



# **CHRISTUS VIVIT:**

## **THE PATHWAY TO ACCOMPANIMENT**

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**VIVE CRISTO:** EL CAMINO HACIA EL ACOMPAÑAMIENTO

A Resource for Journeying with Youth and Young Adults

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*Christus Vivit: The Pathway to Accompaniment*

**A Resource for Journeying with Youth and Young Adults**

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**We are grateful to His Holiness, Pope Francis**, for guiding the Catholic Church through the synodal process that led up to his landmark 2019 apostolic exhortation, *Christus Vivit*, which is the foundation for this study guide and for our ministries with the young.

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## Editor’s Note

References to “the Synod” refer to the XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on “Young People, Faith, and Vocational Discernment,” that took place in Rome, Oct. 3-28, 2018.

The Synod addressed people ages 16-29 years. In the original Spanish translation of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Christus Vivit*, Pope Francis uses the word “jóvenes,” which has been translated as either “young people” or “youth,” in the official English translation. However, in the context of the United States, the USCCB recognizes that “jóvenes” includes both “youth and young adults;” that is adolescents (13-18) and young adults (18-39). Furthermore, “pastoral juvenil” in the original *Christus Vivit* translation refers to the broad understanding of the Church’s ministries to both youth and young adults (ages 13-39), though in the United States, “pastoral juvenil hispana” refers to ministry with Hispanic-Latinos approximately ages 16-30.

Therefore, in this document quotes from *Christus Vivit* that mention “youth” are immediately followed with “[and young adults]” to illuminate the focus of the exhortation more fully as it is understood in the context of the United States.

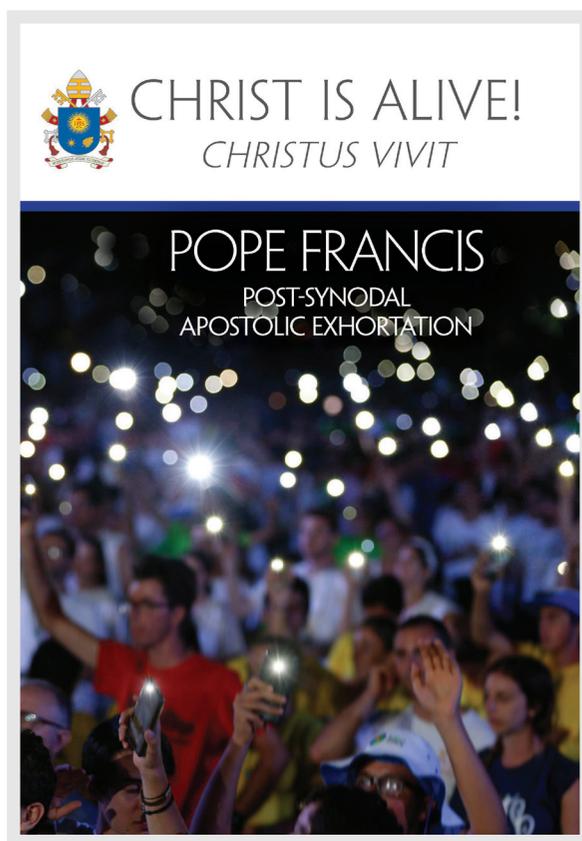
Finally, in *Christus Vivit*, Pope Francis frequently draws inspiration from rich resources of the Catholic tradition, from other Vatican documents, papal homilies, other episcopal conferences from around the world, to the voices of young people in the Synod *Final Document*. Therefore, the reader will see periodically a second reference with the excerpts from *Christus Vivit* to note the original source from which Pope Francis draws. The list of abbreviations clarifies these parenthetical references.

## Abbreviations

AL	<i>Amoris Laetitia</i> : The Joy of Love
CV	<i>Christus Vivit</i> : Christ is Alive!
EG	<i>Evangelli Gaudium</i> : The Joy of the Gospel
EN	<i>Evangellii Nuntiandi</i> : Evangelization in the Modern World
FD	<i>Final Document</i> of the Fifteenth (XV) Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops
GE	<i>Gaudete et Exsultate</i> : Rejoice and Be Glad
PD	Pre-Synodal <i>Final Document</i> for the preparation of the XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops
CCC	<i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i>
MYMW	Second Vatican Ecumenical Council: Message to Young Men and Women
WYDP	Homily at Final Mass, XXXIV World Youth Day, Panama
WYDR	Address at Vigil, XXVIII World Youth Day, Rio de Janeiro

## Introduction and Overview

“Christ is alive!” As Pope Francis began his apostolic exhortation to and about youth and young adults with this joyful exclamation, he culminated a synodal process which engaged young people at every step, amplifying their voices and encouraging their presence and leadership. That landmark document, *Christus Vivit*, is rich in wisdom for all people of faith, but especially reads as a letter of love to young people and those who serve them. In response to the call to go forth proclaiming the risen Christ to and with all young people, the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, in collaboration with United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) National Advisory Team on Young Adult Ministry within its Secretariat of Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth (LMFLY), has developed this study guide for Pope Francis’ *Christus Vivit*, the 2019 apostolic exhortation following the XV Ordinary Synod of Bishops on “Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment,” a process that took place from 2017 to 2018.



*Christus Vivit* cover image © United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), 2019.  
Visit <http://store.usccb.org/> to purchase your copy of *Christus Vivit*.

Rather than proceeding in chronological order through *Christus Vivit*, these ten sections focus on broad themes woven throughout the apostolic exhortation. Through this lens, the reader will be able to see the aerial view of ministry to and with young people. This resource, then, becomes a comprehensive toolkit which a reader may utilize as a study guide or individualized resource.

Each section in this study guide is designed in a two-fold model: conceptual and practical.

The conceptual first half begins with key quotes, pulled from *Christus Vivit* in its entirety, demonstrating how the topic for reflection is a current which runs through the entire apostolic exhortation. The quotes are followed by a reflective summary and insight in which the theme is unpacked, with a particular lens toward the ministerial application thereof.

The practical second half of each section begins with faith sharing, orienting the theme in Scripture or other spiritual writings, and discussion. The topic must be oriented in the spiritual to move into the practical, which follows. The practical implications stem from the preceding discussion, and are written intentionally so as to be applied in any community which might benefit from this resource. By beginning with initial steps, a ripple effect is modeled: small central starts which grow outward into local community applications, then collaboration more broadly. Finally, each Part ends with prayer.

In using this resource, a reader might consider how each part found in each section could be extrapolated and used in its own right. For example, a reader who has not dived deeply into *Christus Vivit* might benefit from focusing on the summary and insight areas for a comprehensive analysis of the themes of the exhortation. For a reader more familiar with the document, the practical applications might be a more specialized tool. The prayers and faith sharing parts could also be used for a spiritual experience, such as a *Christus Vivit* book club for a small church community. Thus, this resource may be used as an individual read – whether in its entirety or pulling from specific themes – or as a tool for a group study of *Christus Vivit*. While ministry personnel will benefit especially from using this, all readers with concern for young people in the Church are most welcome to journey through this apostolic exhortation, as it is written “to young people and to the entire people of God.”

Our prayer is that this resource will help pastoral leaders better engage with youth and young adults, and that it will draw readers into a deeper understanding of Pope Francis’ *Christus Vivit* and, through their love and accompaniment of young people, ignite the flames and fan the fires in the hearts of young people to be protagonists of their own journeys and agents in bringing about the kingdom of God.



**Theme 1:**

# **The Holiness of the Young**

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**LA SANTIDAD DE LOS JÓVENES**

*The balm of holiness generated by the good lives of so many young people can heal the wounds of the Church and of the world, bringing us back to that fullness of love to which we have always been called. (CV 50, FD 167)*

# Introduction

*Christus Vivit* highlights three main points in regards to the holiness of young people. First and foremost is the fact that Jesus himself sanctified youth and young adulthood by being our ultimate example of a holy young person (CV 22-29, 30-33). Second, the many young saints who lived holy lives serve as an inspiration to all young people to discover their particular call to holiness (CV 50-63,162). Third, the witness that young people give beckons each of us individually, and also collectively as a Church, towards greater holiness and to remain “ever young” (CV 9, 13, 34, 37, 160-161, 210).

# Key Quotes

*All emphasis added*

It is important to realize that **Jesus was a young person**. He gave his life when he was, in today’s terms, a young adult. (CV 23)

Becoming a saint means **becoming more fully yourself**, becoming what the Lord wished to dream and create, and not a photocopy. Your life ought to be a prophetic stimulus to others and leave a mark on this world, the unique mark that only you can leave. Whereas if you simply copy someone else, you will deprive this earth, and heaven too, of something that no one else can offer. (CV 162)

**Young people can help keep her [the Church] young**. They can stop her from becoming corrupt; they can keep her moving forward, prevent her from being proud and sectarian, help her to be poorer and to bear better witness, to take the side of the poor and the outcast, to fight for justice and humbly to let herself be challenged. (CV 37)

Anyone called to be a parent, pastor or guide to young people must have the farsightedness to appreciate the little flame that continues to burn, the fragile reed that is shaken but not broken (cf. Is. 42:3). The ability to discern pathways where others only see walls, to recognize potential where others see only peril. That is how God the Father see[s] things; he knows how to cherish and nurture the seeds of goodness sown in the hearts of the young. **Each young person’s heart should thus be considered “holy ground,”** a bearer of seeds of divine life, before which we must “take off our shoes” in order to draw near and enter more deeply into the Mystery. (CV 67)

### Summary and Insight

Though all Christ-followers are called to holiness, our youthful years are a special time for “training” in holiness and preparing to carry out God’s plan (CV 27). Jesus Christ himself prepared to do the Father’s will as he grew in “wisdom, age, and favor before God” in his adolescent years (Lk. 2:52). He also was a young adult when his ministry began and when he offered up his very life for the salvation of the world (CV 23). So, **Jesus forever sanctified youth and young adulthood** by living his mission on this earth as a holy young person. But even though Jesus is God and holy, Pope Francis reminds us in *Christus Vivit* not to think of him as a withdrawn or self-absorbed young person, because according to scripture, it appears Jesus related normally to others and seemed just like any other young person in his town until his ministry began (CV 28).

The lives of the many young saints mentioned in CV 51-62 inspire young people to live bold lives of faith and to be set apart from the world for God. However, we cannot aim to live as a particular saint lived or we will miss the mark. Rather, we must seek to live the particular path of **holiness** God has laid out for us based on our unique personality, gifts, and place and time in history. Pope Francis stresses this point when he urges young people to consider holiness as becoming more fully who you are, becoming the person the Lord created you to be (CV 162).

Rather than being perfect and never sinning, as we often define holiness, Pope Francis writes in his apostolic exhortation on the call to holiness that “holiness is nothing other than **charity lived to the full**”(GE 21). Holiness cannot be reduced to just personal piety, we are called to engage in the **social aspects of holiness**. Living charity to the full necessitates active participation in the world with love. Modeling holiness in society means caring for and defending immigrants, the unborn, those with special needs, the poor, the hungry, the lonely, the uneducated, the imprisoned, the heart broken, the homeless, etc. We are also called to **social holiness** by engaging in civic duties, caring for our common home, and seeking Christian reform to our political systems.

In this way, personal holiness is united with social holiness, as we cannot grow in holiness alone. We bring holiness into the world through the quality of our relationships and our responsibility to infuse charity into society. In order to help young people grow in holiness as defined by Pope Francis, we need to fervently look for ways to help them discover who God truly created them to be, identify what change in society they deeply long for, and give them more opportunities to live charity to the full.

Pope Francis emphasizes the reality that young people make the best missionaries to other young people when he says, “as for outreach, I trust that young people themselves know how best to find appealing ways to come together”

(CV 210). However, Pope Francis also emphasizes that we need young people not just for evangelizing other young people, but for **revitalizing the entire Church**. To be young means you are constantly growing and learning, and the Church looks to the young as her reminder to not become stagnant in her ways or atrophied in her love. In this way, the Church will remain “ever young” because “true youth means having a heart capable of loving” (CV 13). As Saint Augustine of Hippo famously says, the Church is both “beauty ever ancient and ever new” and she remains “ever new” in as much as she remains “ever young.”

Overall, one message is quite clear in *Christus Vivit* regarding holiness: Young people have much to teach us about living holy lives. Additionally, “each young person’s heart should be considered ‘**holy ground**’” where the seeds of divine life are planted in fertile soil (CV 67). With this reference, it must be clarified that we must be mindful to not place unreasonable expectations of perfection on young people. On the contrary, the community must “avoid constantly judging them or demanding of them a perfection beyond their years” (CV 243). Indeed, we cannot neglect to mention mercy and forgiveness when speaking of “the holiness of the young,” for it is true that “Jesus praises the young sinner who returned to the right path over the brother who considered himself faithful, yet lacked the spirit of love and mercy” (CV 12). The holy ground metaphor, rather than expecting undue perfection, is meant to speak to the esteem, wonder, and intentionality with which we must approach young hearts. As a church, we are called to venture to enter into this “holy ground” that is the heart of a young person.

## Faith Sharing

*Read the following Scriptures and answer the reflection questions below.*

- ➔ Ah, Lord GOD!” I said, “I do not know how to speak. I am too young!” But the LORD answered me, do not say, “I am too young.” To whomever I send you, you shall go; whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you.” (Jeremiah 1:6-8)
- ➔ “Let no one have contempt for your youth (or “youthfulness”), but set an example for those who believe, in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity.” (1 Timothy 4:12)

1. What do these passages reveal about God’s attitude towards young people?
2. What are some ways that Jesus embodied these passages when he was a young person?
3. Who is a young person in your life that you look to as an example in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity?

### For Discussion

1. What implications does the knowledge that Jesus sanctified youth and young adulthood have for those of us working in ministry with the young?
2. What practical ideas come to mind for how your community can help young people discover who God truly made them to be? What are ways that the Church can better encourage young people to live holy lives starting in their youth or in young adulthood?
3. What are some concrete service opportunities for young people to live charity in your local area or parish community? What are some practical ways to nurture the sharp sense of social justice in young people and support their involvement in social and political issues to create a more just, charitable society?
4. What gaps do you recognize in your parish or diocese where youth and young adults are not involved in the prioritizing, planning, or implementation of ministry outreach to other young people? What are ways to more intentionally invite young people into that process and create pathways for young people to grow in holiness?
5. What do you think the Church can learn from young people amidst the current struggles and challenges she is facing?
6. What does it mean to you to approach the hearts of young people as if you were “walking on holy ground” (CV 67)? How can this concept be better integrated into ministry with the young?

### Practical Implications – The Pathway to Accompaniment

*After each one of these, discern within your community how this applies specifically to your context. Some suggestions are linked here; however, this is not intended to be an exhaustive resource list.*

#### INITIAL STEPS

- ➔ Uncover the conceptions and ideals that young people have regarding the topic of holiness by taking a preliminary survey asking young people what holiness means to them and/or ask them to name someone they know who exhibits holiness.

- ➔ Explore the following resource to learn more about the call to holiness according to Pope Francis: [Apostolic Exhortation: Gaudete Et Exsultate: The Call to Holiness in Today's World](#) and reflect particularly on his example in paragraph 16.
- ➔ Consider the holistic dimension of your own call to holiness, involving both personal and communal aspects, exploring how true holiness extends from personal devotions into our relationships with family, friends, co-workers, community, and society.
- ➔ Meditate on Luke 2-4, key moments in the life of young Jesus leading up to his public ministry.

### LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION

- ➔ Together with the young people of your parish, discern a regular weekly or monthly apostolate for your youth or young adult group to pour into and give of themselves in service and charity.
- ➔ Host an evening focused on the theme of holiness. Confront any false ideals of what holiness should look like for a young person versus how Jesus actually lived as a holy young person (See CV 28). Consider playing a few songs (on the theme of holiness) at the end of the evening and allow a few moments of silence for the young people to journal what stirs in their heart. [Some questions](#) for contemplation could include:
  - What is holiness?
  - What or who helps me pursue holiness in my daily life?
  - What changes is God asking me to make to grow in holiness?

When the evening is over, consider offering this free, bilingual [30 Day Prayer Journal with Reflections on Holiness](#) from the Grotto Network as a way to encourage young adults to continue to reflect on holiness at home; host a [Life Night on Holiness](#) with youth or or ask them to write reflections on [these five things by Life Teen](#) that get in the way of growing in holiness.

- ➔ Create parish and diocesan councils for youth and young adult ministry where young people can articulate their ideals for how best to reach out to other young people with the Gospel and allow them to be part of the actual implementation of that outreach.

### COLLABORATIVE CONNECTIONS

- ➔ Intentionally seek to have young people actively involved in each parish ministry and committee in ways which maximize their gifts so that their youthfulness can keep revitalizing the Church in broad terms, not solely in the arenas of youth and young adult ministry.

- ➔ Create a list of qualified mentors and/or trained spiritual directors in each deanery of your diocese to serve as a resource for young people seeking to discover more of who God has called them to be and who are looking to grow in holiness to live out their particular mission. *Note: This may require first offering training for mentors and/or spiritual directors in your area.*
- ➔ Discuss among your staff or create a pastoral plan to ensure your team understands how best to mentor young people in leadership roles, noting how to address any challenges through accompaniment and pastoral care. As Pope Francis writes, “Sometimes mentors are put on a pedestal, and when they fall, it may have a devastating impact on young people’s ability to continue to engage with the Church” (CV 246). Together with key players, anticipate that sensitive or challenging issues may arise so you can be prepared for how to respond. Some ideas might include:
  - Reflect on what reconciliation looks like with a leader with a group and outline steps that the community can take to show restored trust to ensure someone does not feel shunned.
  - Develop ways for your staff and ministry partners to model mercy and reconciliation that include an invitation to “come home” as the prodigal son did as well as responding to those young people wounded and discouraged in the process.

## Prayer

Saint Augustine of Hippo reminds us that it is never too late in life to pursue holiness, and that even the young people farthest from a life of virtue are not without hope for becoming holy, and even becoming saints. With hope in our hearts, we close this Part by [praying the words of Saint Augustine](#), asking the Holy Spirit to assist us in being holy in every way:

*Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy. Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy. Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love but what is holy. Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy. Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy.*

*Through the intercession of Saint Augustine, who responded to his call to holiness later in life, together with all the saints who lived holiness from their youth, we pray, Lord, for the grace to always seek holiness and to trust in your mercy when we fall short.*

*May we be, to the extent your grace allows, holy as you are holy.*

*We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.*



Theme 2:

# The Spirit of Synodality

EL ESPÍRITU DE SÍNDALIDAD

*Ministry has to be synodal; it should involve a “journeying together” that values the charisms that the Spirit bestows in accordance with the vocation and role of each of the Church’s members, through a process of co-responsibility... Motivated by this spirit, we can move towards a participatory and co-responsible Church, one capable of appreciating its own rich variety, gratefully accepting the contributions of the lay faithful, including young people and women, consecrated persons, as well as groups, associations and movements. No one should be excluded or exclude themselves. (CV 206)*

## Introduction

In order to explore the spirit of synodality in *Christus Vivit*, it helps to begin with the concept of synodality itself: What does **synodality** mean? In the context of the Church, it refers to a process of dialogue and collaboration, with listening and discernment as its hallmark. Through Synodality, Pope Francis envisions not only the consultative and collaborative relationships with the Synod of Bishops and the Pope, but includes a more direct consultation from the lay faithful highlighting the importance of communion between local and universal church. The Synod modeled this process of deep listening, discernment, and co-responsibility to illuminate conversations around young people, their lives, and their participation in the Church so that we may do the same in our faith communities.

We can model the spirit of synodality in serving youth and young adults through synodal **places**, synodal **processes**, and synodal **dialogues**.

## Key Quotes

*All emphasis added*

The Holy Spirit wants to make us come out of ourselves, to embrace others with love and to seek their good. That is why **it is always better to live the faith together** and to show our love by living in community and sharing with other young people our affection, our time, our faith and our troubles. The Church offers many different possibilities for living our faith in community, for everything is easier when we do it together. (CV 164)

At the same time, we should take into greater consideration those practices that have shown their value – the methods, language and aims that have proved truly effective in bringing young people to Christ and the Church. **It does not matter where they are coming from or what labels they have received, whether “conservative” or “liberal”, “traditional” or “progressive”**. What is important is that we make use of everything that has borne good fruit and effectively communicates the joy of the Gospel. (CV 205)

In fact, Jesus did not grow up in a narrow and stifling relationship with Mary and Joseph, but readily interacted with the wider family, the relatives of his parents and their friends” (AL 384). Hence we can understand why, when he returned from his pilgrimage to Jerusalem, his parents readily thought that, as a twelve-year-old boy (cf. Lk 2:42), he was wandering freely among the crowd, even though they did not see him for an entire day: “supposing him to be in the group of travellers, they went a day’s journey (Lk 2:44). **Surely, they assumed, Jesus was there, mingling with the others, joking with other young people, listening to the adults tell stories and sharing the joys and sorrows of the group. Indeed, the Greek word that Luke uses to describe the group – synodía – clearly evokes a larger “community on a journey” of which the Holy Family is a part.** Thanks to the trust of his parents, Jesus can move freely and learn to journey with others. (CV 29)

Youth [and young adult] ministry has to be synodal; it should involve a **“journeying together”** that values “the charisms that the Spirit bestows in accordance with the vocation and role of each of the Church’s members, through a **process of co-responsibility**... Motivated by this spirit, we can move towards a participatory and co-responsible Church, one capable of appreciating its own rich variety, gratefully accepting the contributions of the lay faithful, including young people and women, consecrated persons, as well as groups, associations and movements. No one should be excluded or exclude themselves.” (CV 206, FD 123)

Those of us who are no longer young need to find ways of keeping close to the voices and concerns of young people. **“Drawing together creates the conditions for the Church to become a place of dialogue and a witness to life-giving fraternity”** (MYMW). We need to make more room for the voices of young people to be heard: “listening makes possible an exchange of gifts in a context of empathy... At the same time, it sets the conditions for a preaching of the Gospel that can touch the heart truly, decisively and fruitfully.” (CV 38, FD 8)

## Summary and Insight

The current situation in which young people are experiencing the formative years of their lives is one which is increasingly complicated. Both in the United States and beyond, we see that division and polarization impact society, politics, and even organized religion. While digital capacities ensure greater connectedness, it also creates a demand for instant gratification and results. The wisdom of the Church is such that the Church consistently offers what is needed throughout every era – and in this time, **synodality** is more needed than ever.

The Synod of Bishops on “Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment” modeled a process that embraced synodality. The Synod ensured the **participation** of young people at every step: from diocesan surveys, to a Pre-Synod gathering culminating in a Final Document written directly by young people, to young delegates, and to the Synod itself. It presented moments of **co-responsibility**, opening avenues for the voices of young people to be heard not as the topic of conversation but present at the table. A great sense of **hope** stemmed from this synodal process. Synodality is a necessity in the life of the Church, and if this is something the Church needs, how much more so can young people thrive in a context which is **collaborative, discerning, and journeying together?**

There are three key ways to understand and model Synodality:

- ➔ **Time:** Synodal time manifests in processes; In *Christus Vivit*, the Holy Father cites the story of the Holy Family’s pilgrimage to Jerusalem, during which Jesus (still a youth at this point) is found talking with the elders in the Temple. Part of the dearth of concern for Jesus’ whereabouts was due to the cultural context of community journeying together: “Surely, they assumed, Jesus was there, mingling with the others, joking with other young people, listening to the adults tell stories and sharing the joys and sorrows of the group. Indeed, the Greek word that Luke uses to describe the group – *synodía* – clearly evokes a larger “community on a journey” of which the Holy Family is a part.” (CV 29) This pilgrimage was a moment in which the old and young, from every corner of the community, traveled together with common purpose. When the Church makes spaces for young people as well as more seasoned members to participate in community life, we nourish the synodal processes by remembering clearly our common journey. As a popular hymn, The Servant Song, says, “We are pilgrims on a journey; we are travelers on the road; we are here to help each other walk the mile and bear the load.”
- ➔ **Place:** Synodality manifests in places where community is fostered. Community is a hallmark of the Christian life. Young people deeply crave community, and the Roman Catholic understanding of Christian life and worship can feed that need naturally. Places where young people can plug in, are invited to and can engage in community life, and offer their gifts will foster a culture of synodality which organically cultivates co-responsibility across ages and stages.

- ➔ **Depth:** Synodality manifests in the depth of dialogue and listening. Synodal dialogues must manifest in our ability to listen well to another and make space for dialogue over disagreement. We need to be willing to acknowledge that there are multiple spiritual avenues in the life of the Church which can lead a young person into a deeper relationship with Christ. When discussing different programs and resources which have experienced success with young people, Pope Francis writes that “it does not matter where they are coming from or what labels they have received, whether ‘conservative’ or ‘liberal,’ ‘traditional’ or ‘progressive.’ What is important is that we make use of everything that has borne good fruit and effectively communicates the joy of the Gospel” (CV 205). It is only through engaging with those with whom we might appear to differ that we discover our commonalities, and it begins by acknowledging mutual validity in service to young people.

These three components model that synodality is the journey itself, the community on the journey, and the dialogue held by the community on the journey - all three concurrently and yet individually. Thus, synodality is evolutionary and adaptable, informed by all of those factors, and is the model of being Church that cultivates the fullness of the Church’s capacity to serve young people.

**Synodality** may seem like a complex concept, but it is one that is so simple and strikes at the heart of the Church: creating space for voices to come together. Where better for us to begin in our own contexts than with the voices of young people?

## Faith Sharing

*Read the following Scriptures and answer the reflection questions below.*

In the Scriptures, the early Christian community formed and grew through a synodal journey, as seen in these passages. Read what Scripture has to say about life in Christian community:

- ➔ Acts 2: 42-47 (the formation of the early Christian community)
- ➔ 1 Corinthians 12: 25-27 (the body of Christ)
- ➔ Thessalonians 5:14 (patience with everyone)
- ➔ Romans 12:3-13 (service in the body of Christ)
- ➔ Ephesians 4: 2-6 (maintaining unity)

- ➔ Colossians 3:13 (forgiveness)
- ➔ Hebrews 10: 24-25 (encouraging one another)

1. What challenges can we assume the early Church faced based on these readings?
2. To what extent do these passages from Scripture exemplify the Christian communities in which you are a part?
3. What communities have nurtured and nourished you and what qualities did they have?

## For Discussion

1. What does the lived experience of synodality look like to you? Where have you personally experienced the Church living out synodality?
2. Where does your community manifest synodal places, processes, or dialogues?
3. How does the Church model synodal communities well, and where does the Church need to grow?
4. Who or what makes up your larger “community on a journey?”

## Practical Implications – The Pathway to Accompaniment

*After each one of these, discern within your community how this applies specifically to your context. Some suggestions are linked here; however, this is not intended to be an exhaustive resource list.*

### INITIAL STEPS

- ➔ Do some research on what a synod is and how it works. Take time to reflect on how a synod benefits the life of the Church. Good resources for this include:
  - The USCCB’s pages on the [XV Synod](#)
  - [Its implementation](#)
  - The [Vatican document](#) “Synodality in the life and mission of the Church”

➔ Research models of intentional Christian communities, for example:

- [Catholic Worker Movement](#);
- [Shalom](#)
- [St. Francis Farm](#)
- [L'Arche Noah Sealth of Seattle](#)

What qualities do they all share? What can we learn from them?

➔ Become familiar with discernment and listening as attributes of synodality. Two groups in particular designed processes for which dialogue and listening were hallmarks to more deeply understand the lived experiences of their respective constituents. Review their resources:

- [V Encuentro](#)
- [National Dialogue](#)
- [Black Catholic Young Adult Listening Session](#)

Then, host listening sessions with youth and young adults in your area and engage and accompany them in dialogue about what the church can do to help support them in their faith and life. Bring their reflections to your parish or diocesan staff and discern together how to respond to their needs.

### LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION

➔ Host an event unpacking the Synod. Contact the USCCB or NFCYM for resources on how to facilitate such an event, or to contact helpful speakers. Consider making this a tradition after all Vatican Synods, to keep your community connected to what is happening in the larger Church.

➔ Engage with your diocesan office(s) for youth and/or young adult ministries in imagining a diocesan synod on young people, in the same spirit as the 2018 Synod on “Young People, Faith, and Vocational Discernment.” Perhaps this could cross diocesan lines to be a statewide endeavor.

- Examples of dioceses who have done this include:
  - ◆ The [Diocese of San Diego](#) held a young adult synod in September 2019
  - ◆ The [Diocese of Knoxville](#) held a diocesan young adult listening session in November 2018 in response to the Synod

## COLLABORATIVE CONNECTIONS

- ➔ Review the resources compiled by the [USCCB](#) and [NFCYM](#) in light of the 2018 Vatican Synod, which includes ongoing opportunities for webinars and gatherings as well as helpful analysis of *Christus Vivit*.
- ➔ Bridge the synodal nature of the Church with your broader community by encouraging the young people in your care to become involved in local civil and political engagement (consistent with Catholic Social Teaching and the call to holiness), so that the process of synodality and engaging a variety of voices extends beyond the parish walls.

## Prayer

*Loving God,  
You call us into community,  
From your chosen people of the Old Testament  
To the early church in the New Testament  
And even today, in the ways Christian community  
forms.  
Draw us ever closer to one another  
And thus, to You.*

*Eternal God,  
You have moved across time and memory  
Through all generations,  
Walking with each of us on our journey.  
Help us to remember this as we walk with young  
people,  
One holy family of our own.*

*Patient God,  
You speak to us in unexpected ways,  
Through prophets and priests, young and old alike.  
Open our ears to hear you  
In the voices of others,  
And guide our hearts to be more engaged  
In dialogue.*

*Let all we do be a witness to young people  
Of the one who is the Way, the truth, and the Life.*

*We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ,  
Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit,  
One God, forever and ever. Amen.*



## Theme 3:

# The Journey of Accompaniment

## EL CAMINO DE ACOMPAÑAMIENTO

*The same young people described to us the qualities they hope to find in a mentor, and they expressed this with much clarity. “The qualities of such a mentor include: being a faithful Christian who engages with the Church and the world; someone who constantly seeks holiness; someone who is a confidant without judging. Similarly, someone who actively listens to the needs of young people and responds in kind; someone deeply loving and self-aware; someone who recognizes his or her limits and knows the joys and sorrows of the spiritual journey. An especially important quality in mentors is the acknowledgement of their own humanity – the fact that they are human beings who make mistakes: not perfect people but forgiven sinners.” (CV 246, PM 12)*

# Introduction

The Synod itself and the process leading up to it continually discussed the word **accompaniment**, a term also scattered frequently throughout *Christus Vivit* itself. Therefore, it is important to explore the proposed role of “accompaniment” in youth and young adult ministries to really understand why it was a term so frequently used in the Synodal process. The ideal image we are given to model true accompaniment is that of Jesus’ approach to his disciples as he appears alongside them in the walk to Emmaus (Luke 24:31-33). He **accompanied** the disciples on their journey, helped them **recognize** what they are experiencing by listening to them, led them to **interpret** the events in light of Scripture, and allowed the disciples the freedom to **choose** to set out to share their encounter with the risen Lord (CV 237).

