



Christ *is* Alive

AN AUSTRALIAN GROUP READING GUIDE TO
POPE FRANCIS'
CHRISTUS VIVIT

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This reading guide is
responding to Pope Francis'
*Christus Vivit post-synodal
apostolic exhortation to young
people and to the entire people
of God.*

Direct quotations from
the exhortation are always
presented within quotation
marks.

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HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE

GATHER. This Reading Guide is designed to be used either alone or with others. If you are sharing in a group, begin by welcoming everyone. Offer a special welcome to participants from other faith traditions who may join you. Ask participants to introduce themselves if needed. As your private or group session gets underway, always begin with the Sign of the Cross.

DIVIDE this document into enough material to fill the time allotted for each of your study or prayer times, or for the amount of time your small group meets. Simply mark your stopping point for each session and take up next time where you left off. Work through the material as quickly or as slowly as you wish.

READ. If you are meeting in a small group, move around the circle and read aloud the stanzas of this summary. Rotate readers with each numbered article. Group members should note items in the Pope's teaching that strike them as especially important. (Do not read aloud the article numbers. They are included to help you find each article in the original document if you want to explore in more depth certain elements of this exhortation.) If you are using this material for private study, read the material slowly and reflectively.

DISCUSS AND PRAY. When you come to the group process notes, pause to continue around the circle, discussing or praying as the notes direct. If you're in private study, put down the booklet and pause at these points to allow the Lord to speak in your meditation; enter into prayerful conversation with him. Group users may do the same between group meetings. Use our discussion and meditation suggestions as a starting point and add your questions, prayers, or action plans.

FINISH. As you come to the end of your process in each session, invite participants to identify the one or two large ideas that they hear the Holy Father teaching in that segment of the document. Each participant may hear the text differently; there are no 'correct' answers.

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INTRODUCTION

'Christ is Alive' (or *Christus Vivit* in Latin), are the first words of Pope Francis' exhortation (or statement) to young people. The document, which was published in March 2019, contains the Pope's reflections upon the discussions that took place at the General Synod of bishops during October 2018 in Rome.

The Synod gathered bishops from all over the world, but the Pope also invited young people from every continent to come to Rome and contribute to the process. The young people spoke to the Pope and the bishops about their experience of being young, about their struggles and hopes, and about their experience of the Church. In addition to this, many young people from all over the world participated in surveys in the months before the Synod about similar topics. The term 'synod' means 'being on the way together', and so the process tried to ensure that the bishops and the young people were on a common journey of faith and dialogue.

The Pope's vision was that the Synod would reflect upon young people's experience of life, faith and the discernment of their vocation. In other words, in *Christ is Alive* he wants to help young people to be able to listen to their friend Jesus as he calls them to make their unique contribution in the Church and the world.

The exhortation is addressed to young people, and so you might like to imagine the Pope is speaking to you personally as you read this summary of the document's major points.

CHAPTER ONE

WHAT DOES THE WORD OF GOD HAVE TO SAY ABOUT YOUNG PEOPLE?



Pope Francis draws upon many passages from both the Old and New Testaments in order to break open the theme of young people's encounter with God and the mission to which the Lord calls them. The Pope also introduces an important theme in *Christ is Alive*: that 'youth' is a state of heart rather than a chronological age (or even a state of mind), and we remain young when our hearts are open to God.

The Scriptures recount many different encounters between young people and God. In the Old Testament, various young people encounter God, who calls them to undertake important missions for the

sake of God's people. Joseph accomplished great things as God used his dreams to lead him. God was not offended by Gideon's honest questioning, and in fact called Gideon to free Israel's people from their oppressors. The young Samuel became a great prophet because he listened to the voice of the Lord, and identified the overlooked David as the Lord's chosen instrument and king.

While Solomon and Jeremiah initially thought that their youthfulness was an obstacle to God's purposes, they became, with the Lord's encouragement, deeply committed to their mission.

Naaman's unnamed servant girl trusted in the power of God to

heal Naaman, while Ruth was an example of both generosity to others and tenacity in realising her own plans.

