

CHRIST IS ALIVE CHRISTUS VIVIT CHAPTER SUMMARIES

Christus vivit is a post-synodal apostolic exhortation of Pope Francis, written in response to the Fifteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, on young people, faith and vocational discernment, held from 3 to 28 October 2018

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CHAPTER SUMMARIES

CHAPTER ONE: WHAT DOES THE WORD OF GOD HAVE TO SAY ABOUT YOUNG PEOPLE

Note:

Christ is Alive (Christus Vivit) is the post-synodal apostolic exhortation that has been written after the Synod on Young People, Faith and Vocations in October 2018. There are a number of documents that have been released around the Synod. The Pre-Synodal documents and the Final Document produced directly after the Synod are recommended texts if you are really interested in discovering more.

Christus Vivit is addressed not only to young people, but the whole of the Church. Pope Francis opens by directly introducing the document and commenting on how he attempts to summarize ideas from the final document as well as comment. In Chapter One, Pope Francis addresses how young people and youth are addressed in the scriptures, citing references in both the New and Old Testaments. It is not an exhaustive list as there is scriptural reference throughout the document. Pope Francis comments throughout the chapter, highlighting that young people should have hope, not be discouraged and respect those elders around them. "If you have lost your inner vitality, your dreams, your enthusiasm, your optimism and your generosity, Jesus stands before you as once he stood before the dead son of the widow, and with all the power of his resurrection he urges you: "Young man, I say to you, arise!" (Luke 7:14)" [CV 20]

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CHAPTER TWO: JESUS, EVER YOUNG

In Chapter two, Pope Francis goes back to Jesus' youth, again using scripture to paint a picture of Christ's early days as his "training" for a life of mission. He uses Jesus' life growing up as a model for those who work with young people to recognize them and acknowledge them. He talks about how the Church should be inspired by youth and keep them in mind at all time. Pope Francis comments on how the Synod recognized that the Church has no meaning for "a substantial amount of young people" [CV 40] and for some others, young people want a church that is "credible to young people" and reacts and supports women and young people. The next part of chapter two goes in directly to talk about the influence of Mary and her commitment to God. He talks of how she was a "a young woman whose heart overflowed with joy" [CV 46]. He comments on her role as a mother and protector. "Thus Mary illumines anew our youth" [CV 48]. The end of chapter two references many young saints as witnesses to the faith in particular "when they open themselves up to encounter Christ" [CV 49]. "May these and so many other young people who perhaps in silence and hiddenness lived in the Gospel to the full, intercede for the Church, so that she may be full of joyous, courageous and committed young people who can offer the world new testimonies of holiness." [CV 63].

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CHAPTER THREE: YOU ARE THE “NOW” OF GOD

Chapter three paints a positive and glowing picture of youth, reinforcing that they are the Church of today and comments on how the Synod recognizes the many different contexts that young people come from. In particular it talks about the world that young people live in... often one of violence, “marginalization and social exclusion” (CV 74). It reminds those of us who are more fortunate to consider and have compassion for the young who have more challenges in life. “If tears do not come, ask the Lord to give you the grace to weep for the suffering of others.” (CV 76). This chapter focusses on modern culture and young people and the challenges that brings – image, identity and the digital age. Pope Francis speaks about positives of enhanced communication and engagement but also warns of its limitations, “blocking the development of authentic interpersonal relationships,” cyberbullying and access to online gambling and pornography. The next part of Christus Vivit comments on the challenges faced by young migrants followed by a frank and open commentary on the scourge of sexual abuse committed by those in the Church and the deception of those in authority and the rise of clericalism. Pope Francis finishes the chapter by reminding us to find truth and joy in Christ. “This is especially the case with young people, for whenever you are united, you have marvellous strength. Whenever you are enthused about life in common, you are capable of great sacrifices for others and for the community. Isolation, on the other hand, saps our strength and exposes us to the worst evils of our time. (CV 110).

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CHAPTER FOUR: A GREAT MESSAGE FOR ALL YOUNG PEOPLE

In this chapter, Pope Francis directs his message to young people, encouraging them to find God's love and reminding them that God values and loves each individual person with pure joy. Pope Francis then talks of Christ's sacrifice and love, "The same Christ who, by his cross, saved us from our sins, today continues to save and redeem us by the power of his total self-surrender. Look to his cross, cling to him, let him save you..." (CV 119) This chapter is one of great love and enthusiasm as it highlights and talks directly to "Christ is alive!" It talks very clearly about Christ as our friend, great presence and companion. The chapter finishes with the third truth, the Holy Spirit and its ability to move and guide you. Pope Francis urges you to be open to the Spirit and the love God has for us, "He is the source of youth at its best." (CV 133)

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CHAPTER FIVE: PATHS OF YOUTH

Chapter five focusses on what it is like to be a young person drawing from Pope Francis' personal perspective. When asked what he sees in a young person, Pope Francis responds, "...a young person stands on two feet as adults do, but unlike adults, whose feet are parallel, he always has one foot forward, ready to set out, to spring ahead. Always racing onward. To talk about young people is to talk about promise and joy." (CV 139) This whole chapter is directed quite pointedly at young people, addressing them directly and encouraging them in the dreams and hopes. The chapter also goes on to talk poignantly about friendship; about Christ's friendship and its importance, stability and closeness. Pope Francis talks about becoming older and holding onto a "youthfulness". In his own words, "When I began my ministry as Pope, the Lord broadened my horizons and granted me renewed youth." (CV 160). The end of the chapter talks about social justice, the common good, compassion and the mission of Catholics, "Filled with the love of Christ, young people are called to be witnesses of the Gospel wherever they find themselves, by the way they live." (CV 175)