# Key Quotes

*All emphasis added*

At the Synod, “many pointed to the shortage of **qualified** people devoted to accompaniment... The Synod also recognized the need to train consecrated persons and laypeople, male and female, to accompany young people. (CV 244, FD 9)

When we listen to others in this way, at a certain moment **we ourselves have to disappear** in order to let the other person follow the path he or she has discovered. We have to vanish as the Lord did from the sight of his disciples in Emmaus, leaving them alone with **burning hearts** and an irresistible desire to set out immediately (cf. Lk 24:31-33). (CV 296)

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)

### Summary and Insight

Accompaniment is, in fact, a **journey**. It is an intentional “walking beside” someone as they are going on their way in life. Throughout the Gospels, accompaniment proved to be Jesus’ preferred method to teach, guide, and relate to his disciples. He literally walked the roads with them, ate with them, and prayed with them. In summation, he lived life alongside them, even when they walked in the wrong direction (CV 292).

**Listening** is key to accompanying others well, and this point has been made clear in Scriptures as Jesus quite frequently returned a question for a question in order to hear, first, from his listeners. Listening also has been prioritized among the topic of accompaniment throughout the Synod as well as throughout *Christus Vivit* (CV 38, 41, 65, 244, 246, 284) but is especially and most directly addressed in paragraphs 291-296 of the document. In the section on “Listening and Accompaniment,” this quote from *Christus Vivit* sums up the kind of listening we ought to aim for in ministry with youth and young adults: “The other person must sense that I am **listening unconditionally**, without being offended or shocked, tired, or bored” (CV 292). If we desire to be a Church that accompanies young people well, we must be a Church that listens to young people well.

When young people themselves were describing their ideal “qualified mentor” (CV 246), they stated how they desired qualities of someone who actively listens. Time and time again throughout the Synod, young people made known the importance of being accompanied by means of **mentorship**. Mentors can come in the forms of spiritual directors, small group leaders, and/or individuals that simply invest in young people just by giving of their time to meet with them one-on-one, perhaps over a cup of coffee. However, just as much as the need for qualified mentors was expressed, so, too, was the lack of such individuals expressed (CV 244). It is urgent for Church leaders to find ways to bridge the gap between these desired qualified mentors that young people themselves are asking for and the sheer lack of individuals prepared to be those qualified mentors.

One reason proposed for why it has been difficult to identify qualified mentors among us is because the idea of who could serve in that role has traditionally been quite limited to those living a religious vocation. The Synod Fathers and Pope Francis encourage us (in *Christus Vivit*) to continue to broaden the path for more laity, lay ecclesial ministers, and those living a religious vocation to become mentors (cf. CV 244).

A second obstacle in identifying qualified mentors has been a lack of **intergenerational interaction**. Pope Francis emphasizes the need for the young and old to come together and learn from one another when he says, “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 most fertile ground for this intergenerational mentorship, so to speak, takes place at home as “the family should be the first place of accompaniment” (CV 242).

Lastly, when discussing accompaniment, we must have clear the end goal of our accompaniment and mentorship. To what end are we accompanying these young people? If we do not have in mind to accompany them towards Christ, then we accompany in vain and are sure to misguide them in this life. Rather, we accompany them in their journey towards Christ, and once they recognize him and their hearts are burning within, there comes a time when we must “**disappear** in order to let the other person follow the path he or she has discovered” (CV 296).

## Faith Sharing

Read the following Scripture and answer the reflection questions below.

Read the following Scripture passage:

➔ The Walk to Emmaus. (Luke 24: 13-35)

1. Share some key moments from your life when you realized that Jesus had been walking alongside you all along, even in your moments of confusion, despair, and/or fear (perhaps this realization came only in retrospect, just as it did for the disciples).
2. Just as Jesus listened as his disciples told their story of the events that took place, who has been someone that consistently listens to you when you need it most?
3. Do you recall a moment when your heart burned in the presence of Christ or upon hearing Scripture spoken to you? What did you do as a result of that - how did you respond?

## For Discussion

1. What are the qualities of the individuals you know that accompany young people well? What fruit have you seen come from this accompaniment?
2. What can Church leaders do to better listen to and walk with young people to hear more fully their interpretation of the events taking place in their lives to help them discern God’s presence?
3. What are the obstacles you face finding “qualified mentors” for young people in your local area? What are possible solutions to those obstacles?
4. What are some creative ways we can create space for young people to have a genuine, authentic encounter with Christ in parish or diocesan ministries?

# Practical Implications – The Pathway to Accompaniment

*After each one of these, discern within your community how this applies specifically to your context. Some suggestions are linked here; however, this is not intended to be an exhaustive resource list.*

## INITIAL STEPS

- ➔ Research different organizations and programs that offer training in spiritual direction and/or mentorship.
- ➔ Check out these resources, among the many others, that exist on the topic of accompaniment:
  - NFCYM webinar [He Walked With Them](#)
  - NFCYM webinar [The Art of Accompaniment](#)
  - [The USCCB’s Guide to Accompanying Youth and Young Adults as Missionary Disciples](#)
  - [Wavering Souls: The Challenge of Young Black Adults in Today’s Catholic Church](#)
  - [La Pastoral Juvenil a la luz del Sínodo sobre los jóvenes](#)
  - [Radiate Christ: Become a Parish Who Accompanies Young People \(NFCYM\)](#)
  - Acompañamiento: Transforming Parish Ministry with Youth ([English](#))
  - Acompañamiento: Transforming Parish Ministry with Youth ([Spanish](#))
  - The USCCB’s [Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry](#)
- ➔ Be deliberate and intentional about the qualities of a good mentor described in CV 246. Consider how one might be trained or formed in those skills.

## LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION

- ➔ Watch this bilingual Video Series produced by Spirit Juice Studies: [Called To Accompany / Llamados a Acompañar](#) with your parish and/or diocesan volunteers to train them on the importance of accompaniment in youth ministry. *Note: Some of these videos can certainly apply to accompanying young adults as well.*
- ➔ Promote ongoing opportunities in your parish and diocese for individuals to be trained in spiritual direction and in mentorship.

- ➔ Create space in your youth ministry and/or young adult groups for inter-generational encounters such as themed family nights, an “adopt a grandparent” initiative in the community, service nights visiting a local nursing home, or babysitting for a parent’s night out.

### COLLABORATIVE CONNECTIONS

- ➔ Partner with the offices for Vocations Ministries (for priesthood and consecrated life) and Marriage and Family Life Ministries in your local diocese to ensure that young people are receiving adequate accompaniment as they discern their vocation as well as continuous accompaniment as they live their vocation, especially focusing on young married couples and individuals that are undocumented as these are two demographics that are often overlooked in regards to vocational accompaniment (CV 242).
- ➔ Reach out to the local Catholic Schools Office in your diocese to advocate for the formation of ministerial small groups, mentorship programs, and/or family outreach at the schools if they do not currently exist (CV 247).

## Prayer

*Risen Lord, thank you for never leaving us to face our perils alone.*

*Just as you have walked beside us with patience, compassion, and gentle guidance,*

*Teach us how to accompany well the young people you have placed in our lives.*

*Risen Lord,*

*For those young people deep in despair, be their hope.*

*For those young people lost in darkness, be their light.*

*For those young people carrying heavy burdens, be their comfort.*

*Jesus,*

*Teach us to be slow to speak and eager to listen to others.*

*Teach us to recognize you in every moment, but especially in the breaking of the bread.*

*Teach us to look to you for the wisdom to accompany young souls.*

*Jesus, Risen Lord, and our great teacher,*

*You who have accompanied us so well, be our guide as we accompany others.*

*We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ,*

*Who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, One God, forever and ever. Amen.*



## Theme 4:

# The Now: Reality and Response

## EL AHORA: REALIDAD Y RESPUESTA

*Young people also experience setbacks, disappointments, and profoundly painful memories. Often they feel “the hurt of past failures, frustrated desires, experiences of discrimination and injustice, of feeling unloved and unaccepted.” Then, too, “there are moral wounds, the burden of past errors, a sense of guilt for having made mistakes.” Jesus makes his presence felt amid these crosses borne by young people; he offers them his friendship, his consolation, and his healing companionship. The Church wants to be his instrument on this path to interior healing and peace of heart. (CV 83, FD 62)*

### Introduction

Pope Francis calls youth and young adults “the now of God” (CV 178), but in order for these young people to truly impact the world, the Church, through her pastoral leaders, must help them through the issues of “the now” – their experiences of being young and the external concerns facing them as a young person in the twenty-first century.

Through the synodal process that led up to *Christus Vivit*, youth and young adults shared their concerns, needs, and lived experiences. However, Pope Francis noted, “young people frequently **fail to find in our usual programs a response to their concerns, their needs, their problems, and issues**” (CV 202).

In order for the Church to be relevant and impactful for youth and young adults, Catholic leaders must **become aware of young people’s realities and develop practical ways to respond to those concerns**.

In *Christus Vivit*, Pope Francis reminds us of two major types of realities facing youth and young adults: (1) stage of life (internal) concerns, or the experience of being young; and (2) current realities and (external) concerns, or the experience of the present moment. Some overlap, but it is important to know the distinctions between realities that emerge from human development and those that emerge from today’s culture, and most importantly, how to respond and accompany youth and young adults.

### Key Quotes

As a Church, **may we never fail to weep before these tragedies of our young**. May we never become inured to them... None of this pain goes away; it stays with us, because the harsh reality can no longer be concealed. (CV 75)

At times, the hurt felt by some young people is heart-rending, a pain too deep for words. They can only tell God how much they are suffering, and how hard it is to keep going, since they no longer believe in anyone... **May all young people who are suffering feel the closeness of a Christian** community that can reflect those words by its actions, its embrace, and its concrete help. (CV 77)

I encourage communities to examine, respectfully and seriously, the situation of their young people, in order to find the most fitting ways of **providing them with pastoral care**. (CV 103)

Your youth [and young adulthood] is not an “in-between time.” **You are the now of God**, and he wants you to bear fruit. For “it is in giving that we receive.” The best way to prepare a bright future is to experience the present as best we can, with commitment and generosity. (CV 178, WYDP)

## Summary and Insight

The “harsh reality” that Pope Francis references is actually many realities and experiences that youth and young adults are going through in their lives at this moment (CV 75).

What emerged from the three-year listening and consultation process, or the “synodal process,” that led up to *Christus Vivit* were stories and experiences from youth and young adults around the world, that are distinct to each person’s culture and country, while also illuminating similar threads that are woven into every community and circumstance.

Looking at the testimonies gleaned throughout the synodal process and, in particular, outlined in *Christus Vivit*, these realities can be roughly divided into two categories as a way to help understand them:

### 1. STAGE OF LIFE REALITIES AND INTERNAL CONCERNS (I.E. THE EXPERIENCES OF BEING YOUNG)

These are issues that most generations of young people experience as they move through youth and young adulthood, though **each generation responds to these concerns in their own way**. In *Christus Vivit*, Pope Francis mentions a few including:

- ➔ Intergenerational relationships (CV 80, 179-181, 187-201)
- ➔ Understanding one’s sexuality and identity (CV 81, 259-261, 265)

- ➔ Taking risks and self-expression (CV 82, 142-143)
- ➔ Experiencing setbacks, disappointment, and doubt (CV 2, 83, 198, 234)
- ➔ Discovering one's God-given identity (CV 107, 140-142, 226, 255-256, 272-273)
- ➔ Finding balance in life and work (CV 137, 268-269)

While it may be tempting to dismiss these as issues that every generation experiences, when they are maturing through youth and young adulthood, *Christus Vivit* reminds us that these are pastoral concerns that exhibit themselves in new ways with each generational cohort. As such, they require us to pay attention with compassionate eyes.

## 2. CURRENT REALITIES AND EXTERNAL CONCERNS (I.E. THE EXPERIENCES OF LIVING IN THE WORLD TODAY)

These are issues that are constantly changing with each passing year. However, the events and realities of living in any age impacts the lives of youth and young adults more significantly because this is a time in their lives when **many external challenges or events can have lasting repercussions**. In a sense, this section will need to be updated every few years as the current realities facing young people will certainly change. For the time frame surrounding the development of *Christus Vivit*, the “snapshot” of the issues that are now affecting youth and young adults include:

- ➔ Widespread violence (CV 42, 72, 75-76)
- ➔ Unhealthy ideologies (CV 73)
- ➔ Marginalization and social exclusion (CV 74, 270-271)
- ➔ The throwaway culture (CV 78)
- ➔ The exploitation and homogenization of young people (CV 79, 82, 182-186)
- ➔ The breakdown of families and family structure (80, 262-264)
- ➔ The digital environment (CV 86-90, 104-106)
- ➔ Migration and family separation (CV 91-94)
- ➔ Climate change (CV 91, 228)
- ➔ The abuse crisis within the Church (CV 95-102)

Regardless of whether issues are internal or external, whether something that is common to every generation or unique to the year or decade in which we find ourselves, Pope Francis encourages the Church at every level “to examine, respectfully and seriously, the situation of their young people, in order to find the most fitting ways of providing them with pastoral care” (CV 103).

*Pastoral care, then, is what is missing* when the Holy Father observes that youth and young adults “frequently fail to find... a response to their concerns, their needs, their problems and issues” (CV 202). We read in *Christus Vivit* that the Catholic Church, universally and in local communities:

- ➔ must learn to be more empathetic, “to weep before these tragedies of our young” (CV 75);
- ➔ can be “an instrument on the path to interior healing and peace of heart” (CV 83);
- ➔ should encourage young people to not lose hope in the face of such issues (cf. 107-109);
- ➔ must be an example of unity, “for whenever you are united, you have marvelous strength” (CV 110), and fraternity, noting the African proverb that says, “If you want to go fast, walk by yourself. If you want to go far, walk with others.” (CV 167);
- ➔ should not be insular or inward-looking, but be “directed above all to charity within the family and to social and political charity... concrete and faith-based commitment to the building of a new society” (CV 168), encouraging the protagonism of young people (cf. 169-174)

As a result, churches are challenged to respond with care, and with the urgency of the moment, to the realities facing young people in the present moment (the “now” of God). More than most other aspects of the Church’s work, this was reported as most absent - and yet most necessary. Being aware of and **being responsive to this need can be an excellent first step in transforming one’s ministry** to align more with the vision laid out in *Christus Vivit*.

## Faith Sharing

Read the following Scriptures and answer the reflection questions below.

Read the following Scripture passages:

- ➔ “...his heart was moved with pity for them... like sheep without a shepherd.” (Matthew 9:35-38)
- ➔ “Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28-30)
- ➔ “I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” (John 10:11-15)

1. What do each of these passages say about Jesus? What example, in them, does Jesus set for us?
2. Imagining the crowds in the scriptures as the youth and young adults in our communities, how might these passages impact our pastoral work with them and the realities they are facing?

