



## STATUTES OF THE YOUTH TEAMS OF OUR LADY

### INTRODUCTION

The Youth Teams of Our Lady (YTOL) Movement had its origin at the Teams of Our Lady of couples (END – Equipes Notre-Dame) International Meeting in Rome in 1976. A young adult named Christine d'Amonville, daughter of French couple responsible for International END at the time, decided to organize a simultaneous meeting for the young adult children of the couple's team members in collaboration with Father Guy Thomazeau. These young people regularly attended the meetings of their parents since childhood, and were anxious to receive the same spiritual fruits as their parents did through END. It was then that they decided it was time to have a specific condition for development of their own charism, with more appropriate standards to the vocation of young adult singles in pursuit of holiness.

After that, the participants of this first meeting began to disclose in their respective countries the richness they had experienced, and worked toward defining a project to create youth teams based on the model of END. The hopes and plans for the YTOL movement started to become reality in September 1977 in Gap (France), when Christine gathered once more young adults from various European countries for its 2nd International Meeting. During this event, the first International Secretariat, based in France was established, which defined subsequently its structure, creating documents, guidelines, and functions.

The main objective of this introduction is to site these statutes in the basic insights of the movement so as to enable the YTOL to go forward with courage and confidence, faithful to its founding charism.

As it is written in the YTOL International Charter, in an anthology of the founding texts, the aim of the Youth Teams of Our Lady from the beginning was to be "a movement of spirituality" and not simply a friendly group of young adults wishing to escape from isolation, or threats of the exterior world. And so, from the beginning, it has brought together, only the ones who want to progress towards holiness in and through the Christian spirituality. However, because they know their weaknesses and limitations, and how difficult it is to endure through the many challenges throughout life, YTOL members have decided to become part of a unit (called the team) in an organized movement which is both flexible and demanding.

The *Charism* of the YTOL is to guide its members to search, discover, and deepen the values revealed by Jesus Christ in the Gospels, through a way of prayer, sharing, and study within an ecclesial community: a team. For this, the movement entrusts itself to Mary, choosing Her as a model of openness and availability to the manifestation work of the Holy Spirit.

The *Mission* of the YTOL is to help its members live the double dimension of the Christian life: following Christ's teachings and being sent by Him on a mission into everyday society; and ultimately, toward holiness, in communion with the Church. The course proposed by the movement is founded on the concept of a change from a handed-down faith to a living, deeper, more mature faith, aiming at discovering and developing one's gifts and vocation.

Looking back on an experience of nearly forty years of existence, YTOL members are convinced that the movement answers the needs of young people and of the Church. Currently active in fourteen countries, its aim is to project a Christian witness in the world.

## **Article 1 – TITLE AND DESCRIPTION**

The official name of the Movement is Youth Teams of Our Lady, abbreviated to YTOL. YTOL is the umbrella title to the entire Movement, and may be translated according to the languages of the countries in which they are established upon the International Secretariat approval.

YTOL, as a movement of the laity, intends to be an "international association of the lay faithful of private right" in conformity with the Canon 299 of the Code of Canon Law of 25th January 1983 and to the unanimous prescripts of the present statutes.

The Movement forms a worldwide spiritual community within the Church with the objective of human and spiritual formation of their members in a community, a team, following the guidelines of the YTOL International Charter.

Below, the basic terminologies used in these statutes are defined:

- *Base Team* – smallest unit (basic cell) of the Movement;
- *Sector* – local administrative organization;
- *Responsible* – administrative function in several instances;
- *Formal Meeting* – the main gathering event of a Base Team;
- *Informal Meeting* – an event aiming at improve relationship within the Teams.

## **Article 2 – HEADQUARTERS**

The YTOL International headquarters change every two years, and is currently situated in Vinhedo - Brazil (160, Janduí st). It can be transferred to another locality by the decision of the International Secretariat.

