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Chapter Six — “Young People with Roots”

This chapter discusses the roots of a tree, and how they help the tree stay grounded and weather a storm. Pope Francis compares this to the roots young people can find in “the spiritual and human riches inherited from past generations” (181). If we ignore what came before us, the pope asserts, we are more susceptible to manipulation by those who are only seeking to benefit themselves. He advises young people to stay connected with older generations. Using the prophecy of Joel in the Old Testament, Pope Francis discusses how the young and the elderly can complement one another, as the elderly “have dreams built up of memories” and the young “can have visions that broaden their horizons and show them new paths” (193).

Chapter Seven — “Youth Ministry”

The next section of the exhortation is focused on youth ministry, which Pope Francis acknowledges has gone through many changes that echo the ways in which society has changed in recent decades. While he applauds the ways in which various movements have sought to better meet the needs of young people, he cautions that these movements should be carried out with a closer connection to the larger Church community. He advocates viewing young people themselves as agents of youth min-

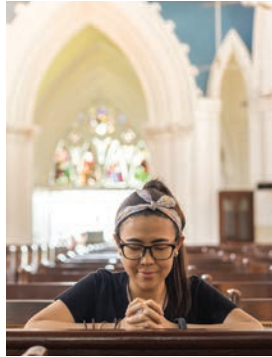
istry, citing their boldness and creativity. He encourages those involved in youth ministry to be flexible enough to meet the needs of young people as they arise. He extrapolates on “two main courses of action” in youth ministry: “One is *outreach*, the way we attract new young people to an experience of the Lord. The other is *growth*, the way we help those who have already had that experience to mature in it” (209).

Chapter Eight — “Vocation”

Here, Pope Francis discusses vocation in the broad sense of God’s call in our lives, and in a more specific sense of how we are called to participate in the mission of the Church through service to others. The pope states that responding to our vocation means “finding our true selves in the light of God and letting our lives flourish and bear fruit” (257). He discusses specific types of vocation, including vocation to love and family, work, and consecrated life.

Chapter Nine — “Discernment”

The final chapter in *Christus Vivit* is on discernment. Here, Pope Francis highlights the importance of prayer and people who can listen and accompany the one who is discerning, including friends, priests, and religious. He also offers several questions to assist young people in the discernment of their vocation, as well as some necessary skills for those who are helping others discern.



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A GREAT GIFT

With his words of wisdom and encouragement to young people, Pope Francis has shown himself to be a true father and pastor, calling them to be all they can be, and pointing out the unique gifts they can offer the Church. He closes the apostolic exhortation by reminding young people, “The Church needs your momentum, your intuitions, your faith. We need them!” (299).

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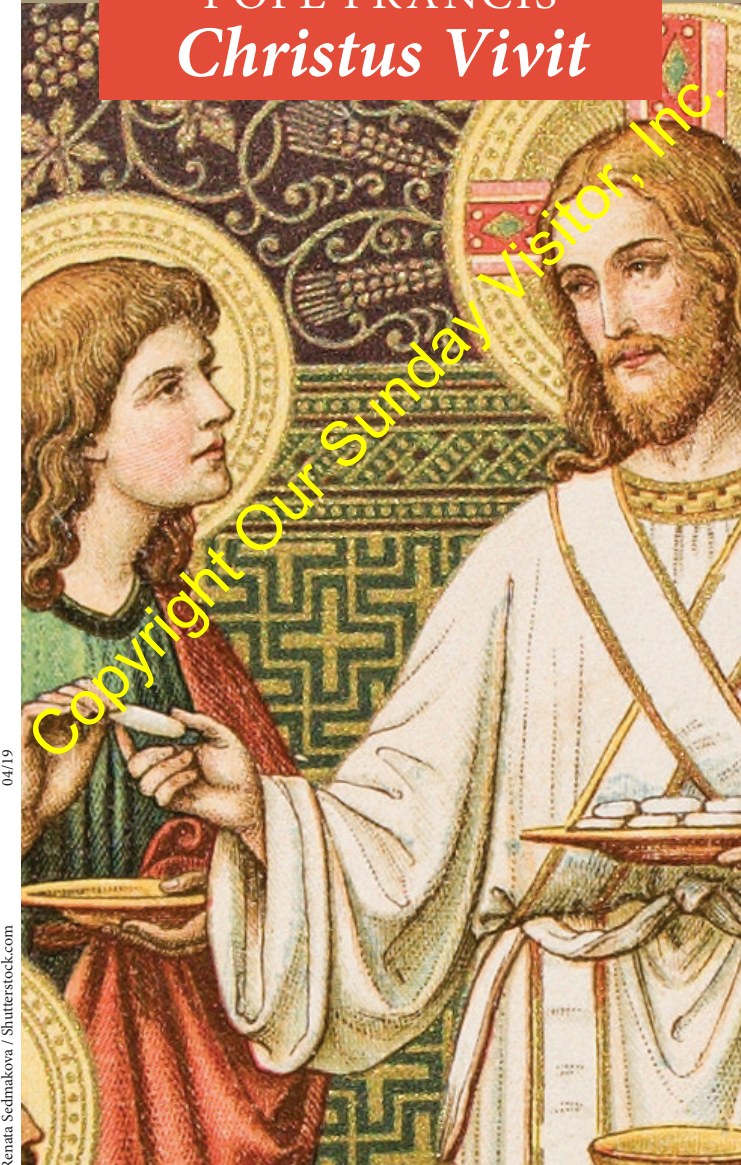
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TO YOUNG PEOPLE AND TO THE ENTIRE PEOPLE OF GOD

POPE FRANCIS
Christus Vivit



04/19

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CHRISTUS VIVIT

Apostolic Exhortation
of Pope Francis

“Christ is alive! He is our hope, and in a wonderful way he brings youth to our world, and everything he touches becomes young, new, full of life. The very first words, then, that I would like to say to every young Christian are these: Christ is alive and he wants you to be alive!” (*Christus Vivit*, 1)

These are the opening lines of *Christus Vivit*, the new apostolic exhortation by Pope Francis “to Young People, and to the Entire People of God.” An apostolic exhortation is a document from the pope. It is often written, as in this case, to communicate the conclusions the pope has reached following a synod of bishops.