### For Discussion

1. What are the internal and external realities facing youth and young adults in your city, town, or neighborhood? Who are the young people you know personally who are impacted by these issues?
2. In what ways are poverty, violence, migration, climate change, the digital environment, marginalization, or other social and external struggles affecting the youth and young adults of your local area?
3. How can Church leaders better listen to, understand, research, and be continually aware of the issues and realities impacting young people in their area?
4. How can your community accompany youth and young adults who are experiencing intergenerational conflict; confusion over their sexuality and identity; setbacks, doubts and disappointments; or other internal struggles related to their vocation and work, families, or personal health?
5. How can your community accompany youth and young adults who are directly impacted by or who are witnessing these external issues and concerns?

### Practical Implications – The Pathway to Accompaniment

*After each one of these, discern within your community how this applies specifically to your context. Some suggestions are linked here; however, this is not intended to be an exhaustive resource list.*

### INITIAL STEPS

- ➔ When thinking about the youth and young adults needing accompaniment through their lived realities, think broadly, especially those who are not always visible: those on the margins of society (those in poverty, those with differing abilities, etc.), those from different cultural or racial backgrounds, and those who are less active in their religious praxis.
- ➔ Research the internal and external issues impacting young people in your city, town, or neighborhood, the surrounding geographical area, and the broader society.
- ➔ Explore the resources for responding to internal and external issues. What local and national resources, websites, and organizations are available to you related to issues<sup>1</sup> of:
  - Mental health; for example, [NFCYM](#) (youth), [USCCB](#) (young adult) or [NAMI](#)
  - Transitions and internal struggles, poverty; for example, [The Catholic Campaign for Human Development](#)
  - Violence for example; [NFCYM](#) (youth) and [USCCB](#)
  - Racism and prejudice; for example, [NFCYM](#) and [USCCB](#)
  - Climate issues; for example, [The Catholic Climate Covenant](#)
  - Addiction, family support; for example, [NFCYM](#) and [USCCB](#) (young adult)
  - Abuse; for example, [NFCYM](#) and [USCCB](#)
  - The digital environment; for example, [NFCYM](#) and [NAMI](#)
- ➔ Remove the stigma of talking about internal struggles including but not limited to: intergenerational conflict; questions and confusion around sexuality and identity; self-expression; uncertainty about vocation and meaning in life; finding balance among others.

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<sup>1</sup> - These are just some of the issues facing young people today. It is important to be in dialogue with those whom you minister with to best ascertain what particular challenges they face in your community. The following descriptors “youth” and “young adult” indicate resources specific to those age ranges, when there is no description the website is applicable to all ages.

### LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION

- ➔ Offer resources and opportunities for those struggling with mental health concerns including, but not limited to: depression, anxiety, addiction, behavioral issues, PTSD, and mental illness.
- ➔ Provide opportunities and/or resources for spiritual direction and counseling (available through the diocese, religious communities, other parishes, apostolates, educational institutions, etc.).
- ➔ Offer restful and safe spaces on church grounds for youth and young adults to find refuge from internal struggles or external threats and circumstances.
- ➔ Provide support services for those experiencing community, gang, and domestic violence; racism and prejudice; impacts from climate issues and natural disasters; online bullying; pornography; migration and immigration issues; personal exploitation; divorce and family separation or crises; drugs and alcohol problems; abuse in any form, among others (using the various resources explored in the “initial steps” above).
- ➔ Host programs within the parish community raising up these issues, helping all parishioners accompany youth and young adults impacted by or experiencing these realities.

### COLLABORATIVE CONNECTIONS

- ➔ Work with parents and families on speaking openly about these issues within the home, where appropriate, for struggles facing both adolescents and young adults.
- ➔ Take steps toward unity and collaboration within the parish (across ecclesial ministries and perspectives) and within the civic community (ecumenical, interfaith, and secular cooperation), with an eye towards unified initiatives to support young people in the church and in society.
- ➔ Develop more social justice efforts within the parish, to help active Catholic youth and young adults better engage with society and culture, and work towards addressing the internal and external or social issues that are impacting them and their peers.
- ➔ Get active in your town, city, neighborhood, or region. In those settings, personally form genuine relationships and have honest conversations with youth and young adults, to listen to their lived realities and be able to respond to them accordingly.

## Prayer

*“You, O Lord, are my hope.” (cf. Ps. 71:5)*

*Good and gracious Lord, be with youth and young adults  
As they experience the realities and struggles of life through young eyes.*

*Be light and hope to young people facing the darkness of violence and poverty,  
Trauma and abuse, confusion and internal strife, oppression and fear.*

*Give them the confidence and hope to continue on their journey,  
And give us the strength and fortitude to accompany them along that path.*

*Merciful Father, forgive us when we have failed to respond to their concerns.  
Help us to be more pastoral, more compassionate, more loving and patient.*

*In You, O Lord, we always find rest for our own weariness and uncertainty.  
May all young people, through our ministry and work, find rest in you, too.*

*Inspired by your holy saints who endured struggles and pain in their young lives,  
Saint Kateri, Saint Dominic Savio, Saint Therese, Blessed Chiara Bandano, Blessed Isidore Bakanja,  
And all who felt the impact of their realities, may we step forward with confidence,  
To be the instruments of your love and hope to all the young people we encounter.*

*We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ,  
Who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
One God, forever and ever. Amen.*



Theme 5:

# The Gospel Message

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LA MÍSTICA DEL EVANGELIO

*The one who fills us with his grace, the one who liberates us, transforms us, heals and consoles us is someone fully alive. He is the Christ, risen from the dead, filled with supernatural life and energy, and robed in boundless light. (CV 124)*

## Introduction

The kerygma, the basic Gospel message and Good News of Christ, is essential to the life of the Church and must be essential to our ministry with young people. In *Christus Vivit*, Pope Francis sums up the Gospel message in these four concise messages: **God the Father loves you. Jesus saves you. Christ is alive. The Holy Spirit gives life.** In order for the Church not to be vain in her efforts to engage young people in the life of the Church, she must always present these key points of the Gospel message in her outreach. The Good News of Christ must be the focal point of our ministry and a relationship with Christ must be the desired end goal. Why? Because in the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the mystery of our Catholic Christian faith is lived. Without Christ and the Gospel, we have nothing real or lasting to offer young people.

## Key Quotes

*All emphasis added*

The very first truth I would tell each of you is this: **“God loves you.”** It makes no difference whether you have already heard it or not. I want to remind you of it. God loves you. Never doubt this, whatever may happen to you in life. At every moment, you are infinitely loved. (CV 112)

The second great truth is that Christ, out of love, sacrificed himself completely in order to save you. His outstretched arms on the cross are the most telling sign that he is a friend who is willing to stop at nothing: *“Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end”* (Jn 13:1). (CV 118)

...[T]here is a third truth, inseparable from the second: **Christ is alive!** We need to keep reminding ourselves of this, because we can risk seeing Jesus Christ simply as a fine model from the distant past, as a memory, as someone who saved us two thousand years ago. But that would be of no use to us: it would leave us unchanged, it would not set us free. (CV 124)

In these three truths – **God loves you; Christ is your Savior; he is alive** – 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. The Holy Spirit fills the heart of the risen Christ and then flows over into your lives. When you receive the Spirit, he draws you ever more deeply into the heart of Christ, so that you can grow in his love, his life and his power. (CV 130)

## Summary and Insight

To be a Christian, a Christ-follower, means that we are **beloved**. We know this because twice in the Gospels (once at Jesus' baptism, then during the Transfiguration), God the Father refers to Jesus as "his beloved Son" (Lk. 3:22, Matt. 17:5). Then, right before Jesus entered into his Passion, he prayed to the Father in Matthew 17 that we (his followers) might know that **we are loved as Jesus is loved**. In other words, Jesus prayed that we might know we are God's beloved son or daughter just as Jesus is the beloved Son of God. Therefore, to be a community of Catholic Christians means we are a community of loved people, a community of "beloveds." Pope Francis reinforces that we are loved by God, most especially through his reflections on what the New Testament says about young people and being young in *Christus Vivit* 12-17, because even though we are a loved people we often walk around unaware of this important truth that is essential to our identity and to our faith.

Not only are we loved, but "his is 'a love that does not overwhelm or oppress, cast aside or reduce to silence, humiliate or domineer. It is the love of the Lord, a daily, discreet and respectful love; a love that is free and freeing, a love that heals and raises up. The love of the Lord has to do more with raising up than knocking down, with reconciling than forbidding, with offering new changes than condemning, with the future than the past'" (CV 116, WYD).

This is a love that, arguably, not many of our young people have heard expressed in our pews or in our ministries in the world today. This is not a "love" that condemns or stifles. **This is a love that is exciting and inspiring; it is a message of freedom, mercy and hope.**

It is not uncommon to get discouraged by all "our problems, frailties, and flaws. Yet it is precisely through our problems, frailties, and flaws that he wants to write this love story. He embraced the prodigal son, he embraced

Peter after his denials, and he always, always, always embraces us after every fall, helping us to rise and get back on our feet. Because the worst fall, and pay attention to this, **the worst fall, the one that can ruin our lives, is when we stay down and do not allow ourselves to be helped up**” (CV 120). In the Church today, many young people fall and then end up distancing themselves or disengaging from the Church and the Christian community, while some leave the Church entirely, because of shame, gossip, or a lack of hope. Let us look for ways to be leaders, like Christ, that help young people “get back up” after they fall.

“**Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity.** She exists in order to evangelize, that is to say, in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God, and to perpetuate Christ’s sacrifice in the Mass...”(EG 12). And we, the members that make up the Church therefore also exist in order to evangelize. Together with the Holy Spirit, we must look for new ways to evangelize or re-evangelize young people with the truth that they are loved by God, saved by Christ, God is alive, and his Holy Spirit is within us.

## Faith Sharing

Read the following Scriptures and answer the reflection questions below.

- ➔ “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.” (John 3:16)
- ➔ “You have been purchased at a price. Do not become slaves to human beings.” (1 Corinthians 7:23)
- ➔ “For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control.” (2 Timothy 1:7)

1. Which of these 3 verses focusing on the basic Gospel message that *Christ died to save you, purchased your freedom, and gives you his Spirit* moves your heart the most today and why?
2. How can knowing God gives you a spirit of power, love, and self-control change your attitude or perspective on problems/challenges you are currently facing in ministry?

## For Discussion

1. When have you recognized that Jesus is alive? In who? In what?
2. On a scale of 1 to 10, how well do you think our Church is doing overall at making clear the basic Gospel message

(God the Father loves you; Jesus saves you; Christ is alive; The Holy Spirit gives life) to young people? What can you propose to be done differently to bring that message more clearly to the life of youth and young adults?

3. How can we, as Church leaders, emphasize in our ministry with the young that the point of Christianity is not just to know facts about God and scripture, rather, to let the Gospel message become personal? In other words, how can we help young people:
  - ➔ Recognize and experience Jesus as their Lord and Savior, rather than just “knowing” that he is a Savior?
  - ➔ Express how God has personally loved them versus simply knowing that God is love?
  - ➔ Help them see how their own suffering and struggles are united to Jesus’ suffering and struggles, and because of this, see the way Jesus walks with them as they bear their crosses?
  - ➔ Find hope in seemingly-hopeless situations just as Christ’s resurrection always points us to hope?
  - ➔ Know that the Holy Spirit is always by their side, and feel the Spirit’s presence in every moment of their lives?
4. Who is a young person you know that really embodies the Gospel message and lives out the truth that they are loved, and strives to ensure that others know that they are loved by God as well?

## Practical Implications – The Pathway to Accompaniment

*After each one of these, discern within your community how this applies specifically to your context. Some suggestions are linked here, however this is not intended to be an exhaustive resource list.*

### INITIAL STEPS

- ➔ Reflect on the words of Fr. Pedro Arrupe’s, SJ (1907-1991), *¡Enamórate!* (“Fall in Love!”):

*Nothing is more practical than finding God, than falling in love in a quite absolute, final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning, what you do with your evenings, how you spend your weekends, what you read, whom you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in love, stay in love, and it will decide everything. (CV 132)*

Ask yourself: to what extent you have really “fallen in love” with God?

- ➔ Read the encyclical written by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, [Deus Caritas Est: God is Love](#) to dive deeper into the central truth of our Catholic faith that God is love.
- ➔ Watch [Brenda Noriega and Brian Rhude’s USCCB Press Conference](#) as they reflect on the kerygma in light of *Christus Vivit* and ministry with young people.

### LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION

- ➔ Gather in small groups with ministry leaders and wit youth or young adults to share your story of encountering Jesus, of “falling in love” with him, and how that has changed your life. Then, reflect on how each one of you can encourage those you know to recognize and feel God’s love more fully in their lives.
- ➔ Guide your group through the kerygma during your time together one evening. It would be ideal to walk through the main points of the Gospel message and ask discussion questions in a small group setting or one-on-one with a mentor. A couple resources that could serve to guide you in the sharing of the kerygma are listed here but there are certainly many other resources available:
  - [The Ultimate Relationship by CCO](#)
  - [FOCUS resource to use the CCO Ultimate Relationship Guide](#)
  - [Life Teen’s Gospel Archive](#)
  - [Seguidores de Jesus](#)
  - [What We Have Seen and Heard: A Pastoral Letter on Evangelization from the Black Bishops of the United States](#)
- ➔ Model an amended “lectio divina” experience for your group. Print out a copy of Psalm 139, verse 1-18, for each person in your youth or young adult group. Read over the psalm once as a group, then give everyone a chance to read over it again in silence. Ask them each to read it once more in silence, but this time encourage them to circle two truths about God’s love for them that they want to cling onto in the upcoming week.
  - You could have some songs playing in the background which reiterate the theme of God’s great love, such as [How He Loves Us by Kim Walker Smith](#), [Beloved by Tenth Avenue North](#), or the “[Musical Celebration of God’s Love For Us](#)” from Heartsongs: Tâm Tình Ca (HSTTC) with the Northern Virginia Vietnamese-American community.

- ➔ Watch a video together as a group focusing on one of the four main points of the Gospel message highlighted by Pope Francis in *Christus Vivit* (God the Father loves you, Jesus Christ saves you, God is alive, and The Holy Spirit gives life). Among many others, some video/audio options include:
  - [Why God Loves You by Fr. Mike Schmitz](#)
  - [Vive Jesús El Señor](#)
  - [Fr. Josh Johnson “Everything Passes But God”](#)
  - [Bishop Barron on the Holy Spirit](#)

Then discuss the video afterwards with some pre-prepared discussion questions.

- ➔ Consider creating a year-long evangelization program for your ministry based on these 4 truths emphasized in Part 4 of *Christus Vivit*: God loves you, Jesus saves you, Christ is alive, and the Holy Spirit is within us!

