



**CHRISTUS VIVIT
(CHRIST IS ALIVE)**

By Fr. Matthew P. Schneider, LC

SUMMARY

Apostolic exhortations, like *Christus Vivit* is, are generally letters to the whole world on a specific theme. In this case, the difference is not so much the theme but the audience. It is addressed primarily to young people.

The letter is structured into nine chapters. The first two chapters provide a kind of Scriptural background, talking about the two testaments, then Jesus and the saints. The third provides an analysis of the situation young people find themselves in. The fourth is probably the most important chapter: it is a presentation of basic Christian truths in a format accessible to young people. The fifth chapter talks about the various experiences young people have today. Chapter six brings back the value of listening to elders and being rooted in culture rather than being unrooted and homogenous. The seventh is the longest chapter, dealing with many practical details about youth ministry. The last two chapters talk about the vocation with chapter eight focusing on different vocations while chapter nine focusing on discerning a vocation.

Each section of this document is good and coherent in itself. The document itself tries to cover a wide swath of all aspects affecting young people, so one part may not relate super-well to another. This is inevitable in such a wide-reaching document.

Note: In this document as in many Church documents translated from other European languages, “youth” or “young people” refer to a slightly older age than in everyday American English. World Youth Day has an age limit of 16 to 35 and that is approximately the age the Pope is referring to in this document.

CATEGORIES OF INTEREST

Young People, Youth Ministry, Youth, Holiness, Kerygma, Young Adults, College, High School, Young Professionals, Vocation, Intergenerational Ministry

TIMEFRAME

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RECOMMENDED NUMBER OF SESSIONS

If doing it as a small group, I'd recommend 9 sessions: 1 for each chapter, covering the intro and summary in the first and last session respectively.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Everyone will need this study guide and a copy of the Essay:

- Free webpage of [Christus Vivit](#)
- Free pdf of [Christus Vivit](#)
- Buy USCCB print edition of [Christus Vivit](#)
- Buy OSV print edition of [Christus Vivit](#)
- Buy WAU print edition of [Christus Vivit](#)

It would also be helpful to keep a copy of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* and *The Bible* at hand.

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

Anyone can participate because the Pope addresses the document to all people. However, given the theme, this is more suited for youth, or those who work with youth (whether youth ministers or parents). In general, homogenous groups work better so high schoolers, college students, parents and youth ministry volunteers might want to do it separately if numbers are sufficient.

STRUCTURE

Each chapter / session begins with an introduction to the material followed by questions. The questions can be divided two ways. First, some questions are more about comprehension while others are for reflection on what Francis said, and often both are mixed. Questions have no label distinguishing comprehension or reflection. Second, 11 out of 107 questions are labelled “optional” as they don't cover key points of the document but are helpful for someone who wants to be thorough. The consideration before the questions in each chapter is a kind of summary: you can read it before reading the chapter and/or as a reminder of what you previously read when beginning a group discussion.

The questions here are meant to help you understand and reflect on the text, and to apply the text to your life and the lives of those around you. Paragraph numbers are after each question, so you can look it up if you are uncertain about anything. I have tried to make questions so that any group can start a discussion. Feel no obligation to answer every question but try to have a good discussion about growing as youth or helping youth grow in holiness.



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CHAPTER 3

You Are the “Now” of God

CONSIDERATIONS

After putting forward the scriptural and spiritual foundation in the first two chapters, Pope Francis dedicates this chapter to discussing where young people are. Much of this is dedicated to specific struggles they are having (As this guide is designed for those in Canada and the USA, I will skip some issues, which are uncommon in these countries). This chapter might seem overly negative on first reading; however, we need to understand Francis’s intention: he wants to point out how tough and difficult life is today for many young people, in order to point out what the Church is responding to and who Jesus is an answer for. It is, in a way, the listening that Pope Francis often promotes.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Are young people just the future? What does the Church see in them? (64)
2. What does the Pope suggest instead of prepackaged answers? How often do I use such answers? (65)
3. Should we look mainly at young people’s difficulties or troubles? Or should we appreciate their good points and look with hope? (66–67)
4. (Optional) What does Pope Francis mention about the world demographics of young people? (68–70)
5. Is youth something abstract? How should we analyze it? How might this analysis change our approach? (71)
6. (Optional) What aspects of living in a world crisis does Francis mention for young people? Which do people I know face? (72–80)
7. Do the sufferings of other young people hurt my heart? Do I weep for them? What motivates this weeping? (76–77)
8. Do I have a good relationship with my parents? Do I learn from them and respect them? What could we do to improve this relationship? (80)
9. What kind of moral questions do I struggle with? How can the Church help? What do I want to learn from her regarding sexuality? (81–82)