## **Article 3 – MISSION AND ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS**

As mentioned in the Introduction session, the mission of the YTOL is to help young adults discover and put into practice the dimensions of the Christian spirituality, in fidelity to the teachings of the Catholic Church. A movement of spiritual training and support, the YTOL helps its members to deepen their love for God as well as the love of their neighbor. They have recourse to brotherly mutual help so that the members can adopt concrete conditions of their personal, family, professional, and social lives according to the will of God. YTOL encourages its members to become conscious of their mission of evangelization in the Church and in the world, by means of their witness of faith and other activities as they may decide to engage in.

Seeking holiness, YTOL members engage in the following means of formation:

- Formal meeting with appropriate time for prayer, theme reflection, sharing of experience about both daily life and spiritual life, and a definition of a "rule of life" (point of effort);



- Organizing formation sessions such as gatherings, conferences, retreats, and community prayers at the regional, national, and international levels;
- Apostolic and social activities, especially in the field of evangelization within the family, the society, and the Church, according to the principles of the International Charter.

In summary, YTOL members do not consider their joining of the movement and their adhesion to the statutes as an end, but instead, a starting point. The Christian law is one of charity; charity has no limit, and charity knows no rest.

## **Article 4 – THE MEMBERS**

YTOL members must be Catholic single young adults, with no children, neither conjugal experience, between the ages of 15 and 30 years old. Members are called to join the movement with the goal of putting into practice the mission and the methods of the movement, such those defined by the latest edition of the YTOL International Charter (2011), and by the present statutes.

A team consists of 6 to 12 young adults and begins with a period of initiation (called “piloting”) that can last up to one year. During this period, with the accompaniment of experienced YTOL members called pilots, the new team discovers the various aspects and characteristics of the life of the team and the Movement, supported by the study of this document.

Other members that compose a team and should be chosen by them (with Sector approval) until the end of piloting are the Accompanying Couple and the Spiritual Counselor.

Each member can leave at any time, or eventually may be expelled, for a serious reason, judged by the local Sector Responsible.

A new member can join a team if there is vacancy, after the respective Sector’s approval. The new member will participate in process called “side piloting”, provided by a pilot appointed by the Sector, who will transmit the experience of the Statutes and the necessary explanations. During this period, the new member will become acquainted with this document and progressively endeavor to practice the duties, while living them in the Formal Meetings.

## **Article 5 – LIFE WITHIN A TEAM AND MUTUAL HELP OF THE MEMBERS**

The Team, a true ecclesial community, constitutes the basic cell of the Movement. Thus the specific vocation of YTOL, as a Movement within the Church, is to give birth to and animate these small communities of young adults, who are seeking to live a fully Christian life within their personal, social, professional, and familial lives.

After the period of piloting, the Team elects a "Responsible" each year. The role of the Team Responsible is to, with a spirit of service, take care of the healthy progress of the Team, ensuring it remains faithful to the charism and the growing means proposed by YTOL, as well as take all efforts to its good integration to the Movement, especially to the Sector to which it is linked. At that time, the Team also chooses an invocation of Our Lady (eg: “Our Lady of Graces”) for what it will be known.



The Formal Meeting is the key event in the life of the Team. Coordinated by the Team Responsible, the meeting is composed of a simple meal, a time of prayer, personal sharing (the expression of the experiences and preoccupations), an exchange of views on a reflection theme, (which is in harmony with the objectives of the Movement for the year), as well as the definition of one individual rule of life (point of effort) for the subsequent period.

YTOL members commit to making an effort personally to listen to the Word of God, meditate on it and pray daily, (which can include the rosary and the Magnificat), as well as attend an annual retreat. To attain these, they also commit to supporting each other in the theme reflection, discerning God's will, as well as in helping one another in the continual enrichment of each other's prayer lives. YTOL members are called to pray with one another, as well as for one another, following what is written in the Scriptures: "Again, [amen,] I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Mt 18: 19-20).

It is not realistic to claim to help one's friends to lead a spiritual life, if one does not first help them to overcome their worries and difficulties. This is why YTOL members practice mutual help generously, as much materially as spiritually, obeying Saint Paul's great precept: "Bear one another's burdens, and so you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal 6: 2).

