Following the Synod on Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment in October of 2018, Pope Francis issued an apostolic exhortation titled _Christus Vivit_ in March of 2019. This document is addressed to all people of God, but it is specifically written for young people and those responsible for their formation.

This reading guide can be used individually or within the context of a group. It is designed to introduce people to _Christus Vivit_, to foster reflection and discussion on the call Pope Francis issues within it, and to help determine how parishes and the Church at large can answer this call. This guide is meant to provide aid in understanding the document, not to replace it. For the best reflections and discussions, we encourage using the guide as you read _Christus Vivit_.

_Guide composed by Maddie Davin, DWC Spring 2019 Intern_
Introduction
(#1-4)

“He is in you, he is with you and he never abandons you. However far you may wander, he is always there, the Risen One. He calls you and he waits for you to return to him and start over again. When you feel you are growing old out of sorrow, resentment or fear, doubt or failure, he will always be there to restore your strength and your hope.” (#2)

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Chapter One:
What does the word of God have to say about young people?
(#5-21)

“Young hearts are naturally ready to change, to turn back, get up and learn from life.” (#12)

“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.” (#15)

“A wise young person is open to the future, yet still capable of learning something from the experience of others.” (#16)

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. What does Scripture teach about young people?
2. How does Scripture’s teaching on young people apply to our world today?
3. Do young people get discouraged by the world and by the Church?
4. What can the Church do to address issues which discourage young people?

Take Action

1. How can your parish do a better job of highlighting Scripture’s relevance to young people?
2. Consider actions you can take to begin a parish conversation on both the discouragement and joys young people receive from the Church.
Chapter Two:
Jesus, ever young
(#22-63)

“Let us ask the Lord to free the Church from those who would make her grow old, encase her in the past, hold her back or keep her at a standstill. But let us also ask him to free her from another temptation: that of thinking she is young because she accepts everything the world offers her, thinking that she is renewed because she sets her message aside and acts like everybody else. No! The Church is young when she is herself, when she receives ever anew the strength born of God’s word, the Eucharist, and the daily presence of Christ and the power of his Spirit in our lives. The Church is young when she shows herself capable of constantly returning to her source.” (#35)

“Young people can help keep her 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.” (#37)

“We need to make more room for the voices of young people to be heard” (#38)

“Consequently, the Church should not be excessively caught up in herself but instead, and above all, reflect Jesus Christ. This means humbly acknowledging that some things concretely need to change, and if that is to happen, she needs to appreciate the vision but also the criticisms of young people.” (#39)

“Although many young people are happy to see a Church that is humble yet confident in her gifts and capable of offering fair and fraternal criticism, others want a Church that listens more, that does more than simply condemn the world. They do not want to see a Church that is silent and afraid to speak, but neither one that is always battling obsessively over two or three issues. To be credible to young people, there are times when she needs to regain her humility and simply listen, recognizing that what others have to say can provide some light to help her better understand the Gospel.” (#41)

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. What does Jesus living and preaching as a young person mean for the way we incorporate young people within the Church?
2. How can young people stop corruption within the Church?
3. How can the Church do a better job of listening to the concerns of young people?
4. What can young people, frustrated with the Church, learn from tradition?

Take Action

1. How can your parish do a better job of incorporating young people into parish life?
2. Think of something you can do to listen to the voices of young people.
“We cannot just say that young people are the future of our world. They are its present; even now, they are helping to enrich it.” (#64)

“We want to weep so that society itself can be more of a mother, so that in place of killing it can learn to give birth, to become a promise of life. We weep when we think of all those young people who have already lost their lives due to poverty and violence, and we ask society to learn to be a caring mother.” (#75)

“The Church’s concern is focused especially on those fleeing from war, violence, political or religious persecution, from natural disasters including those caused by climate change, and from extreme poverty.” (#91) (Final Document #25)

“Fragmentation is also felt by the communities they leave behind, which lose their most vigorous and enterprising elements, and by families, especially when one or both of the parents migrates, leaving the children in the country of origin. The Church has an important role as a point of reference for the young members of these divided families. However, the stories of migrants are also stories of encounter between individuals and between cultures. For the communities and societies to which they come, migrants bring an opportunity for enrichment and the integral human development of all.” (#93) (Final Document, #27)

“In a special way, I urge young people not to play into the hands of those who would set them against other young people, newly arrived in their countries, and who would encourage them to view the latter as a threat, and not possessed of the same inalienable dignity as every other human being.” (#94)

“Thank God, those who committed these horrible crimes are not the majority of priests, who carry out their ministry with fidelity and generosity. I ask young people to let themselves be inspired by this vast majority. And if you see a priest at risk, because he has lost the joy of his ministry, or seeks affective compensation, or is taking the wrong path, remind him of his commitment to God and his people, remind him of the Gospel and urge him to hold to his course. In this way, you will contribute greatly to something fundamental: preventing these atrocities from being repeated.” (#100)

**Reflection/Discussion Questions**

1. How has the Church served as a source of unity in your community? In what ways has it failed to do so?

2. What can the Church do to better respond to generational and cultural divisions within your community? Within Appalachia?

**Take Action**

1. If not already present, begin a dialogue within your parish about transparency, trust, and unity within your community.