### COLLABORATIVE CONNECTIONS

- ➔ Bring in a guest speaker that has struggled being “enslaved” by something (either literally or figuratively) or “seduced” by some ideal or person to talk to your community about how they found freedom in Christ in the end (CV 122-123).
- ➔ Work with your local pastor or bishop to schedule a special evening for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, particularly targeting young people. Set a time for Reconciliation where young people are able to attend, such as an evening during the week, or a weekend time that is feasible, depending on your local reality.
  - You could also consider doing this during your regularly scheduled time for youth or young adult Gatherings to encourage young people to allow themselves to be loved by the Lord despite their faults and failings (CV 119-120).
- ➔ In order to give your young people (and their families) an opportunity to share the Good News of Christ’s love with others, both in words and actions, collaborate with Catholic mission agencies such as:
  - [The Catholic Campaign for Human Development](#)
  - [Catholic Relief Services](#)
  - [Catholic Charities USA](#)
  - Peruse the many opportunities through [Catholic Volunteer Network](#)

## Prayer

*Heavenly Father, help us to believe that You love us  
Just as you love your beloved Son, Jesus.*

*May we have the grace to cling to the truth  
That we are infinitely loved by you, our Infinite God,  
In every moment of our lives.*

*Let us be so filled with that truth  
That we are deeply moved to help others discover  
That they also are infinitely loved as a beloved child of God.*

*We offer to you, our Lord and Savior,  
Our lives as a living prayer that proclaims without ceasing  
That you, Christ, are ALIVE!*

*We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ,  
Who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
One God, forever and ever. Amen.*



## Theme 6:

# Pathways of Ministry

## LOS CAMINOS DE PASTORAL

*By learning from one another, we can better reflect that wonderful multifaceted reality that Christ's Church is meant to be. She will be able to attract young people, for her unity is not monolithic, but rather a network of varied gifts that the Spirit ceaselessly pours out upon her, renewing her and lifting her up from her poverty. (CV 207)*

## Introduction

The Church's ministry with youth and young adults is ever-changing. One of the key lessons from the Synod was the need to renew the ministerial landscape, as the existing models and pathways are not always effective as time marches on.

Pope Francis offered a sobering reminder of this reality in *Christus Vivit*, noting that “young people frequently fail to find in our usual programs a response to their concerns, their needs, their problems, and issues” However, he did acknowledge the work of ministry thus far “can be considered the work of the Holy Spirit who constantly shows us **new paths**. Even so, there is a need to look at the ways such groups participate in the Church's overall pastoral care, as well as a need for greater communion among them and a better coordination of their activities” (CV 202). Throughout *Christus Vivit*, Pope Francis outlined at least four “new paths” that the Holy Spirit has shown through the synodal process and in the lived experiences of young people within each country.

## Key Quotes

Jesus' life can prove inspiring for all those young people who are developing and preparing to take up their mission in life. This involves growing in a relationship with the Father, in awareness of being part of a family and a people, and in openness to being filled with the Holy Spirit and led to carry out the mission God gives them, their personal vocation. **None of this should be overlooked in pastoral work with young people**, lest we create projects that isolate young people from their family and the larger community, or turn them into a select few, protected from all contamination. Rather, we need projects that can strengthen them, accompany them and impel them to encounter others, to engage in generous service, in mission. (CV 30)

Young people also experience setbacks, disappointments and profoundly painful memories. Often they feel “the hurt of past failures, frustrated desires, experiences of discrimination and injustice, of feeling unloved and unaccepted”...Jesus makes his presence felt amid these crosses borne by young people; he offers them his friendship, his consolation and his healing companionship. The Church wants to be his instrument on **this path to interior healing and peace of heart.** (CV 83)

**Ministry has to be synodal;** it should involve a “journeying together” that values the charism that the Spirit bestows in accordance with the vocation and role of each of the Church’s members, through a process of co-responsibility. Motivated by this spirit, we can move towards a participatory and co-responsible Church, one capable of appreciating its own rich variety, gratefully accepting the contributions of the lay faithful, including young people and women, consecrated persons, as well as groups, associations, and movements. No one should be excluded or exclude themselves. (CV 206, FD 123)

It is also important to **allow room for a “popular” youth [and young adult] ministry,** with a different style, schedule, pace and method. Broader and more flexible, it goes out to those places where real young people are active, and fosters the natural leadership qualities and the charisms sown by the Holy Spirit... Some of our pastoral activities can assume that a journey of faith has already begun, but we need a “popular” youth [and young adult] ministry that can open doors and make room for everyone, with their doubts and frustrations, their problems and their efforts to find themselves, their past errors, their experiences of sin and all their difficulties. (CV 230, 234)

It doesn’t take much to make young people missionaries. Even those who are most frail, limited, and troubled can be missionaries in their own way, for goodness can always be shared, even if it exists alongside many limitations... Inseparable from a “popular” youth (and young adult) ministry is an irrepressible “popular” missionary activity that breaks through our customary models and ways of thinking. Let us accompany and encourage it, but not presume to overly regulate it. If we can hear what the Spirit is saying to us, we have to realize that **youth [and young adult] ministry is always missionary.** (CV 239-240)

Much of the longing present in the hearts of young people can be summed up in the word “**restlessness**”... Restless discontent, combined with exhilaration before the opening up of new horizons, generates a boldness that leads you to stand up and take responsibility for a mission. This healthy restlessness typical of youth [and young adulthood] continues to dwell in every heart that remains young, open, and generous. True inner peace coexists with that profound discontent. (CV 138)

## Summary and Insight

The proposed pathways of ministry presented throughout *Christus Vivit* are intended as means for the Church to engage youth and young adults in their experience of faith and to accompany young people as they mature through youth and young adulthood (cf. CV 209).

Not every young person will respond in the same way to the Church and pastoral ministers - and so a multilayered roadmap consisting of many routes must be developed so that, as Pope Francis notes, we can achieve that “wonderful multifaceted reality that Christ’s Church is meant to be” (CV 207).

Even though there are many potential avenues to ministerial engagement, four key roads for the Church to follow emerged from the synodal process and within the text of *Christus Vivit*:

- ➔ **pastoral** pathways (see CV 75-77, 83, 216-219)
- ➔ **synodal** pathways (see CV 29, 38, 199-201, 205-206, 220, 291-299)
- ➔ **popular** pathways (see CV 36-37, 168-174, 230-238) and
- ➔ **missionary** pathways (see CV 175-178, 239-241, 253-258)

Pope Francis notes that following these new pathways of the Spirit will allow us to walk in the way of Jesus, whose own ministry on earth “can prove inspiring for all those young people who are developing and preparing to take up their mission in life.” (CV 30) Just as the Lord crafted his ministerial route as seen in the Gospels, so too can we craft our engagement and accompaniment with the young today.

### PASTORAL PATHWAYS

The pastoral approach is one in which the Church recognizes and responds to the struggles facing youth and young adults today so that, “as a Church, may we never fail to weep before these tragedies of our young” (CV 75). Re-orienting ministry in a pastoral direction is one that seeks to understand the lived experiences of young people and seeks to comfort, support, and encourage them in tough times.

This means **the first encounter one has with a youth or young adult should be a pastoral one**, that says “what are you facing right now?;” “how can we help?;” or “what can we do to support you?” While the Church is not only a social service agency, it can certainly start here (and continue doing throughout the course of the Church’s engagement with a particular youth or young adult). Speaking with “the language of closeness” and using “the grammar of love,” rather than judgement, suspicion, or the need to fix or save people, is the pastoral way forward (CV 211). A pastoral approach can help the Church respond to young people as Christ would “on this path of interior healing and peace of heart” which youth and young adults, so often overwhelmed by life, are seeking (CV 83).

### SYNODAL PATHWAYS

The synodal approach is one of connectivity and community, especially important in an often-polarized, divisive, or disjointed society. Pope Francis uses the image of the family caravan in the Scriptures ( Lk 2:41-52) to unpack the idea of “synodality,” noting that the Church can also be a “community on journey” that supports, accompanies, and trusts one another (CV 29).

Working together, being in dialogue with others in the Church and in society, across generations, cultures, and perspectives, allows for a more “participatory and co-responsible Church, one capable of appreciating its own rich variety” (CV 206). This may mean compromising and negotiating with other pastoral leaders to effectively “communicate the joy of the Gospel” to youth and young adults (CV 205). Synodality takes place over time (being patient along the journey), over space (within a community), and is incredibly deep (through mentorship, listening, and quality relationships); therefore, a synodal ministry pathway is one that is **always in motion**, always collaborating and bringing new voices to the table, and always co-responsible and open to whatever direction the Spirit leads through deep dialogue.

### POPULAR PATHWAYS

The “popular” approach is one that is grounded in the practices of the people. It is radically inclusive in nature, making space for every young person to feel welcomed, engaged, and empowered, or as St. John Paul II regularly noted, to “[open wide the doors for Christ](#)” for all humankind. Pope Francis uses the word “popular” in *Christus Vivit* to describe this pathway, which may seem an odd word choice for English-speaking audiences (who are normally accustomed to this word meaning “admired” or “set apart or above others”). However, the word evokes the Latin American reality of being “populist” or “of the people,” most especially the poorest people.

As Pope Francis notes in *Christus Vivit*, ministry in a “popular” style is a “process that is gradual, respectful, patient, hopeful, tireless, and compassionate” (CV 236) and it is one that has “a different style, schedule, pace and method. Broader and more flexible, it goes out to those places where real young people are active” (CV 230). In other words, it is a ministry pathway that **tirelessly extends beyond the walls of the church building**, with a pace that respects the lives of the everyday young person, even those not active in the Church. It is a ministry that listens to those on the margins: ecclesially, economically, socially, and culturally - that keeps asking questions like “who is not around the table?;” “how can we hear from them?;” “what can they teach us?;” “where will they guide us?” When we critically examine the barriers that prohibit the full, active, and conscious participation of all youth and young adults, we can begin to walk along this pathway.

Of special note in this area is the empowerment of young people as the “agents of ministry” with youth and young adults, wherein we call upon their gifts and provide them with leadership formation opportunities for the Church and society (CV 203). By bringing forth youth and young adults as leaders within these communities, “trusting a little more in the genius of the Holy Spirit” (CV 231), we might be surprised what happens, as “the young make us see the need for new styles and new strategies” (CV 204) - and in an ever-changing world, that may be just what is needed.

### MISSIONARY PATHWAYS

The missionary approach is one that may be most difficult for ministry leaders, as it often points youth and young adults to a horizon beyond the ministry itself. Pope Francis reminds us that this “irrepressible” missionary pathway “breaks through our customary models and ways of thinking” and that we must humbly “accompany and encourage it, but not presume to overly regulate it” (CV 240). This is the vocational pathway wherein our ministry with a youth or young adult is to gently encourage them towards wherever God is calling as they move from youth through young adulthood.

Embarking on a missionary pathway requires patient listening on the part of the leader and focused discernment on the part of the young person, so that the voice of God can be heard and followed. This is not an abstract concept of vocation, but one relevant to young people and infused with intentionality; we know that young people are in a stage of life in which they crave a sense of how to figure out who they are, what they are meant to do, what they want to “be when they grow up,” what they are supposed to do with their lives, how they can make the greatest impact, etc. While these questions might be posed in a more secular context to young people, the Church has the tools to equip young people to live their way into the answers. That intentionality will be of paramount importance on a young person’s journey - and to the missionary pathway of the Church’s ministry with the young.

Of particular note, and one that connects all the pathways, is the challenge to the entire Church to make space for youth and young adults to step into their role as “**protagonists**” in the world. The synodal process raised up the image of bishops, pastors, lay leaders, and young people working co-responsibly, side-by-side, where, inspired by each other’s boldness and enthusiasm, exhibited a “restless discontent, combined with exhilaration before the opening up of new horizons” (CV 138). Together, the Church, just like the young Jesus, was “restless” for the exciting possibilities of new pathways for mission.

## Faith Sharing

Read the following Scriptures and answer the reflection questions below.

- ➔ On the pastoral approach. (Matthew 11:28-30 and Luke 15:1-32)
- ➔ On the synodal journey. (Luke 2:41-52 and Luke 24:13-25)
- ➔ On the inclusive popular approach. (Matthew 13:1-58 and Matthew 25:31-46 )
- ➔ On the missionary approach and vocational call. (Matthew 20:19-20 and Ephesians 4:1-16)

1. What do these various Scripture passages say to you about the four key pathways of ministry? How can the Church adopt the way Jesus approached people in the Scriptures?
2. As Pope Francis says in *Christus Vivit*, “Through the holiness of the young, the Church can renew her spiritual ardor and her apostolic vigor” (CV 50). What gives you the passion, drive, and motivation (your own “spiritual ardor” and “apostolic vigor”) to minister with youth and/or young adults?
3. What pathways have you followed on your own journey of discipleship and ministry?

## FOR DISCUSSION

1. What pathways are currently open in your ministry? What pathways need to be developed?
2. How do young people in your community currently express “appealing ways to come together” as suggested in CV 210? What insights do they have that can be implemented?
3. How can your ministry be more pastoral to the struggles facing youth and young adults today?
4. How can your community be more synodal in its approach to young people? How can you be more collaborative? In what ways can your ministry be ever-moving, like a caravan?

5. What are some “popular” or grassroots ways that young people gather in your area, and what can you learn from the way they form communities and raise up leaders?
6. Who is being excluded from ministry, whether due to financial, timing, emotional, psychological, or socioeconomic barriers? What barriers might your community be able to remove to their participation?
7. How are you encouraging mission and vocation in youth and young adults within your community? How are you accompanying them towards protagonism in the Church and in secular society?

## Practical Implications – The Pathway to Accompaniment

*After each one of these, discern within your community how this applies specifically to your context. Some suggestions are linked here; however, this is not intended to be an exhaustive resource list.*

### INITIAL STEPS

- ➔ Offer a listening session with the young people that you serve. Allow them to “blue-sky” imagine what they feel they and their peers need and want. Listen – don’t respond. Take the time to allow all ideas and comments to be shared. Ideas for listening sessions with various audiences of young people can be found online at [www.nationaldialogue.info](http://www.nationaldialogue.info).
- ➔ Research the socio-economic realities facing youth and young adults in your local area. Consider looking at census data, local economic and cultural studies, regional statistics from [V Encuentro](#), or working with your civic groups or government to learn more about what young people are facing every day (in an attempt to discern how to pastorally respond).
- ➔ Be intentional with language used around “vocation” – to ensure that the broadness of the definition presented in *Christus Vivit* is represented (that is, “as a calling from God, including the call to life, the call to friendship with him, the call to holiness” CV 248).
- ➔ Additional resources might include:
  - The [USCCB Vocations](#) page and resources on [discernment of vocation](#) to the priesthood and religious life (which can be used as a baseline resource for the discernment of vocational pathways);
  - The [USCCB For Your Marriage](#) page and resources for the discernment of the vocation of marriage and family.

### LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION

- ➔ Research communities which have advisory groups of youth and young adults, learn more about how those function, and consider implementing one in your community.
- ➔ Review the suggestions from your listening session with young people. In collaboration with the young people themselves, consider at least five (5) viable comments or suggestions and determine how best to implement them (without worry about potential failure or mistakes).
- ➔ Develop a pastoral outreach strategy to address the issues most impacting young people in your local area (i.e. racism, online bullying, unemployment, drug use, poverty, mental health, etc.).
- ➔ Go where young people gather in your area (in non-ecclesial settings) such as Soul Cycle, CrossFit, Planet Fitness, MeetUp groups, coffee shops, etc., and consider meeting there or holding conversations in those places (i.e. brunch after Sunday Mass, an evening dialogue, etc.) from time to time (as opposed to always hosting events on church grounds).
- ➔ Offer experiences of vocational discernment for young people - whether through retreats, speakers, or making resources available. Always keep in mind all the vocational pathways: ordained, consecrated, single, and married life; the vocational call of all the baptized; lay ministry and the lay apostolate; careers and employment; family life, etc.
- ➔ As a parish community (or at the parish council or among parish staff), read *Christus Vivit*. In particular, explore what Pope Francis says about parish life: CV 216-223 and on areas to be further developed in the Church: CV 224-229, then discuss strategies for implementing some of the ideas raised in these sections within your local context.