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CHAPTER SIX: YOUNG PEOPLE WITH ROOTS

Chapter six actually serves as a warning... it directly asks young people to be wary of the “false cult of youth”; a generation of young people without roots that ground them and are easily manipulated. Pope Francis talks about the importance of both family and the elderly. How their wisdom and influence is key to developing those roots. He acknowledges that young people will not always agree with older generations but that there is great treasure in a common sharing of wisdom. “If we journey together, young and old, we can be firmly rooted in the present, and from here, revisit the past and look to the future.” (CV 199). The brief chapter finishes up by highlighting that together we can renew each other. “Roots are not anchors chaining us to past times and preventing us from facing the present and creating something new. Instead they are a fixing point from which we can grow and meet new challenges.” (CV 200).

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CHAPTER SEVEN: YOUTH MINISTRY

Pope Francis addresses formal youth ministry directly in chapter seven, asking it to look to the needs of young people and be guided by youth. Rather than giving a blueprint to youth ministry, he outlines two main courses of action, “outreach” and “growth”. Outreach relies on the young people engaging with other young people to draw them in as well as highlighting that a dialogue with the youth needs to be full of love and integrity. In growth, Pope Francis talks about focusing on trying to “awaken and consolidate the great experiences that sustain Christian life” (CV 212) rather than a focus on the Church’s stance on doctrine and moral issues. He certainly does not imply that we should ignore them, just focus on the development of the kerygma. He goes on to talk about welcoming young people and being inclusive in a homely, relaxed community for all. “Then too, the person-to-person contact indispensable for passing on the message can happen, something whose place cannot be taken by any pastoral resource or strategy.” (CV 218). The next section focuses directly on “Youth ministry in educational institutions” commenting on the need to have a balance of both faith and real-world experiences, “For one of the greatest joys that any educator can have is to see a student turn into a strong, well-integrated person, a leader, someone prepared to give.” Pope Francis highlights the importance of the education system as an essential place for evangelization but he does not claim it to be an easy task... “is your great challenge: to respond to the crippling refrains of cultural consumerism with thoughtful and firm decisions, with research, knowledge and sharing.” (CV 223)

The second half of the chapter talks firstly about the kinds of things young people engage with; art, music and sports and our need to grow and engage in these areas. He continues to talk about finding ways to have a youth ministry for all, highlighting the need to have leaders that can attract and engage with all different groups and not be elitist. The chapter finishes by commenting on the connection between young people and a desire to be missionary and in that regard, also the need to be accompanied by adults, their family and their community. The need for qualified lay and religious to accompany young people through their faith and life is important and Pope Francis finishes the chapter by highlighting that “the Church’s educational institutions are undoubtedly a communal setting for accompaniment; they can offer guidance to many young people, especially when they “seek to welcome all young people, regardless of their religious choices, cultural origins and personal, family or social situations.” (CV 247).

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CHAPTER EIGHT: VOCATION

This chapter talks broadly about the vocation of all to grow and mature for the glory of God. It breaks vocations into five sections, a call to God's friendship, to others, to family, to work and lastly to special consecration. The first, to God's call to friendship is what Pope Francis refers to as the "basis of all else" (CV 250). Without a successful encounter with Christ, it is difficult to grow in our lives. By being there for others, young people are answering the call to be a missionary disciple and it "gives greater value to everything you do." (CV 256). Issues that were of major concern to young people at the Synod were forming a family and work. In this next section, Pope Francis talks directly of young people's desire for love and family and the importance of love, marriage and responsibility. The next issue in work, points to the different complexities experienced across the world but highlights, "When we discover that God is calling us to something, that this or that is what we were made for – whether it be nursing, carpentry, communication, engineering, teaching, art or any other kind of work – then we will be able to summon up our best capacities for sacrifice, generosity and dedication." (CV 273). The chapter wraps up by commenting on vocations to the priesthood and the religious life, asking young people to be open to follow a call from God.

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CHAPTER NINE: DISCERNMENT

In this final chapter, Pope Francis talks about the process of discernment, looking at the importance of silent prayer to help interpret God's language. It instructs us to listen as well as have questions in our mind to help us focus, "We need to ask: Do I know myself, quite apart from my illusions and emotions? Do I know what brings joy or sorrow to my heart? What are my strengths and weaknesses? These questions immediately give rise to others: How can I serve people better and prove most helpful to our world and to the Church? What is my real place in this world? What can I offer to society? Even more realistic questions then follow: Do I have the abilities needed to offer this kind of service? Could I develop those abilities?" (CV 285). The process of discernment is about asking and listening to the call of Christ, much like that of one of our friends, "I want you to know that, when the Lord thinks of each of you and what he wants to give you, he sees you as his close friend." (CV 288). The chapter then goes on once more to talk a little of the importance of accompaniment, focusing on listening as an individual, discerning the temptations along the path and then perceiving the drive behind the intention. This chapter talks to both the person discerning and those that accompany them. *Christus Vivit* concludes by addressing young people with: "Dear young people, my joyful hope is to see you keep running the race before you, outstripping all those who are slow or fearful. Keep running, "attracted by the face of Christ, whom we love so much, whom we adore in the Holy Eucharist and acknowledge in the flesh of our suffering brothers and sisters. May the Holy Spirit urge you on as you run this race. The Church needs your momentum, your intuitions, your faith. We need them! And when you arrive where we have not yet reached, have the patience to wait for us." (CV 299)