Pope Francis has had a special relationship with young people in the Church since the beginning of his pontificate. He attended his first World Youth Day in Brazil in July 2013, just four months after his installation. Since then, Pope Francis has met with young people of the Church at World Youth Day in Kraków, Poland, in 2016 and in Panama City, Panama, in 2019. In 2018, Pope Francis called a synod of bishops on “Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment.” The purpose of this worldwide meeting of Church leaders and young people was to help the Church examine “how she can lead young people to recognize and accept the call to the fullness of life and love, and to ask young people to help her in identifying the most effective ways to announce the Good News today” (from the Introduction of the *Preparatory Document of the XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment*).

This exhortation summarizes Pope Francis’ reflections on the work of the synod. It is divided into an introduction and nine chapters that cover different aspects of the message Pope Francis wishes to convey to young people (typically defined in the Church as persons 16 to 29 years old) and to the larger Church, particularly those who serve this age group in ministry.

Introduction

In the opening paragraphs, Pope Francis explains that he is writing especially to Christian young people, but also “to the entire People of God, pastors and faithful alike, since all of us are challenged and urged to reflect both on the young and for the young” (CV, 3). He adds that he will be addressing some sections directly to young people and offering other thoughts as reflections for the whole Church. While Pope Francis says he cannot adequately summarize all of the conclusions of the synod (and he refers the reader to the Final Document for this purpose), he states that he has tried to focus in this exhortation on the proposals of the synod that he found most significant, adding that his words “will echo the myriad voices of believers the world over who made their opinions known to the Synod” (4), a reference not only to those who participated in the proceedings, but also to those who answered the extensive survey conducted in the months leading up to the synod.

Chapter One — “What Does the Word of God Have to Say about Young People?”

In the first chapter, Pope Francis delves into “the richness of the sacred Scriptures” (5), recounting passages from both the Old and New Testaments in which young people figure prominently. He reflects on the stories of Joseph, Gideon, Samuel, David, Solomon, Jeremiah, and Ruth. Francis then turns to the New Testament, where he uses several passages from the teachings of Jesus and from the epistles to discuss the difference between a young heart and a heart grown old. He describes the importance of keeping “young hearts” that are “ready to change, to turn back, get up and learn from life” (12). However, he also emphasizes the importance of respecting one’s elders, being “open to the future, yet still capable of learning something from the experience of others” (16).

Chapter Two — “Jesus, Ever Young”

Pope Francis now turns his attention to the person of Jesus Christ, whom he calls “ever young.” He points out that Jesus was crucified while still a young man, and he began his public mission “in the prime of life” (23). The pope recounts the Gospel account of Jesus’ youth, demonstrating from the Gospel stories that Jesus was an integral part of his community in Nazareth as he prepared to carry out his mission. In reflecting on these aspects of the youth of Jesus, Pope Francis calls for youth programs that strengthen and accompany our young people, and “impel them to encounter others, to engage in generous service, in mission” (30). He also calls them to assist the Church in maintaining a youthful spirit, saying, “we must dare to be different, to point to ideals other than those of this world” (36). The chapter closes with a discussion of Mary and a number of young saints.

Chapter Three — “You Are the ‘Now’ of God”

Having provided examples from the Scriptures and the lives of the saints, Pope Francis now turns his attention to the lives of young people today, whom he says are not only “the future of our world,” but “its present” (64). He outlines a few of the different contexts of youths around the world, including some of the most serious problems young people are facing, such as violence, poverty, and exploitation. He also discusses three key themes that emerged from the synod — the digital landscape, migration, and the abuse crisis in the Church. Regarding the latter, he quotes the Final Document of the synod, saying that abuse causes “sufferings that can last a lifetime” and represent “a serious obstacle” to the mission of the Church (95).



Chapter Four — “A Great Message for All Young People”

This chapter is dedicated to three truths Pope Francis wishes to convey to young people. The first is, “God loves you” (112). The second is, “Christ, out of love, sacrificed himself completely in order to save you” (118). The third truth highlighted in this chapter is, “Christ is alive!” (124). “In these three truths,” Pope Francis writes, “we see God the Father and Jesus. Wherever the Father and the Son are, there too is the Holy Spirit. He is the one who quietly opens hearts to receive that message. He keeps alive our hope of salvation, and he will help you grow in joy if you are open to his working” (130).

Chapter Five — “Paths of Youth”

Pope Francis discusses various ways that responding to the Gospel message can affect the lives of young people, including giving them dreams and the courage to try new things and choose their paths in life. He also points out that young people who are responding to the Gospel do not stay isolated. Rather, they build communities based on Christian friendship; they bring people together despite their differences; they go out and do good in the world, taking the Christian values of justice and charity with them; and they spread the Good News to others.