## Collaborative Connections

- ➔ In a spirit of synodality, reach out across ministerial and ecclesial boundaries in developing efforts for youth and/or young adults; for instance:
  - With other ministry efforts within your parish (i.e. marriage ministry, children’s catechesis, RCIA, hospitality ministries, liturgy and worship office, etc.);
  - With other Catholic parishes in your diocese or neighboring towns;
  - With other Catholic organizations and institutions in your diocese or region (including with the diocesan offices themselves) or with national Catholic groups or initiatives;
  - With other Christian churches in your local area;
  - With those engaged with young people in the secular community.
- ➔ With those other collaborators (see bullet point above), learn more how they serve young people, take note of what works for them, then find ways to collaborate and work on projects together.
- ➔ In an effort to engage in a more “popular” approach, here are a few suggestions:
  - Work with families in your parish in engaging disaffiliated and disconnected young people by offering to send care packages to their sons and daughters (especially for young adults in college or in their new apartment or home).
  - Work with secular organizations in the community to have more opportunities to engage with youth and/or young adults who are not active in the Church.
  - Work with community service organizations to identify lower income individuals in the area, and find ways to engage youth (within families) or young adults through the pastoral work of the Church and call them to leadership roles.
- ➔ Within the parish community structure, consider setting up a mentorship program where different adult parishioners can better engage with young people (both youth and young adults) who share things in common with them (i.e. shared interest, similar career or vocational path, sports or entertainment, etc.).

## Prayer

*“Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light for my path.” (Ps 119:105)*

*O Lord, your words guide our path forward  
As we seek to accompany young people today.*

*As you call us to be “filled with compassion” (Lk 15:20),  
May we set forth on the pathway of pastoral care.*

*As we continue to journey “in the caravan” (Lk 2:44),  
May we seek the pathway of synodality.*

*As you are present in every “one of these least ones” (Mt 25:45),  
May we discover the pathway of the people.*

*As you call all people to “go therefore” (Mt 28:19),  
May we set out on the pathway of mission.*

*Holy Spirit, infuse our minds with the memories of the pathways that we ourselves have traveled,  
That we might not forget our own experiences of traveling the road of youth and young adulthood.*

*Lord, help us to be the light to the world,  
The light which illuminates the pathways for young people to journey closer to you,  
And, through our support and accompaniment, come to know you more fully.*

*We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ,  
Who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
One God, forever and ever. Amen.*



Theme 7:

# The Wisdom of Generations

## LA SABIDURÍA DE LAS GENERACIONES

*The world has never benefited, nor will it ever benefit, from a rupture between generations. That is the siren song of a future without roots and origins. It is the lie that would have you believe that only what is new is good and beautiful. When intergenerational relationships exist, a collective memory is present in communities, as each generation takes up the teachings of its predecessors and in turn bequeaths a legacy to its successors. In this way, they provide frames of reference for firmly establishing a new society. (CV 191)*

## Introduction

In considering *Christus Vivit*, it is vital to recall that this apostolic exhortation is written to young people and to all the people of God, connecting young and old as an audience of faith. The Church would be well-served to have more integrated models of ministry, where younger and older people can interact freely rather than be isolated from each other. Part of the beauty of the body of Christ is that we all have an important role to play and need one another to move forward.

Just so, the amplification of the voices of young people does not need to come at the detriment of other generations. Indeed, the most successful way to do so is to have as a sure foundation the standing on the shoulders of the giants who have gone before. Acknowledgement of the graces and gifts that both young and old possess ensures greater growth in discipleship: **Wisdom** which is ageless (demonstrated by Scripture and the saints); a **rootedness** provided by connection through generations; and a sense of **growing together** across generational lines. 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).

## Key Quotes

*All emphasis added*

Let us also keep in mind that **Jesus had no use for adults who looked down on the young** or lorded it over them. On the contrary, he insisted that “the greatest among you must become like the youngest” (Lk 22:26). For him age did not establish privileges, and being young did not imply lesser worth or dignity. (CV 14)

Young people are not meant to become discouraged; they are meant to **dream great things**, to seek vast horizons, to aim higher, to take on the world, to accept challenges and to offer the best of themselves to the building of something better. (CV 15)

The Bible never ceases to insist that **profound respect be shown to the elderly**, since they have a wealth of experience; they have known success and failure, life’s joys and afflictions, its dreams and disappointments. In the silence of their heart, they have a store of experiences that can teach us not to make mistakes or be taken in by false promises.... A wise young person is open to the future, yet still capable of learning something from the experience of others. (CV 16)

The world has never benefited, nor will it ever benefit, from a rupture between generations. That is the siren song of a future without roots and origins. It is the lie that would have you believe that only what is new is good and beautiful. When **intergenerational relationships** exist, a **collective memory** is present in communities, as each generation takes up the teachings of its predecessors and in turn bequeaths a legacy to its successors. In this way, they provide frames of reference for firmly establishing a new society. (CV 191)

**Roots** are not anchors chaining us to past times and preventing us from facing the present and creating something new. Instead, they are a fixed point from which we can grow and meet new challenges. It does us no good to sit down and long for times past; we must meet our culture with realism and love and fill it with the Gospel. (CV 200)

The community has an important role in the accompaniment of young people; it should feel **collectively responsible** for accepting, motivating, encouraging and challenging them. All should regard young people with understanding, appreciation and affection, and avoid constantly judging them or demanding of them a perfection beyond their years. (CV 243)

## Summary and Insight

The analogies of roots, growth, and trees used in *Christus Vivit* are familiar ones, as agricultural metaphors are rampant in Scripture. In understanding what *Christus Vivit* is trying to express, we might think of old and young as the “roots” and the “shoots” of the tree. The roots are that which dig into the earth, which provide nutrition and sustenance, and which ground the tree against external forces such as wind and rain which could easily drive the tree out of the earth. However, a tree which remains underground as a root only is not a tree at all; after it is planted, it needs to sprout above ground and spread its branches to its fullest potential. *Christus Vivit* suggests the same: there is wisdom to be found among both the old and the young, with neither having exclusive authority or primacy of place. This is intentional so as not to impose preeminence upon the young by nature of a document focusing on that stage of life.

We see the strengths and challenges of both stages of life on display in this document, as we do in our lived experiences. In the life of the Church today, it is all too easy to hear the following phrases which point to a hierarchy of age: “This is the way we’ve always done it;” “You don’t have enough experience;” “Pay your dues!” Some we might hear that point to a bias in the opposite direction include “Time to get out of the way,” “OK boomer,” or “you’re stuck in the past.” We sometimes forget that **wisdom** is not exclusive to any one age or stage, but is a gift of God that can be cultivated at any time. While it is certain that most do not intend to cause disrespect or judgement of one age group or another, it can occur so consistently that we must be hyper-intentional about the avoidance of it and instead cultivate **intergenerational relationships** wherein the young and the older grow in faith together.

The most natural starting point for the cultivation of these relationships is in the domestic church, where parents and children (whether youth, teens, or adults themselves) can dialogue and develop stronger faith as a family, as well as setting the stage for intergenerational mentoring. In the spirit of subsidiarity, when this is cultivated on the most local level for individuals, it becomes more natural to model in parishes, other communities, and the Church at large.

This document reminds us that the Church is meant to be young in heart and spirit, to advance farther than we as a Church have ever gone without fear or trepidation, but with the enthusiastic “yes!” of the Blessed Mother, a young woman herself. We can reflect on the stories of young saints who did not allow their youthfulness to be a barrier to holiness, but rather as a sanctified period during which they grew deeper in love of Christ. *Christus Vivit*, in paragraphs 50-63, highlight just a few of the many young saints who young people can emulate, asking that “may these and so many other young people who perhaps in silence and hiddenness lived 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). In fact, some of the saints mentioned in *Christus Vivit*; such as, St. Francis of Assisi, did grow into a mature age, but kept his youthful spirit with him and his community throughout his life (cf. CV 52).

None of this is to say that those who are younger should be disrespectful of those who are older; on the contrary, *Christus Vivit* underscores at every turn the young learning from the experiences of those who have blazed a trail before them – whether through Scriptural citations or through the analogy of rootedness as a young tree in the wind.

## Faith Sharing

Read the following Scriptures and answer the reflection questions below.

- ➔ Let no one have contempt for your youth(fulness), but set an example for those who believe, in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity.” (1 Timothy 4:12)
- ➔ The presentation in the temple, where Jesus is presented in the presence of two elder prophets who attest to the role the child will play in the story of God’s people (Luke 2: 22-38).

1. How can young people set examples in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity?
2. How can we set examples for young people in the same ways?
3. What strikes you about what Simeon and Anna say about Jesus?
4. What is God trying to demonstrate with the dichotomy of the very old and the very young? How does that image strike you?
5. Of the young saints listed in paragraphs 50-63 of *Christus Vivit*, with whose story did you most resonate? Why?

## For Discussion

1. Share a story wherein an intergenerational relationship benefitted you and your faith journey (perhaps a parent or grandparent, a mentor or coach, etc.). What qualities did that relationship have that provided “roots” for you?
2. When did you see an older person welcome, celebrate, or advocate for a young person in your community? What impact did that have on the young person and on your community?
3. What spaces currently exist in the Church for intergenerational relationships and collaboration? What models exist in other spheres (even the secular) that are successful?

## Practical Implications – The Pathway to Accompaniment

*After each one of these, discern within your community how this applies specifically to your context. Some suggestions are linked here; however, this is not intended to be an exhaustive resource list.*

### INITIAL STEPS

- ➔ Research models of formation and catechesis such as family faith formation and intergenerational catechesis (such as Generations of Faith). Learn more about how these models work to bridge generational gaps.
- ➔ Develop an experience of intergenerational dialogue between parents and children, to strengthen intergenerationality in the domestic church. (Consider the resource Strong Catholic Families' for such a session, available in [English](#) and in [Spanish](#).) Make sure to collect post-session feedback which can be utilized to develop intergenerational moments for your community going forward.
- ➔ Identify which ministries in your community are already intergenerational in nature, and which naturally lend themselves to cross-generation involvement. What makes them so? How can that be organically built out?
- ➔ Research intergenerational opportunities that exist in the secular sphere (such as mentoring at Fortune 500 companies) or in other religious traditions. Explore their key qualities and what makes them successful.

### LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION

- ➔ Consider a mentorship program between young people and older members of the community. Express the desire for it to be a symbiotic mentoring relationship, not driven by age but by the experience of sharing faith with one another.
- ➔ Connect young people to ministries in your community that engage their gifts – such as liturgical ministries, hospitality, or faith formation – and pair them with someone not of their age range who can mentor them, both as a tool for greater involvement of young people and succession planning for more seasoned volunteers.
- ➔ Dive more deeply into understanding mentorship ([this page from the USCCB](#) is helpful) as well as models of mentorship such as the [ESTEEM program](#) through Leadership Roundtable. How can similar models be engaged in your community?

- ➔ Invite the witness sharing of folks involved in intergenerational relationships. Young people in your ministerial care are the perfect place to start – ask about these relationships and who would be comfortable sharing their story. Consider hosting an intergenerational event in your parish or community to shine a light on their witness and invite deeper thought.

### COLLABORATIVE CONNECTIONS

- ➔ Connect with those who form adults in your community (e.g. the director of adult faith formation for your parish, the religion department liaison for faculty formation at your school, etc.) Take time to learn more about their adult formation opportunities, and where places of overlap can occur with the formation of young people. What can be done intergenerationally?
- ➔ Invite adults who are active in other ministries in your community (e.g. Knights of Columbus, Knights of Peter Claver and Ladies Auxiliary, St. Vincent de Paul, parish soup kitchen, etc.) to meet with young people or give them a “tour” of “a day in the life.”

## Prayer

*Jesus, remind us  
That though you sanctified the stage of youth  
and young adulthood with your presence,  
You sat at the feet of the elders in the temple  
To learn from their wisdom and experience.*

*Connect your people  
In intergenerational living and learning,  
Worship and journeying.*

*Holy Spirit,  
Infuse our Church with a youthful energy  
To be unafraid to dream big  
And to remember the exuberance and tenacity  
That comes with a young heart.*

*Inspire young people in the same way  
To be open to rootedness, learning,  
Wisdom, and mentoring  
That like Simeon and Anna,  
The older among us might see their dreams  
Take flight in the younger among us.*

*Let the best of what we have to offer,  
Old and young and everywhere in between,  
Be engaged in bringing about the Kingdom of  
God.*

*We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy  
Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.*



**Theme 8:**

# The Call to Leadership

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**EL LLAMADO AL LIDERAZGO**

*The young want to be protagonists of change. Please, do not leave it to others to be protagonists of change. You are the ones who hold the future! Through you, the future enters into the world. I ask you also to be protagonists of this transformation. You are the ones who hold the key to the future! (CV 174)*

## Introduction

One of the most consistent themes of *Christus Vivit* is the **agency** of young people. The document postures young people as **protagonists** (of their own stories and faith journeys), as **agents** of ministry (that is, not to be ministered to in a top-down way, but ministered with alongside them), and as **prophets** of change (in the Church and in the world). It reminds us that young people are meant to lead in this moment, by virtue of their baptism, not wait until they have reached a certain age or threshold. We must avoid the trope that “young people are the future of the Church,” not relegating them to a distant time to come, but as active agents in the very present moment.

## Key Quotes

*All emphasis added*

The love of God and our relationship with the living Christ do not hold us back from dreaming; they do not require us to narrow our horizons. On the contrary, that love **elevates us, encourages us, and inspires us** to a better and more beautiful life.... Restless discontent, combined with exhilaration before the opening up of new horizons, generates a boldness that leads you to stand up and take responsibility for a mission. This healthy restlessness typical of youth continues to dwell in every heart that remains young, open and generous. True inner peace coexists with that profound discontent. (CV 138)

I want to state clearly that young people themselves are **agents** of youth [and young adult] ministry. Certainly they need to be helped and guided, but at the same time left free to develop new approaches, with creativity and a certain audacity... I am more concerned with helping young people to use their **insight, ingenuity and knowledge** to address the issues and concerns of other young people in their own language. (CV 203)

Broader and more flexible, (ministry) goes out to those places where real young people are active, and fosters the natural leadership qualities and the charisms sown by the Holy Spirit. It tries to avoid imposing obstacles, rules, controls and obligatory structures on these young believers who are natural leaders in their neighborhoods and in other settings. We need only to accompany and encourage them, trusting a little more in the genius of the Holy Spirit, who acts as he wills. (CV 230)

The Synod recognized that “albeit in a different way from earlier generations, **social commitment** is a specific feature of today’s young people. Alongside some who are indifferent, there are many others who are ready to commit themselves to initiatives of volunteer work, active citizenship and social solidarity. They need to be accompanied and encouraged to use their talents and skills creatively, and to be encouraged to take up their responsibilities. Social engagement and direct contact with the poor remain fundamental ways of finding or deepening one’s faith and the discernment of one’s vocation... It was also noted that the young are prepared to enter political life so as to build the common good.” (CV 170, FD 46)

I want to encourage all of you in this effort, because I know that your young hearts want to **build a better world**. I have been following news reports of the many young people throughout the world who have taken to the streets to express the desire for a more just and fraternal society. Young people taking to the streets! ...Continue to fight apathy and to offer a Christian response to the social and political troubles emerging in different parts of the world. I ask you to build the future, to work for a better world. Dear young people, please, do not be bystanders in life. Get involved! (CV 174, WYDR)

Young friends, don’t wait until tomorrow to contribute your energy, your audacity and your creativity to changing our world. Your youth [and young adulthood] is not an “in-between time.” You are the now of God, and he wants you to bear fruit. (CV 178, WYDP)

## Summary and Insight

If the heartbeat of *Christus Vivit* is a love for youth and young adults, the empowerment of young people into leadership is the consistent call to action of the document.