10. (Optional) How is my longing for God expressed? Do I know people who express their longing for God in ways that don’t mention God? (84)
11. How do I live in the digital environment? What good or bad can I see in it? How do I communicate through it? Am I aware of dangers like loneliness and being manipulated? How do I protect myself from these dangers? (86–90)
12. (Optional) Have I migrated countries in my life or do I know people who have? What was the experience like? Has there been a cultural uprooting? How can the Church helping people in such situations? (91–94)
13. Have I or someone I known suffered abuse? Sexual or physical abuse? Was this abuse within the Church? If I have no direct experience, do I realize how widespread abuse is? How can I respond? (95–102)
14. How many priests really committed abuse? Do I realize it is a smaller percentage than the general male population? What has been my own response to the clerical abuse Crisis? What more can I and the Church do going forward? (95–102)
15. How does Venerable Carlo Acutis offer a way out? How does he show holiness in the contemporary world? How is it that so many are photocopies like he said? How can we escape this? (Note: although not mentioned in *Christus Vivit*, Carlo’s most famous work cataloguing Eucharistic Miracles is still available online www.miracolieuucaristici.org.)

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CHAPTER 4

A Great Message For All Young People

CONSIDERATIONS

This is a central chapter to this whole document. The Pope presents a Kerygmatic message about the basics of salvation in a way that is specifically adapted to young people. He wants to tell young people about the great message of God's love. He structures this on three truths: Gods' love, Jesus salvation and Jesus' continued life.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What are the three truths Pope Francis structures this chapter around? Have you heard them? What did you learn from them? (111–29, specifically 112, 118 and 124)
2. How does God's love relate to familial love? Is God's love fatherly, motherly or both? (113–114)
3. What other characteristics of God's love does the Pope focus on? How does God remember us? Does he overwhelm us? Does he accept our struggles? (115–117)
4. How does Jesus accompany us today? Does it affect our day-today lives with our problems, frailties and flaws? (119–120)
5. Is salvation valuable? Can we buy it? Does Jesus value us? (122–123)
6. Is Jesus just a nice model from 2000 years ago? Or does he fill us with grace today? Is he present in our lives today? (124–126)
7. Is Jesus a friend? Does he show goodness has the upper hand? What power does his resurrection have? How can knowing he lives now lead us to a relationship or encounter with him? (126–129)
8. What role does the Holy Spirit have in these three truths? What does he give or take away? How is he the Spirit of Love? How is he the "source of youth at its best"? (130–133)

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CHAPTER 5

Paths of Youth

CONSIDERATIONS

This chapter is about living youth with Jesus. It talks about the various experiences of youth – a time of decision, a time of energy, a time of hope and expectation, a time thirsting for new experiences, a time of fraternity, and a time of growth – and speaks of how Jesus can enter into it. In the center of the chapter comes a key section on living friendship with Jesus as a young person.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How is our youth a gift of God? (134–135)
2. How is youth a time of decision and development? How was it in Jesus' time and how does that compare to today? (136–137)
3. How should God's love affect our decisions? How does God's love drive out fear? Do I fear definitive choices? What decisions do I need to make soon? How will God's love affect those decisions? (138–140)
4. How do we fight the temptation to give up? How can we deal with normal levels of anxiety? Why shouldn't we sit back and watch life from an armchair? (141–143)
5. Does Jesus want us to have a boring and unfulfilling life? Does Jesus want us to enjoy the small pleasures? Does God want us to enjoy the present? What should our reaction be to all these good experiences that come to us? (144–147)
6. Is God present in our difficulties? How can Cardinal Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan show us how to find God in difficulties? (148–149)
7. How do those with disabilities experience the world differently? How can we reach out to help them? (149)
8. How is Jesus my best friend? Do I encounter him every day as Pope Francis suggests? (150)
9. Is friendship with others a gift from God? How do they show us God's love? Who is my best friend who reflects God's love to me? Am I good, long-term friend? (151–152)
10. When and how did Jesus call himself our friend? How can we see his love as part of his friendship with us? How lasting is his friendship with us? Can we share our secrets with him like with our bestest friend? (153–155)
11. Is Jesus only present when we pray? How can we live with him always? What does he dream for me as his friend? (156–157)
12. How much time and effort do I dedicate to growing physically or mentally? How does that compare with time spent growing spiritually? Do I spontaneously seek Jesus? (158–159)
13. (Optional) How can we transfer the virtues of youth into our older years? How can we stay spiritually young? (160–162)
14. How can we be close to others in fraternity? How does the Holy Spirit want us to come out of ourselves? What is the danger of withdrawing? How can we share our joy with each other? (163–167)
15. Is the lay vocation fulfilled by just serving in the church? How are lay people called to build society? Can lay people fulfill their mission by simply withdrawing into small groups? (168–169)
16. What are some examples the Pope gives for how young people serve? What acts of charity does he mention? Do I do any of these? How can I build a better world? (170–174)
17. How can we witness to the Gospel? What does it mean to "be light"? Are witness and preaching mutually exclusive? (175–176)
18. Where might Jesus send us? Francis talks about the fringes or peripheries of society: where might I find those near my own home? What aspects of the Gospel challenge me personally? (177–178)