We learn in the Acts of the Apostles (4: 32) that the early Christians were "of one heart and soul". Seeing them, the pagans were surprised: "See, how they love one another!" One of the most important assumptions that YTOL believe and carry out, is that, today just as in biblical times, non-believers will be won over to Christ if they see Christian young adults truly loving one another, helping one another in seeking God, and in serving their brothers and sisters. Therefore, brotherly love, which exceeds above and beyond mutual help, becomes a witness.

Here, we have to clarify that the Teams are not an organization of apostolate, but a group of spirituality. This does not mean that YTOL members refuse to respond to calls from clergy, when it sees fit to entrust them with responsibilities in the parish – quite the contrary. Rather, the example of several team members who participate in the liturgy, Mass chants, preparation of the Sacraments, among other activities, can bring a precious effort of liturgical and pastoral mission to their vicars. As a result, this can become a solid foundation for fellow members as well.

## **Article 6 – DUTIES OF THE YTOL MEMBERS**

- Be ready to accept the Movement's guidelines, applying the methods offered by it for personal and spiritual growth. This includes, of course, living in accordance with the Church's teachings;
- Participate of formal (team) meetings, as well as of all the activities proposed on their base team, as well as by the local Sector, National and International Secretariats;
- Get acquainted with these Statutes to better experience the Movement's charism;
- Give a regular monetary contribution for the maintenance and expansion of the YTOL at the local Sector, National and International levels;
- Execute with zeal and spirit of service all the roles he/she is designated to.





## Article 7 – LEVELS OF RESPONSIBILITY AND ANIMATION

Several different levels of responsibility and animation exist in order to create brotherly communion with the aim of achieving the objectives of the Movement:

- The “Liaison”: this member is charged with ensuring the link between several levels of the Movement (sectors, regions, countries), so that the leading team and the linked teams are closely connected so their bonds can be as fruitful as possible;
- The Sector Responsible: this member is charged with coordinating a group of teams with the help of a team, called the Sector, chosen by him/her and made up of a number of young adults, an Accompanying Couple and a Spiritual Counselor;
- Similarly, where there is a Regional Responsible or a National Responsible, charged with their Region or National teams the coordination of several Sectors or Regions, respectively;
- In addition to their executive teams mentioned above, the Responsible for those instances have around them, to fulfill their responsibility, an Animation Team (SAT – Sector, RAT – Region, NAT – National), which will assist them in a spirit of collegial communion and trust. This team is the legislative organism, composed by the Responsible for the level immediately below. Only these members are entitled to vote on proposals submitted for approval at meetings.

The Responsible can be chosen by vote or nomination. This latter is done by the leaving Responsible, preferably with the agreement of all the Responsibles for the level immediately below and being a member of it. Each of the Responsibles report regularly to the level above them on their initiatives, decision and management.

Every responsibility exercised at each of these levels is entrusted to YTOL members, for a period of two years, extendable. All such responsibilities, as well as all the work accomplished by the members are conducted voluntarily, without being paid.

The documents elaborated by all the authorities of the Movement regarding its educational methods, its local structures or that are made available to the young adults with the aim of being studied or distributed must be previously submitted to the NAT of each country for approval, always according to the International Charter and these Statutes.

The highest hierarchy of the Movement is the International Secretariat (IS), formed by the International Responsible, other support members, and assisted by an Accompanying Couple as well as a Spiritual Counselor chosen by him/her. The IS exercises its responsibility in close union (collegiality) with the National Responsibles, which collectively, compose the International Animation Team (IAT). The International Responsible is the official representative of the Movement worldwide and is appointed by the leaving Responsible, preferably with the agreement of the IAT, and being a member of it. The IS mandate is for two years, extendable.



The main responsibilities of the International Secretariat are the following:

- Keep the founding charism of the Movement, ensuring that all of the countries comply with these Statutes;
- Provide means of spiritual deepening and propose the creation / updating of documents;
- Work consistently toward the expansion efforts of the Movement, forming and supporting teams in new countries;
- Liaise with the structures of the Church, especially the Vatican;
- Prepare the meetings of IAT and implement its resolutions;
- Schedule the international meetings;
- Decide on the creation or extinction of the Movement in a country;
- Ensure the liaison with and between countries and helping those which are struggling;
- Represent the YTOL movement at the international level;
- Receive and administer contributions paid by National Secretariats;
- Submit an annual financial statement.