In the New Testament, Jesus tells the story of a younger ('prodigal') son who, after leading a dissolute life, returns home in order to make a new start. The older brother in the story also possessed an 'old heart', because of his greed, selfishness and envy. St Paul calls us to remove the 'old self' and become a 'young self' through choosing compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forbearance and forgiveness. True youth consists of a loving heart, and the soul grows old through everything that separates us from others.

'In a word, true youth means having a heart capable of loving, whereas everything that separates us from others makes the soul grow old.' (CV 13)



For Jesus, youth are as valuable as adults, and as St Paul says should therefore be treated 'as brothers' (1 Tim 5:1). However, young people do need to respect the authority of those who are older (1 Pet 5:5) and learn from the wisdom of others.

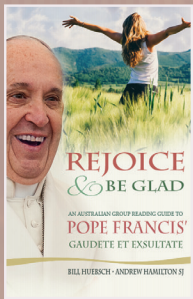
Following the Lord's commandments retains our youthfulness, whereas we lose our youth through attachment to riches and comforts (Mark 10:20, Matt 19: 20-22). The gospel gives the example of the wise young women who were ready and waiting for the master, in contrast with those who were distracted or sleeping. It is possible to spend one's youth being distracted, half-asleep, or engaged in

superficial relationships and shallow experiences. Or we can fill our youth with pursuing true greatness. As he did to the widow's dead son, Jesus says to us, 'Arise!' (Luke 7:14).

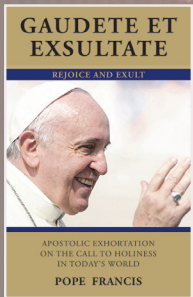
'Young people are not meant to become discouraged; they are meant to dream great things, to seek vast horizons, to aim higher, to take on the world, to accept challenges and to offer the best of themselves to the building of something better.'
(CV 15)

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

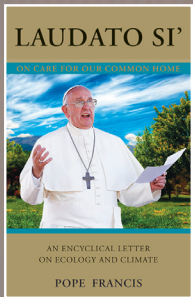
1. Look up some of the biblical stories of young people that Pope Francis refers to. Who inspires you most? What is it about his or her story that you admire?
2. Do you agree that being young is about the state of someone's heart rather than their age? Can you think of someone who is older in years but has retained a youthful spirit? What is it about them that keeps them young?
3. We sometimes hear of 'jaded' young people? Are they old before their time? What do you think Pope Francis means?



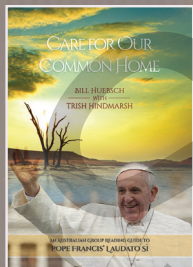
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Christus vivit (Christ is Alive),
Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation to young people, uses Scripture, the witness of young saints, and others, to reflect upon the place of faith and vocation in young people's lives, and the contribution they can make to the Church and the world.

In this plain English study guide, Fr Chris Ryan MGL offers insights to make Pope Francis' message even more accessible.

Christ is Alive
An Australian Reading Guide
provides paraphrased summaries of the Pope's official document, and prayerful discussion and reflection questions that can help each of us see how Francis' words apply to our own lives.

Ideal for Catholic schools, young people, youth ministry, confirmation programs, parish leaders, or for individual study.

This easy-to-use guide can help all believers understand, celebrate, and live Francis' message of Gospel joy, love, and peace.

This Reading Guide is sure to help you answer the call of Pope Francis.

A Prayer for Our Young People

Lord Jesus
your Church
turns her attention
to all the young people
of the world.
We pray that they might
boldly take charge
of their lives,
aim for the most beautiful
and profound things
of life
and always keep their
hearts unencumbered.

Accompanied by wise and
generous guides, help
them respond to
the call you make to each
of them,
to realise a proper plan
of life and achieve
happiness.
Keep their hearts open to
dreaming great dreams
and make them
concerned for the
good of others.

Like the Beloved Disciple,
may they stand at the foot
of the Cross,
to receive your Mother as
a gift from you.
May they be witnesses to
your Resurrection
and be aware that you
are at their side
as they joyously proclaim
you as Lord.

Amen.



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