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CHAPTER 7

Youth Ministry

CONSIDERATIONS

This chapter addresses what most people think about most when they think of youth and the Church: youth ministry. The Pope wants to offer some general reflections not offer a single program. He thinks there are many good programs in the Church that should work in harmony. As far as principles, Francis wants to point out: (1) that young people are agents, (2) that we should work together, (3) that we need both outreach and personal growth, (4) that we need to be “rooted” in our culture and family, (5) that we need to reach out to where youth are, (6) that we need to develop and form leaders among the youth, (7) that youth are missionaries, and (8) that we older people have a duty to properly accompany them.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How do young people fall outside usual programs? What has happened with groups and movements regarding young people? How should such groups and parishes work together? (202, if you have more questions, there is a recent Vatican document that goes more in depth on this called *Iuvenescent Ecclesia*.)
2. How can young people be agents of youth ministry? How can I be an agent of youth ministry? What talents do I have to offer? (203–204)
3. What does Pope Francis think of labels like “conservative” and “liberal”? How have I seen them divide the Church? What do different perspectives have to offer? (205)
4. What does the Pope mean by journeying together? How can we learn from each other? (206–207)
5. What are the two main courses of action Pope Francis mentions? How do they interact? (208–215)
6. Outreach. Francis suggests creating appealing ways for youth to come together: how can we make this happen in our concrete circumstances? How does Pope Francis suggest we use language in such outreach? (210–211)
7. Growth refers to personal growth of each not numbers. How do we follow up after people experience Jesus? How can we improve this? Do we focus on the kerygma or skip it? What kinds of human, spiritual, intellectual and apostolic formation do we offer other youths? (212–215)
8. Pope Francis suggests we often feel orphaned yet the Church can be a family. When have you felt orphaned? How has the Church been a family for you? How can the Church better develop as a family or in friendship? (216–220)
9. (Optional: for those in Catholic schools) How can the school be a place of ministry and evangelization? How should we avoid the bunker mentality Pope Francis warns us of? (221–222)
10. How are spiritual and cultural formation connected? Is study just to get a good job? Why does it matter to ask questions? (223)
11. What areas does Francis list as key for youth ministry? When talking about prayer, he mentions adoration and contemplation: what are my experiences of these? How would I describe it? How can we serve better? Why are sports and music important fields of evangelization? (224–227)
12. Where can we always see God? How can we see him in nature, in the Eucharist, in the other sacraments, etc.? (228–229)
13. When we think of “popular” youth ministry, we often think of big flashy events, but the Pope focuses more on forming Christian leaders. What kinds of leaders is he speaking about? Are we just seeking human qualities or something from the Holy Spirit? (230–232)
14. Francis criticizes reductive moralistic rules but wants responsibilities in their place: what is the difference? Hint: rules are in a book, responsibilities are to another person. (233)
15. How can we better include others in youth ministry? What about questioners or non-believers? Do we just help those fully accepting every line of the Catechism? (234–235)
16. (Optional) What does the pope get out of the story of the disciples at Emmaus? (236–238)



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