The tasks and duties of the International Animation Team are the following:

- Sharing the experiences, activities, and needs of the various countries;
- Suggest and approve the general lines of action of the Movement worldwide as well as the means to achieve them;
- Review and approve documents and IS proposals;
- Establish and maintain connections with the local Church (involvement in diocesan activities, relationships with other young adult movements/ministries, etc.);
- Propose a means of deepening YTOL spiritual life in the countries (regional meetings, retreats, formation sessions, newsletters, etc.);
- Assure the liaison between the teams in each country;
- Define and evaluate proposals for the Movement's expansion in new countries;
- Annually, establish the amount of dues by member countries.

## **Article 8 – TEAM RESPONSIBLE**

All YTOL members are called to have responsibilities within the movement. Thus, a member from the Base Team is elected to be its Responsible for the period of one year, being in charge of keeping the team loyal to the charism and the means proposed by the Movement. The Responsible is chosen by the members of the team at the time of its foundation and subsequently, at the end of each year.

The term "Responsible" does not mean "one who decides alone" or "one who commands". Rather, the Responsible represents the team, is aware of the happenings of each team member, and organizes the life of the team with the help of others. A short formula defines the role of the Responsible and underlines its fundamental importance: 'they are responsible for brotherly love'. It is their responsibility to see that the team succeeds in evangelical charity and that each YTOL member finds the help they need within it.



The Responsible must be close to Christ through individual prayer and participation in the Sacraments, praying every day for the team and its members. Therefore, accepting this role within YTOL is responding to a call from the Lord, who entrusted the task of helping the team members to walk towards Him.

The Responsible coordinates the preparation of the Formal Meetings along with the Accompanying Couple and the Spiritual Counselor, and manages the *sharing* during the meeting.

It is the Responsible who provides the liaison with the Sector and, through it, with the rest of the Movement. They send the Sector a report on the activities of their team each month. These reports make it possible for the Sector to help every team benefit from the experience of the others. The monthly report also brings to light - should they occur - the struggles of a team, and makes it possible for the Sector to aid it.

Any member or team that does not want to or cannot follow the Movement's guidelines is susceptible to discipline. Many movements collapse slowly, smothered under the weight of inert members, who have not been asked in time to leave. When the Responsible is forced to ask a member who does not observe the commitments of the Teams to leave, they must make them understand that, although the general interest requires their departure, the affection the team has for them is in no way changed. They will ensure that contacts and bonds of friendship with them remain close.

## Article 9 – SPIRITUAL COUNSELORS

The Spiritual Counselor brings to the Teams the unique graces of their priesthood. Their involvement within YTOL is a way to fulfill their priestly function (Mt 16:18, Jn 15:3) to represent Christ as Head of His Mystical Body, within the Base Team, which is a "cell of the Church". The Priest is a sign that the team is a part of the Church, and assists the young adults to address issues in a more theological and spiritual perspective, being living testimony of a consecrated vocation. He also actively participates in the life of the Movement, meetings and events. However, the priests do not take on the responsibility of leadership as the young adult members do; this is why they are called "Counselors".

The team's Spiritual Counselor is chosen by its members and must lawfully exercise the priestly ministry in conformity with Canon 324 § 2. The priest who is asked to participate within YTOL is to undertake the necessary procedure with his superiors to accept this position.

In the event that a team is unable to obtain the accompaniment of a Priest, a team may, with the consent of the Sector, ask the following to accompany the team temporarily:

- Religious or Seminarians, who have already studied at least two years in theology, and their participation is approved by their superiors regarding their suitability and ability to meet their responsibilities, status, and testimony necessary to function;
- Permanent Deacons (provided they are not part of the same Accompanying Couple of a team).



The Priest who is the Spiritual Counselor for the Sector, Region, National Team, or International Team is chosen among the Base Team's Spiritual Counselors and by the Responsible of the respective level. The duration of the Spiritual Counselor's role within the respective team is equal to the instance to which it belongs.

