentic choices is a way for the Church to exercise its maternal function, generating the freedom of the children of God. This service is none other than the continuation of the action of Jesus Christ with his people: through a constant and cordial presence, a devoted and loving proximity, and a tenderness without limits”* (91, Final Document Synod of the Young) and bringing the life of that young man of Assisi, who had the courage to live in a different way, to be a leader of so many brothers and sisters, and to be a witness inside and outside the Church, carrying the Gospel through the example of his life, believing in the possible dream of universal brotherhood.

A few years ago, Pope Francis told us that "many times in life, we waste time asking ourselves: But, Who am I?" You can ask yourself who you are and spend a lifetime searching for who you are. But ask yourself: Why? Who am I?" (Speech at the Prayer Vigil in preparation for World Youth Day, Basilica of Santa María Maggiore, April 8, 2017)

From this experience of encouraging the Franciscan Youth, just like Francis and Clare of Assisi in their time, we are invited to be protagonists, we are summoned as leaders who are encouraged and committed to this journey in the Church and in society. We must assume the commitment to grow in the ability to share the joy and grace of the proclamation of the Gospel, not marking a single direction as correct, but making the journey by living in communion with those young people who today follow this charism. In this way, in that shared life, we can awaken in others, in new YouFra brothers and sisters, the grace of being the main characters in our own story, through service, dedicated life, and animation.

Our Franciscan charism is very necessary today in our Church. We are invited to continue giving ourselves to this task of following Jesus in the way of Saint Francis, but with a special task: to be at the forefront as members of YouFra who are protagonists and who are part of life.

SOME IDEAS AND FOCUS POINTS ABOUT SERVANT LEADERSHIP

1 Guide and animate

Both are important. Guiding is having a vision, showing the way, correcting, organizing, providing. To animate is to listen, to set an example, to draw attention to, to exhort, to teach, to encourage the brothers and sisters.

2 Take into account the dual nature of servant leadership: hierarchical and collegial

It is hierarchical because God is at the top of the hierarchy, the base structure being the Church, with the OFS and YouFra inserted into it. It is collegial because there is Co-Responsibility, that is, each brother and sister of the Fraternity must remember the sense of co-responsibility, which commits them to work as a team with the "servant leaders." And, the leader is responsible for promoting this principle of co-responsibility, the animation is done by the Council and minister, not the minister and council, collective decisions are made.

3 Talk about leadership from the perspective of service in the context of a fraternity

Be a leader who ensures the animation of the brothers and sisters, who ensures the building, development and promotion of fraternity. It is of no use to be a leader in this charism if you do not have fraternity as the center.

4 Build a constant and committed animation

From the simple we are invited to be animators present in the life of the fraternity. Constant presence and co-responsibility are signs of servant leaders, of a life dedicated to others.

5 Make decisions

In the task of the leader who encourages brothers and sisters, in some situations he or she has to make decisions that will push forward, improve or change a course. There is no need to be afraid of making decisions, but these decisions must always be fraternal in nature. For this, dialogue, fraternal consultation, observing what is happening in the fraternity is always good.

6 Be opened: assume spaces, share gifts and talents

It is important to recognize, value and promote our own talents and those of our brothers and sisters. It is necessary to understand that our gifts are a gift from God, and that these gifts encourage us and, by sharing them, they can also encourage others.

7 Openness, empathy and communication

Those in leadership roles who do not understand the reality of the brothers and sisters are not servant leaders. It is necessary to walk with the community, to be close, to see the current reality and accept it because it is also our reality.

8 Tener respeto mutuo

Within the idea of co-responsibility and taking into account our way of life in fraternity, the promotion of mutual respect is important: the fraternity must respect the servant leader and the servant leader must respect the fraternity.

9 Be flexible in the different contexts that arise

The world is constantly changing, much faster than a few years ago. It is necessary for a leader to see reality and how transformations are happening, what they are looking for in the present. What we have experienced helps us, we are also the present, and we must be on that path to continue building for the future.