First and foremost, young people are the **protagonists** of their own stories and faith journeys. By remembering our own experiences of youth and young adulthood, we bring to mind our own experiences of that stage of life and can more easily free young people to take the reins of their journey. As ministers to and with young people, this requires a great sense of trust: first, in our own experience of being young; and second, in young people to walk their own path. When young people are protagonists of their own stories, they can explore the possibilities of what *Christus Vivit* talks about in terms of discontent, of restlessness, and of wanting to hurtle into the world.

Second, young people are **agents** of ministry. Ministry with young people cannot be “vertical,” where the minister holds power over the agency of the young people, but instead “horizontal,” wherein ministers work with and walk alongside young people. Agency begins with discovering what young people want and need, and allowing them to provide the answers and direction. *Christus Vivit* empowers young people to use their own gifts and wisdom to serve their contemporaries; this in and of itself is its own style of leadership, where a young person need not be at the helm of a mega-event, but rather engaging their own gifts in service to their peers.

Ministers who foster the agency of young people begin by engaging directly with young people, listening to their stories, experiences, needs, and dreams. By starting from a place of **engagement**, truly knowing young people can grow. Additionally, ministers should be **discerning**: to be discerning means to be attentive to the movements of the Holy Spirit in one’s life and ministry, with spiritual “eyes and ears” open to what God might be saying. One who ministers to and with young people should be prayerfully aware of where and how the Holy Spirit is moving, and able to walk with young people in that same discernment. Discernment also requires ministers to practice **detachment** from their own way of doing things, or the idea that they might know best. When detachment occurs from desired plans, the Holy Spirit is given room to work. It is a difficult practice but a critical one, because there can be no success in ministry unless the driving agent is the Holy Spirit. Ministers must then **empower** and **support** young people to be those agents of ministry, willing to **collaborate** with and **support** them to manifest what must be done to serve their peers.

Finally, young people are **prophets** of change. *Christus Vivit* presents a consistent narrative of hope in young people, as the ones who will carry the Church and world forward. The Synod spoke to the social engagement of young people, as the most socially conscious and committed; that cognizance means that young people will be the protagonists of change not only in the Church, but in the world. Thus, while we must not relegate young people solely to the future (they are undeniably the present as well), young people are, indeed, the holders of the future. For this reason, there is a prophetic nature to youth and young adulthood.

## Faith Sharing

Read the following Scriptures and answer the reflection questions below.

- ➔ The Request of James and John. (Matthew 20: 20-28)
  - Consider especially verses 26-28: whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave. Just so, the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

1. When did you first realize that you were a protagonist in your own story? An agent of ministry? What hallmarks of those realizations can you name?
2. Who, in your life, empowered you as a protagonist of your own story? How did they do so? What was the impact on you as a result?

### For Discussion

1. In what spaces in your community are young people protagonists and agents? In what spaces could room be made for young people to engage as such?
2. What are the social issues about which young people in your community are especially passionate? What issues in the Church matter most to the same young people? Why do those issues hold primacy with these young people?
3. What realities for young people does the Church do well responding to, and which require growth in our understanding and accompaniment?

## Practical Implications – The Pathway to Accompaniment

*After each one of these, discern within your community how this applies specifically to your context. Some suggestions are linked here; however, this is not intended to be an exhaustive resource list.*

### INITIAL STEPS

- ➔ Consider the gifts of the young people who you serve. How can they be invited to lead according to those gifts?
- ➔ Enter into discernment processes with young people to discern what their gifts are and how best they can contribute those gifts.
- ➔ Pray specifically for the young people in your ministerial care. Pray for them by name and by gift. Ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate their gifts and ignite them as protagonists and agents in the life of the Church.

### LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION

- ➔ Offer listening sessions for young people in your community. Allow young people to share their thoughts on the community, their dreams for what could be, and suggestions they have for improvement or greater engagement.
- ➔ Examine the ministries that already exist in your community. Where can young people be plugged in to what is already active? Examples may include:
  - inviting young lectors and Eucharistic ministers;
  - engaging extroverted young people as ushers and hospitality ministers;
  - young people studying finance to be a part of the finance council; etc.
- ➔ Create a leadership committee or council of young people (consider one that serves both youth and young adults, but depending on your community's need, one or the other might be a more prudent starting place). Empower this group to assist in the visioning, planning, and execution of programs and opportunities to serve young people as well as your community at large.

### COLLABORATIVE CONNECTIONS

- ➔ Contact organizations who engage young people in leadership specifically ([NFCYM](#) is a great place to start), but consider also diocesan models such as:
  - [Archdiocesan Youth Advisory Council of the Archdiocese of Baltimore](#)
  - [Diocesan Young Adult Council of the Diocese of Lansing](#)

What models of success have they found? What can be emulated by your community?

- ➔ Connect with local, perhaps secular, organizations in your area in which young people are already involved in response to particular social needs. These might include food insecurity, income inequality, tutoring, etc. Young people are already the prophets of change in those contexts; we simply need to enter into the spaces where they already are.

## Prayer

*Jesus Christ,  
Who used stories to share the Good News,  
We lift up to You all young people  
To be the protagonists of their own faith journeys.  
Inspire them to take ownership of their stories  
As the “now” of the Church as well as the future.*

*Holy Spirit, inspiration of all ministry,  
Ignite in young people the capacity to be agents of ministry  
to their peers, to their communities, and to the Church.  
Enkindle in their minds and hearts  
All the gifts they need  
To set aflame the whole world.*

*God of all ages,  
like the great prophets of the Old Testament,  
Use your servants, the young people of this time,  
To speak truth to power,  
To be the voice of the voiceless,  
And to bring about the kingdom of God.*

*We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ,  
Who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
One God, forever and ever. Amen.*



**Theme 9:**

# **An Invitation to Discernment**

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## **UNA INVITACIÓN AL DISCERNIMIENTO**

*We must remember that prayerful discernment has to be born of an openness to listening – to the Lord and to others, and to reality itself, which always challenges us in new ways. Only if we are prepared to listen, do we have the freedom to set aside our own partial or insufficient ideas... In this way, we become truly open to accepting a call that can shatter our security, but lead us to a better life. (CV 284)*

## Introduction

The topic of discernment played a central role in the 2018 Vatican Synod and *Christus Vivit*; the concept was so critical that it even appeared in the official synodal title itself: the Synod on “Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment.” Though discernment is most often referred to within the Catholic Church in the context of a vocational state of life, discernment has a much broader meaning as it is an important skill needed for everyday faithful, Christian life. We all face decisions in which we must discern what is most true, good, and beautiful among our options - where we see the Holy Spirit moving us in the direction where God calls us to be. Though discernment is needed at all stages of life, it is particularly useful during youth and young adulthood, as that is when many major life decisions arise. Therefore, giving young people tools to discern well and accompanying them as they do so as early as possible is a great gift that the Church and her ministers should aspire to give.

## Key Quotes

His love is so real, so true, so concrete, that it invites us to a relationship of **openness** and fruitful dialogue. (CV 117)

A particular form of discernment involves the effort to discover our own vocation. Since this is a very personal decision that others cannot make for us, it requires a certain degree of **solitude and silence**. The Lord speaks to us in a variety of ways, at work, through others and at every moment. Yet we simply cannot do without the silence of prolonged prayer, which enables us better to perceive God’s language, to interpret the real meaning of the inspirations we believe we have received, to calm our anxieties and to see the whole of our existence afresh in his own light. (CV 283, GE 171)

I mentioned there that all of us, but especially the young, are immersed in a culture of zapping. We can navigate simultaneously on two or more screens and interact at the same time with two or three virtual scenarios. Without the wisdom of discernment, we can easily become prey to every passing trend. Indeed, this is all the more important when some novelty presents itself in our lives. Then we have to decide whether it is new wine brought by God or an **illusion** created by the spirit of this world or the spirit of the devil. (CV 279, GE 167)

How could God take pleasure in someone incapable of enjoying his small everyday blessings, someone blind to the simple pleasures we find all around us? “No one is worse than one who is grudging to himself” (Sir 14:6). Far from obsessively seeking new pleasures, which would keep us from making the most of the present moment, we are asked to open our eyes and take a moment to experience fully and with **gratitude** every one of life’s little gifts (CV 146).

When seeking to discern our own vocation, there are certain questions we ought to ask. We should not start with wondering where we could make more money, or achieve greater recognition and social status...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)

## Summary and Insight

Discernment begins with the knowledge that we are truly **loved** by God and trust in knowing God does indeed have a plan for our lives (CV 112). **Prayer** is essential to discernment because it is through our conversations with God that we grow in our relationship with him and in our ability to hear his voice (CV 155, 280, 284). Pope Francis reminds us that God “does not get upset if you share your questions with him. He is concerned when you don’t talk to him, when you are not open to dialogue with him” (CV 117). One cannot discern well, discover God’s will, nor identify his/her vocational calling without being in dialogue with God himself. (CV 279)

But how does God dialogue with us? How does he speak? As Pope Francis writes, God speaks to us in a variety of ways; **through the wisdom of others**, in our conversations with mentors, close friends and family who know us well. Where two or three are gathered, there God is in our midst (Matt. 18:20). Discernment is not only an individual act, but a communal process, as “our discernment leads us to see our life in relation to their lives” as we consider how we can best serve God and others. (CV 286)

In practicing discernment, we also become more attentive to the quality of our relationships, noting those who accompany and listen to us with pastoral sensitivity (CV 291-294, 246) and those who fail to listen with empathy or lead us astray.

Then, we reflect in **silence** on where we heard God speak to us throughout each moment of the day, from our prayers, our work, and our conversations with others. God often makes himself known to us through silence. This idea is well supported by many saints who attested to this reality, but this idea is also reiterated in *Christus Vivit* 283. We need silence to better hear his voice and to discern his will. We can also be assured of his voice by the fruit it bears in our life: “more fervor in prayer, more hunger for his word, more longing to receive Christ in the Eucharist, more desire to live by his Gospel, more inner strength, more peace, and spiritual joy” (CV 161).

Through our work, our relationships, and in “the silence of prolonged prayer,” we are better able to discern whose is the voice that is talking to us (CV 283). As we know, God’s is not the only voice that speaks to us and “without the wisdom of discernment, we can easily become prey to every passing trend” (CV 279) and “sometimes the things that flit across our minds are mere temptations that can distract us from our true path” (CV 293). By talking to God every day and by reflecting on the moments that brought us consolation and desolation, as St. Ignatius would say, or through a daily examination of conscience, we call to mind the times when we were beacons of God’s love and those times when we were a barrier to God’s love, we can become more familiar with **his voice** and more prepared “to discern the salutary promptings of the good Spirit who proposes to us the Lord’s truth, but also the traps laid by the evil spirit – his empty works and promises” and will more readily be able to distinguish his voice from the “illusion created by the spirit of this world or the spirit of the devil” (CV 293 and 279 respectively).

Our daily life brings us a multitude of choices between one path or the other. Young people often face “analysis paralysis” when faced with important decisions, often overwhelmed by the multitude of options with few skills to discern what path to choose. Discernment, in the Ignatian spiritual tradition, helps break this paralysis of indecision by distinguishing **which path brings us consolation or desolation**. We reflect on who we are as children of God and how we can be of service to God and others. Which one builds up the Body of Christ, and which one does not? Which path allows us to thrive, to be our best selves with and for others? Call to mind your gifts and charisms. What are your strengths and limitations and do you “have the abilities needed to offer this kind of service? Could [you] develop those abilities” (CV 285)? The Spirit works with and through our gifts, talents, abilities, and strengths in service to the world and it is by uncovering our gifts that we can discern how to respond to God’s calling for our lives.

Pope Francis makes it clear that living fully in the **present moment** and not missing the beautiful, everyday moments of life is crucial to discernment (CV 145-147). It does us no good to try to decipher our decisions of the past nor does it serve us to try to guess how we might discern in the future. All we have is the present moment to discern how the Holy Spirit is working in this current space and time. God does not reveal the future to us, but he does ask us to say “yes” to him, as Mary did at the Annunciation, when we are confident that what is being asked of us is his will (CV 256).

Then, when possible, wait. Sit with your decision, the direction you chose, and continue to listen to God’s voice. In the moments of waiting and uncertainty, “we are asked to open our eyes and take a moment to experience fully and with gratitude every one of life’s little gifts” (CV 146). God can only act in the present moment and we can only discern in the present moment.

Let us pray, seek him in the wisdom of others, through silence, learn to identify his voice, and act courageously when he reveals his will to us.

## Faith Sharing

*Read the following Scriptures and answer the reflection questions below.*

- ➔ “Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.” (Romans 12:2)
- ➔ “Beloved, do not trust every spirit but test the spirits to see whether they belong to God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” (1 John 4:1)
- ➔ Jesus replied, “Rather, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it.” (Luke 11:28)
- ➔ “I say, then: live by the Spirit and you will certainly not gratify the desire of the flesh ...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” (Galatians. 5: 19, 22)
- ➔ Trust in the LORD with all your heart, on your own intelligence do not rely; in all your ways be mindful of him, and he will make straight your paths. (Proverbs 3: 5-6)

1. What practical things do each of these passages suggest we do in times of discernment?
2. What specific moments do you recall from the Gospels when Jesus modeled these ways of discerning as suggested in the above verses?

## For Discussion

1. What are the different ways that we “hear” from God in prayer?
2. Recall a time when you had to make an important decision. How did the counsel of others help you discern God’s voice? When did you hear God’s voice in the silence of your heart?
3. When have you discerned what brings you consolation and what brings you desolation; what is of God and what is not of God in your own life?
4. What forms of prayer have you witnessed young people respond to best in your ministry?
5. Based on what you have observed, what life decisions do young people find most difficult to discern? What struggles have young people expressed surrounding the topic of discernment in general?
6. What can Church leaders do to become better listeners, experts at helping young people discern? How can they better accompany young people as they discern and learn to identify the voice of God in their life? What tools might the Church still need to develop in regards to discernment?

## Practical Implications – The Pathway to Accompaniment

*After each one of these, discern within your community how this applies specifically to your context. Some suggestions are linked here; however, this is not intended to be an exhaustive resource list.*

### INITIAL STEPS

- ➔ Research and gather ideas from these helpful resources on discernment:
  - [USCCB Discernment Tools](#)
  - [Jackie and Bobby Angel on Discernment](#)
  - [6 Steps in Vocation Discernment, Discernment 101](#)

- [4 Helpful Rules for Discernment, What does God want me to do?](#)
  - [Letting God Take His Time](#)
  - [Blessed Is She Discernment Resources](#)
  - [Loyola Press- Discernment: Making Inspired Choices](#)
  - [Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious Discernment Tools](#)
  - [Catholic Apostolate Center Vocational Discernment Resources](#)
  - [Vision Vocation Network](#)
- ➔ Familiarize yourself with the practice of discernment. After engaging with the aforementioned resources, take time to practice discernment yourself - whether through tools such as the Spiritual Exercises or other Ignatian discernment resources, or perhaps a discernment retreat offered by a local retreat house or Catholic college. Strengthening your own discernment “muscle” helps equip you to accompany young people in discernment.
- ➔ Be open to ways that God is calling you to better model discernment for young people by leading a life of prayer, practicing deep sympathetic listening. Become more attentive to the quality of your relationships with others, your experiences and emotions noting what brings you joy, consolation, and peace, and living in the present moment.

### LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION

- ➔ Host a series for young people on Ignatian Spirituality and the Discernment of the Spirits. If you are not comfortable facilitating it, consider inviting members of a Jesuit community (if there is one local to you) or staff from a local retreat house.
- ➔ Engage in imaginative experiences. When faced with an important decision, ask young people to prayerfully think about taking either path. Listen deeply to their concerns and walk them through the process of discerning what path brings them consolation and what brings them desolation. Help them uncover what God is telling them through their emotions and their gifts. Then ask them to imagine choosing one path and take it to prayer. Ask them to keep a prayer journal noting their emotions and feelings as well as their conversation with God. If their choice still brings them consolation, then encourage them to act on their decision. If it does not, ask them to imagine choosing the other path and follow the same steps.
- ➔ Start up Discernment Houses, coffee houses, or other specific spaces that could be used for young adults to speak with wise mentors to discern major life decisions or transitions.

- ➔ Invite Theology on Tap speakers (or speakers at your next event) to share their personal discernment journey and how the Lord has guided them in their decision making process.
- ➔ Create a ready-made list of resources for young people that you serve in preparation for when one of them comes to you needing some tools or advice for discernment.
- ➔ Reflect on the significant people in your life. What was the quality of your relationships and how did they influence you for the good and not so good? What did those experiences teach you about finding God in your relationships with others? Share your story with the young people you minister with, invite them to tell you their story and help them see storytelling as a method of discerning God's work in our lives
- ➔ Dedicate time for silence in your planned activities with young people, orienting them on the importance of silence in the spiritual life and sharing ideas of how to use that time of silence well in order to go deeper in prayer.
- ➔ Teach new methods and forms of prayer during your regularly scheduled events with youth and young adults. Check out these websites for some creative prayer ideas for young people:
  - [NCYC Prayer Resources](#)
  - [30 Day Prayer Dare for Young Adults](#)
  - [Prayer Services for Teens](#)
  - [50 Ways to Pray](#)
  - [Imaginative Prayer for Young Adults](#)
  - [Life Teen Summer Prayer Challenge](#)
  - [10 New Ways to Pray](#)
  - [Catechism Prayer Expressions](#)
  - [Praying with Youth \(NFCYM\)](#)

## Collaborative Connections

- ➔ Host diocesan or regional retreats for young adults in both English and Spanish (and in any other language needed for your area) focused on the steps of discernment, especially on how to discern one's vocation, who God calls them to be in the world, and to discern the voice of God at work in their life.

- ➔ Create spaces for casual encounters between religious and young people for the sake of vocational exposure to the consecrated life as well as creating opportunities for dialogue, which are both important concerning informed vocational discernment (CV 276). Some examples of these encounters could be:
  - Teatime with religious sisters from a local order;
  - At a baseball game with the parish priests;
  - A pilgrimage visit to a nearby monastery;
  - Spend a day at a convent to enter into the life of a religious sister; etc.
- ➔ Have a vocations panel at your next gathering of young people and include as many vocational paths as possible to be present on the panel and have each person share how they discerned God's call to live that particular way of life, allowing for questions afterwards.

## Prayer

*In times of discernment, we do not always know the way in which we should go.*

*Thomas Merton, a monk of the Abbey of Gethsemani, wrote this beautiful prayer*

*that can be recited during a time of uncertainty, during a time of discernment:*

*"My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going.*

*I do not see the road ahead of me.*

*I cannot know for certain where it will end.*

*Nor do I really know myself,*

*and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so.*

*But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you.*

*And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing.*

*I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.*

*And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road,*

*though I may know nothing about it.*

*Therefore, will I trust you always,*

*though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death.*

*I will not fear, for you are ever with me,*

*and you will never leave me to face my perils alone."*

*God, be pleased with our desire to please you,*

*especially in the moments when we do not know*

*the way in which we should go.*

*Help us find wise mentors who listen with sensitivity*

*and help us become our best selves; who God wants us to be.*

*May we always have the desire to please you*

*in every decision we face and in every path we take.*

*We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ,*

*who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,*

*one God, forever and ever. Amen.*



## Theme 10:

# Our Pathway to Mission

## NUESTRO CAMINO A LA MISIÓN

*Where does Jesus send us? There are no borders, no limits: he sends us everywhere. The Gospel is for everyone, not just for some. It is not only for those who seem closer to us, more receptive, more welcoming. It is for everyone. Do not be afraid to go and bring Christ into every area of life, to the fringes of society, even to those who seem farthest away and most indifferent. The Lord seeks all; he wants everyone to feel the warmth of his mercy and his love. He invites us to be fearless missionaries wherever we are and in whatever company we find ourselves: in our neighborhoods, in school or sports or social life, in volunteer service or in the workplace. Wherever we are, we always have an opportunity to share the joy of the Gospel. That is how the Lord goes out to meet everyone. He loves you, dear young people, for you are the means by which he can spread his light and hope. He is counting on your courage, your boldness and your enthusiasm. (CV 177)*

# Introduction

All Christians, by virtue of our baptism, are made capable of participating in Christ's mission here on earth to bring all people to himself. This participation began from the moment when Jesus Christ himself sent his disciples out on the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:18-20). Every Christian is **equipped** through the Holy Spirit to participate in Christ's mission and for the particular mission to which the Lord calls each of us individually. This is true regardless of our position in the Church, level of education, age, or gender.

# Key Quotes

*All emphasis added*

This missionary vocation thus has to do with service. For our life on earth reaches full stature when it becomes an offering... I am a mission on this earth; that is the reason why I am here in this world. It follows that every form of pastoral activity, formation and spirituality should be seen in the light of our Christian vocation. (CV 254)

A vocation, while a gift, will undoubtedly also be **demanding**. God's gifts are interactive; to enjoy them we have to be ready to take risks. Yet the demands they make are not an obligation imposed from without, but an incentive to let that gift grow and develop, and then become a gift for others. When the Lord awakens a vocation, he thinks not only of what you already are, but of what you will one day be, in his company and in that of others. (CV 289)

Restless discontent, combined with exhilaration before the opening up of new horizons, generates a boldness that leads you to stand up and take responsibility for a mission. This **healthy restlessness** typical of youth continues to dwell in every heart that remains young, open and generous. (CV 138)

## Summary and Insight

When referring to the mission of the Church in *Christus Vivit*, Pope Francis consistently uses the language of ‘vocation’. He first reminds us that our overall mission is to live the **Christian vocation** of our baptismal call to holiness (CV 162, 150, 159, 249, 253-258). He then speaks of our **particular vocation** which he breaks down into considering the vocation to marriage and family (259-267), considering vocation in the workplace (268-273), and considering the vocation to special consecration and religious life (274-277). Lastly, Pope Francis speaks of our **missionary vocation** itself (CV 27, 139, 168, 177-178, 254). As Pope Francis connects our vocation to our mission, three particular concepts stand out: service (253-255, 285-286), sacrifice (178, 273, 289), and responsibility (257, 264, 271, 138).

Giving of yourself and your time in **service** to others is essential to discovering the mission and purpose the Lord has for you, “for our life on earth reaches full stature when it becomes an offering” (CV 254). Contrary to what some people experience, discovering one’s mission in life (i.e. one’s vocation) should never make you turn inward and “navel gaze.” Rather, the process should open you up to others and allow you to become more of the person God truly created you to be (CV 162).

**Sacrifice** is a principal element to living our mission as “a vocation, while a gift, will undoubtedly also be demanding” (CV 289) and we cannot mistakenly think that “this mission is soft and easy” (CV 178). Leading lives of service and sacrifice for others lends itself to living a life of **responsibility**. The fruit of such a life is living out a mission of love for God and love for others. In the face of the modern culture, Pope Francis urges us with these words: “I ask you to swim against the tide; yes, I am asking you to rebel against this culture that sees everything as temporary and that ultimately believes you are incapable of responsibility, incapable of true love” (CV 264). Though living our vocation requires service, sacrifice, and great responsibility, above all, **our vocation is to love. Our mission is to love.**

Pope Francis concludes *Christus Vivit* focusing on the theme of mission. And it seems with great intentionality that Pope Francis sends us out on mission at the end of his apostolic exhortation, similarly to how Christ did in the Great Commission. It is important to note that Pope Francis highlights the topic of ministry before mission in this apostolic exhortation. This, too, seems intentional as if he is emphasizing that ministry itself is not the end goal; rather, the mission is our aim. He is mission minded, as is the Church Universal. Every Christian is called to engage in the mission of Jesus Christ and to invite others to join in that mission too. For those of us walking alongside young people, part of our mission includes helping those young people discover their mission and particular call to love in this life. Following suite with Pope Francis, we conclude this study guide focusing on vocation and mission. As baptized Catholics, we not only embrace **the mission to live our Christian vocation** everywhere we go, at all times, and with everyone we meet but we also invite others to join in the mission along the way.

## Faith Sharing

Read the following Scriptures and answer the reflection questions below.

- ➔ Then Jesus approached and said to them, “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20)
- ➔ “Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?” “Here I am,” I said; “send me!” (Isaiah 6:8)

1. What stirs in your heart as you read the Great Commission?
2. How does knowing that Jesus promises to be with us always as we live out our mission shift your perspective on this missionary mandate?
3. Do you think young people are aware that “The Great Commission” applies to each one of us as a follower of Christ?
4. Have you ever experienced a moment, like Isaiah did, when you realized the Lord just needed a willing person to go and do what he wanted done, and that you could be that person to do it?
5. How can we encourage young people to live in a spirit of “Here I am, Lord, send me”?

## For Discussion

1. What opportunities do young people have to give of themselves in service to others in your area, parish, or neighborhood? Are they taking advantage of these opportunities?
2. What is the most common dialogue among young people surrounding the topic of work in your area? Are they working in dignified jobs? Are the wages fair? Are they fulfilled in their work? Are they eager to work or wanting to avoid it? Do they have clarity on the type of work the Lord is calling them to do?
3. What is the most common dialogue among young people surrounding the topic of marriage and family in your area? What are the most common hurts, fears, and desires expressed? Is there an eagerness to get married and start a family as expressed in CV 259 or is there a tendency to shy away from the idea?

4. Who is a young person that you know that is actively discerning religious life? In considering religious life, what has been the response of that young person's family and friends? What common fears or misconceptions exist for both families and young people themselves in regards to religious life?
5. What do you think are the hurdles as well as opportunities for young people to actively engage in the missionary activity of the Church?

## Practical Implications – The Pathway to Accompaniment

*After each one of these, discern within your community how this applies specifically to your context. Some suggestions are linked here; however, this is not intended to be an exhaustive resource list.*

### INITIAL STEPS

- ➔ Read Saint Pope John Paul II's Encyclical Letter [Redemptoris Missio-Mission of the Redeemer](#), especially Parts 5, 6, and 7, to get energized about participating in the mission of the Redeemer to bring the message of Christ, the good news of salvation, to all people. You can also watch [Heroic Mission](#), a short video featuring quotes from Redemptoris Missio.
- ➔ Reflect on this quote from the Catechism: "Those who with God's help have welcomed Christ's call and freely responded to it are urged on by love of Christ to proclaim the Good News everywhere in the world. This treasure, received from the apostles, has been faithfully guarded by their successors. All Christ's faithful are called to hand it on from generation to generation, by professing the faith, by living it in fraternal sharing, and by celebrating it in liturgy and prayer" ([CCC 3](#)).
- ➔ Per Pope Francis's encouragement, read the fourth and fifth Parts of the [Apostolic Exhortation Amoris Laetitia](#) to further explore his point that young people intensely feel the call to love as they dream of meeting the right person with whom they can form a family and build a life together. (CV 259)
- ➔ Research podcasts that exist for young people related to discerning a career path, strengthening employability, building a resume, advocating for a pay raise, character in the workplace, living faith in the working world, etc.
- ➔ Create a comprehensive list of ways young people can put their faith in action including local, national, and international opportunities to serve, volunteer, and go on mission.

### LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION

- ➔ Offer young people a variety of opportunities to discover more of their personality and character, strengths and weaknesses through taking personality tests, hosting talent shows, giving online quizzes, and offering general education on the topics of personality types, strengths, and charisms.
- ➔ Plan a local service opportunity or mission trip, but prepare the young people beforehand by connecting what they will be doing to the Great Commission missionary mandate. Include a time of reflection and group sharing afterwards. Consider doing this regularly as a group and going to the same place to serve so that there is continuity and opportunity for personal relationships to form.
- ➔ Invite a full-time missionary to come speak to your group and share his/her experiences in the field. Have that individual also share practical ideas for how to live “as a missionary on mission” in everyday life at school, work, and home.
- ➔ Create several action committees of young people, according to each of their gifts and interests, responsible for making action plans to respond to parishioners in times of need, to engage in social issues, to advocate for the most vulnerable in the community, to coordinate service opportunities both inside the parish and in the general community at large, etc.
- ➔ Author Frederick Buechner famously says: “The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.” Host an evening focused on this theme in light of our call to be missional. Have members of the group sit and reflect on Buechner’s quote and then have each person privately answer the following questions:
  - ➔ When do I feel most alive? What activities bring me the greatest joy?
  - ➔ What am I deeply passionate about? What change would I like to see in the world?
  - ➔ What can I do to take action on the changes I wish to see? What do I enjoy doing that could be a blessing to others and this world?
- ➔ Consider creating a series for your ministry with young people exploring the topics of Christian vocation, particular vocation, and missionary vocation.

## Collaborative Connections

- ➔ Take your youth group to local job or career fairs to explore the different options that exist that they might not have considered as potential careers.
- ➔ Connect your young adult group members to job coaches or career counselors in the area.
- ➔ Ensure that outreach to young married couples and newlyweds is part of your parish and diocesan ministry to ensure that those couples get follow-up formation, guidance, and accompaniment after the actual wedding day.
- ➔ Consider creating a mentorship program connecting newlyweds with more seasoned couples living out their mission as a married couple through the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony.
- ➔ Collaborate with an international mission agency to plan an experience with and for young people to go on a specific mission in a foreign land in order to drive home the point that we are literally called to “make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:18).

## Prayer

You are the vine, we are the branches. (John 15:5-8)

*Jesus, our Savior, thank you for inviting us to partake in your mission here on earth.*

*Instill in every young person the fire of your love and an eagerness to partake in your mission.*

*What you most desire from us, O Lord, is holiness. But help us to discover the particular path of holiness to which you have called us.*

*We trust you, God, to lead and guide our steps when we do not know the way to go.*

*And we place in your good hands all the young people ready to respond generously to your call.*

*Give us a readiness to serve others, sacrifice as needed, and take responsibility for the mission*

*to which we have been called, the mission that is ours to complete.*

*We look to Saint Jose Sanchez del Rio, Saint Francis of Assisi, Saint Joan of Arc, Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, Saint Dominic Savio, Saint Therese of Lisieux, Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, and Blessed Chiara Badano as some of the supreme examples of holy young people who lived out their particular mission on this earth until the very end. Pray for us all you holy young people.*

*We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.*

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# **Christus Vivit: The Pathway to Accompaniment**

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**A Resource for Journeying with Youth and Young Adults**

**Developed by the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM)**  
in collaboration with the USCCB National Advisory Team on Young Adult Ministry

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