## **Article 10 – ACCOMPANYING COUPLE**

In addition to a Spiritual Counselor, the presence of an Accompanying Couple within the Base Team helps to meet the need for even more support in the team member's spiritual growth, and above all, to see them as a genuine witness to the Christian family, showing the visible face of the Sacrament of the Church within the team. Thus, the YTOL members closely witness the real testimonies to discern their vocation: marriage (Accompanying Couple) or consecrated life (Spiritual Counselor).

Team members choose (with the endorsement of a Sector) a Catholic couple, preferably from TOL (Teams of Our Lady), to walk in faith with the team and bring a richness complementary to that which characterizes the education of parents. The Accompanying Couple gives testimony of their spiritual life, shared and lived together, and the graces received through the Sacrament of Matrimony. Therefore, the Accompanying Couple should have good experience of marriage, both in time and in posture. It also provides the experience of a mutual enrichment in prayer and commitment of the laity in the Church and in the world. By their mutual trust and dedication, the Accompanying Couple is the sign of faithfulness to God lived in a time when so many young people hesitate to take a long-term conjugal commitment.

The Accompanying Couple must have great zeal for the team: making every effort possible to ensure it does not take a different direction than expected by the Movement or the Church; helping them in more difficult decisions; addressing with love and directness any obstacles and/or doubts that may arise on the path toward God; calling attention to any deviations; motivating the entire team and, in particular, the Responsible. They may not, however, take responsibility for the progress of activities within the team, working when members are not acting. In this case, it is essential to encourage the team members to act.

The Accompanying Couple of the Sector, Region, National Team, or International Team is chosen by the Responsible for this instance, among all the Base Team's couples. The duration of the Accompanying Couple's role within the respective team is equal to the instance to which it belongs.

## **Article 11 – THE FORMAL MEETING**

A Formal Meeting is the strongest event in the life of a team and its goal is to ensure spiritual growth of the members; both individually and as a group. The bond among the team members suffers greatly from prolonged separation; which is why the team needs regular gatherings. Therefore, the teams meet formally once per month, at least ten times per year. There are four key elements that need to be executed to assure that the Formal Meeting goal is achieved: Prayer, Theme Reflection, Sharing, and Rule of Life (point of effort).



# Youth Teams of Our Lady International



- ***Praying***

Praying together is the most significant and outstanding way of meeting others in depth, of acquiring a common spirit and of growing aware of the presence of Christ.

Immediately before the prayer, the team members share their personal intentions as well as those of the great Catholic family (e.g., persecuted Christians, a particular apostolic venture, recruitment to the priesthood, the Holy Father, etc.).

This group prayer can include psalms, hymns, and/or responsorials that will enable the team members to embrace the prayers of the Church and allow an opportunity for such rich prayers of tradition to be a part of the team's prayer life. A time of silence should also take place so that each member may have the opportunity for more intimate and personal contact with God.

- ***Theme Reflection***

A time of reflection together each month based on themes set annually has proven very fruitful. Furthermore, team members are called to read the topic of study prior to the meeting so that mutual help and exchange of views and ideas is prepared individually by each one.

The topics of study are provided by the National Secretariat Team according to the reality and needs of each country. The goal of the topic study is to help the team members to acquire as complete as possible, a concept of Christian thinking and values; and to initiate them to an authentic personal and family spirituality. That is why, linked to the theme, it is very important to add a reading from the Bible, and the Spiritual Counselor can be of great contribution on this choice as well as on the discussions during the meeting. The topic of study may be among several series of subjects, for which study outlines, questionnaires, and references are provided.

- ***Sharing***

After the prayer and theme reflection, a time is reserved for sharing, which is a key tool in the lucid evaluation of one's own spiritual growth. It is a privileged time to deepen mutual understanding through openness to others and by the provision of personal experience and a sincere support to the common path of conversion.

It is the appropriate time for each member to express honestly and openly about their daily walk, within their family, at work, at school, in their friendships, in their relationships, as well as their goals and aspirations within the various aspects of individual and community growth. Each member is encouraged to share with one another and participate in supporting each other's personal and spiritual growth.