10 Be generators of hope

Because *"hope is bold, it knows how to look beyond personal comfort, the small assurances and compensations that narrow the horizon, to open itself to great ideals that make life more beautiful and dignified"* (Fratelli Tutti)

11 Incorporate the novelty

"Clearly incorporate varied means and resources to help young people grow in fraternity, to live as brothers and sisters, to help each other, to create community, to serve others" (CV 215) . As animators and leaders who embrace reality, we have the opportunity to be creative and encourage novelty, innovation, by transforming what is necessary to accompany the path of the OFS and the YouFra.

12 1)Believe in and be the first being convinced of our vocation

It is important, almost obligatory, that the animator believe in this way of life as a necessary path in this world, a path of faith that can transform the reality of the brothers and sisters, a path that helps by opening doors to be at the service of the people. If the animator doubts, he or she may not generate the motivation and hope necessary for living our Franciscan spirituality, which is following Jesus in the footsteps of Saint Francis and Saint Clare of Assisi.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSALS FOR GROWTH IN SERVANT LEADERSHIP

1 Formation in leadership and service

We need more brothers and sisters to be encouraged to be leaders on our path. We must create momentum, spaces for creativity and service to be born, grow and gain strength. The training of leaders and animators is central so that the journey of the OFS and YouFra continues to be built up constantly.

2 Continuous accompaniment of animators who lead in the OFS and YouFra

That there are already animators, that the leaders of our Movement are already recognized, does not mean that we leave them alone. It is necessary for leaders to walk hand in hand with the brothers and sisters, sharing their experiences and their plans. To be able to grow together is part of the sense of co-responsibility.

3 Teamwork and fraternity

Collective and collaborative work is necessary for the building up of the pathway and the fraternity. Collegial leadership within a Council is one of the central characteristics in this wonderful task of serving, and a concrete option in Franciscan spirituality: it is not leadership in solitude, it is not leadership of power, but it is fraternal and community leadership.

4 Encourage new leaders

In many fraternities it has happened that when an animator leaves or ends a period of service, the fraternity collapses and, in many cases, ceases to have life. This should not happen since it is central to understand that servant leadership is something temporary. A concrete and accurate commitment must be made to the training of leader-animators, and this training should be constant and carried out on a regular basis.

5 Shared representation

So that the leadership experience is shared and can be a hopeful example for others, we can "open" leadership services so that new young people can learn about the role. As leaders, we must be encouraged to share the space and the beautiful grace that serving can be.

FINAL SUMMARY

"The Blessed Father, in a certain way identified with the holy brothers by the ardent love and fervent zeal with which he sought their perfection, often thought to himself about the conditions and virtues that a good Friar Minor should possess. And he said that a good Friar Minor would be the one who combined the life and qualities of these holy brothers" (EP 85) ... and from there, the gifts and talents of the brothers, of the fraternity, begin to be described, and from this recognition of the fraternity, the leaders in service are born.

In our Franciscan Family, the animation and leadership of service is never done in solitude, from an individual and closed point of view, but it is a leadership thought out in the sphere of brothers and sisters, from the collective and the human, of thinking from a group that encourages the journey in fraternity.

From these ideas that we share in this material, we want to highlight the importance of servant leadership, not as a first place or a space of privilege, but as a responsibility that helps to continue to keep this Franciscan Family on the road, which has been on the earth for more than 800 years, leaving in the brothers and sisters a way of life of the Gospel.

"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Mt. 18:20).

Let us continue to encourage life in fraternity through animation and service to others, let us continue to build up and strengthen our fraternity.

QUESTIONS TO SHARE IN FRATERNITY:

- **In these two years since the General Chapter OFS, have we been able to deepen and find new proposals to improve our services from the proposal of leadership as animation?**
- **How do these reflections of this new material help us to improve the commitment we have as servants in our Secular Franciscan Order and Franciscan Youth?**