What is shared is the seriousness and authenticity put in the pursuit of communion with God and with each other, through the use of the means proposed by the Movement. With such openness, members share what is most important to them: their joys and sorrows, successes and difficulties, fears, anxieties, and worries.

Evangelical charity is truly displayed by sharing in this way and calls, in all simplicity, on brotherly mutual help. Accordingly, team members are invited to participate in each other's lives by offering suggestions and guidance to one another, as well as sharing their individual experiences so that they may contribute to the growth of everyone.



It is incredibly important to recognize that to strengthen such mutual trust, absolute confidentiality must be maintained regarding all matters discussed during this time of Sharing. In the presence of others discussion of such topics must be avoided. That is why it is not recommended to have relatives as members of the same team.

- ***Rule of Life***

Being part of a team requires commitment not only to participate in the Formal Meetings, but also for the need of consistency between words and actions, between the Christian faith and everyday life. This context defines the “Rule of Life” which, as a point of effort is a specific point to be improved, chosen monthly by each member for their own spiritual and personal growth. It aims at the member's desire to realize within the team, their quest for holiness. “Be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5: 48).

- ***A Meal Together***

It is very beneficial to commence or conclude the Formal Meeting with a simple meal together. Although not mandatory, it is an important part for creating bond and trust between members. In the Acts of the Apostles, we learn that the early Christians devoted themselves “to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart” (Acts 2: 46).

As the Formal Meetings are powerful means for each member to deepen their spiritual life, help them to discover their identity within the Church, and create bonds of great Christian friendship, retreats and days of reflection are even more so. Besides, it is recommended that additional meetings are organized at the Sector, Regional, National, and International levels, to exchange experiences, studies, and/or simply to strengthen fellowship among members.

Also, each Base Team is encouraged to organize Informal Meetings, preferably monthly, separated from the Formal Meetings. These should be moments for the team members to get to know each other in a different environment, allowing the interaction among them to be deeper. These Informal Meetings can be in a place of choice for the Team Members, following their local culture, but always in accordance with a Christian way of life.

## **Article 12 – ADMINISTRATION OF PROPERTY**

The funds of the Movement comprise the annual subscriptions paid in by its members, as well as donations, subsidies, and legacies. These funds serve to defray the costs of the functioning, animation, and expansion of the Movement.

It can acquire, by purchase, donation or legacy, immoveable property, but the ownership of such property will be retained solely for the objectives of the Movement.

Whoever is in charge of the finances of the Movement must account for the sums received and spent.

Each year the International Secretariat decides on the financial policy of the Movement, particularly as to the international contribution of the countries, and supervises its implementation.



Corporate bodies, regional or national, having legal personality, can be formed in any country where YTOL is rooted. The decision to create them and the rules governing them are to be submitted to the prior approval of the IS. These bodies can possess and manage property that belongs to the YTOL and must report annually to the Responsible locally for the Movement.

In a desire for openness and trust, the accounting documents of civil associations made up by the sectors, regions or countries, are yearly transmitted to the authorities from whom they depend.

In the case of the liquidation of one of these associations, the transfer of its property will be executed in conformity with the rules in use in each country. However, the IS will supervise the use of such property for the advantage of the members of the Movement, or of institutions related, according to the standards of each country where these associations belong to.

In the case of the liquidation of the international association of the YTOL, the transfer of its property will be executed in conformity to the Canon 310 and, giving a priority to associations with the same activities.

## **Article 13 – REVISION OF THE STATUTES**

These Statutes are not fixed in an unchanging way. They are made to have life and may at some point in time, be subject to adjustments. The members of YTOL shall endeavor to bring to the attention of National and International Secretariats what, in their experience, they understand as improvements and modifications.

Following the same procedure used to elaborate these present statutes, any offer for a revision will be decided by the International Secretariat, after consulting all of the National Secretariats, with a majority of two-thirds.

## **Article 14 – FINAL PROVISIONS**

The International and the National Secretariats are responsible to ensure that the guidelines as well as the official documents of the YTOL Movement are being observed according to the actual statutes.

International Secretariat  
Vinhedo, 17th December, 2013  
[www.ytolinternational.com](http://www.ytolinternational.com)