2. Think of a way to show your support for the priests in your community who carry out their ministry with fidelity and generosity.
Chapter Four:
A great message for all young people
(#111-133)

“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.” (#112)

“At other times, he speaks of himself as filled with the love of a mother whose visceral love for her children makes it impossible for her to neglect or abandon them: “Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you” (Is 49:15).” (#114)

“The Lord's love is greater than all our problems, frailties and flaws. Yet it is precisely through our problems, frailties and flaws that he wants to write this love story.” (#120) (Address at the Vigil with Young People, XXXIV World Youth Day in Panama (26 January 2019): L'Osservatore Romano, 28-29 January 2019, 6)

“He fills your life with his unseen presence; wherever you go, he will be waiting there for you. Because he did not only come in the past, but he comes to you today and every day, inviting you to set out towards ever new horizons.” (#125)

Reflection/Discussion Questions
1. Where do you see God's love in your life?
2. Do you feel God's love, even when you feel broken or flawed?
3. How do we show God's love to others, even when they appear broken or flawed in our eyes?
4. Have you experienced God calling you beyond your comfort zone, beyond your horizon?

Take Action
1. How can your parish do a better job of welcoming young people into the Church?
2. What can you do in your life to show people that God's love is greater than our own brokenness?
Chapter Five: 
Paths of youth 
(#134-178)

“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.” (#138)

“Dear young people, make the most of these years of your youth. Don’t observe life from a balcony. Don’t confuse happiness with an armchair, or live your life behind a screen. Whatever you do, do not become the sorry sight of an abandoned vehicle! Don’t be parked cars, but dream freely and make good decisions. Take risks, even if it means making mistakes. Don’t go through life anaesthetized or approach the world like tourists. Make a ruckus! Cast out the fears that paralyze you, so that you don’t become young mummies. Live! Give yourselves over to the best of life! Open the door of the cage, go out and fly! Please, don’t take early retirement.” (#145)

“The desire to live fully and experience new things is also felt by many young people with physical, mental and sensory disabilities. Even though they may not always be able to have the same experiences as others, they possess amazing resources and abilities that are often far above average. The Lord Jesus grants them other gifts, which the community is called to recognize and appreciate, so that they can discover his plan of love for each of them.” (#149)

“Friendship is one of life’s gifts and a grace from God. Through our friends, the Lord refines us and leads us to maturity. Faithful friends, who stand at our side in times of difficulty, are also a reflection of the Lord’s love, his gentle and consoling presence in our lives. The experience of friendship teaches us to be open, understanding and caring towards others, to come out of our own comfortable isolation and to share our lives with others. For this reason, “there is nothing so precious as a faithful friend” (Sir 6:15).” (#151)

“In a special way, I urge young people not to play into the hands of those who would set them against other young people, newly arrived in their countries, and who would encourage them to view the latter as a threat, and not possessed of the same inalienable dignity as every other human being.” (#94)

“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.” (#162)

“Hurts you have experienced might tempt you to withdraw from others, to turn in on yourself and to nurse feelings of anger, but never stop listening to God’s call to forgiveness.” (#165)
Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Are you active in your own life? How might God be calling you to “make a ruckus” in your life?

2. Does our Church community adequately appreciate the gifts and talents of all her members? How can she be more accessible to people with disabilities?

3. Do your friendships bring you closer to God?

4. How might lay people become more involved with the Church’s social mission to be present to those on the margins of society?

Take Action

1. Make a concrete commitment to becoming more active in your own life and community.

2. Consider a friendship which has opened you to new ideas, has been a sign of God’s presence in your life, and has brought you closer to God. Take some time out of your day to let this person know what they mean to you.

“At times … [young people] forget that the lay vocation is directed above all to charity within the family and to social and political charity. It is a concrete and faith-based commitment to the building of a new society. It involves living in the midst of society and the world in order to bring the Gospel everywhere, to work for the growth of peace, harmony, justice, human rights and mercy, and thus for the extension of God’s kingdom in this world.” (#168)

“University students can apply their knowledge in an interdisciplinary way, together with young people of other churches or religions, in order to propose solutions to social problems.” (#172)

“Above all, in one way or another, fight for the common good, serve the poor, be protagonists of the revolution of charity and service, capable of resisting the pathologies of consumerism and superficial individualism.” (#174)
“It is really a matter of being open to receiving a wisdom passed down from generation to generation, a wisdom familiar with human weakness and not deserving to vanish before the novelties of consumer society and the market.” (#190)

“That is why it is a good thing to let older people tell their long stories, which sometimes seem legendary or fanciful – they are the dreams of old people – yet are often full of rich experiences, of eloquent symbols, of hidden messages. These stories take time to tell, and we should be prepared to listen patiently and let them sink in” (#195)

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Why is it important to have communication between generations?
2. What can young people learn from older members of the Church?
3. What can older generations learn from young people?

Take Action

1. How can your parish foster better and stronger communication and relationships between generations within the Church? Within your community?
2. Look at your relationships with your own family members. Consider ways in which you can learn more from those outside of your generation. Make a commitment to improving these relationships.
“Youth ministry needs to become more flexible: inviting young people to events or occasions that provide an opportunity not only for learning, but also for conversing, celebrating, singing, listening to real stories and experiencing a shared encounter with the living God.” (#204)

“Young people need to be approached with the grammar of love, not by being preached at. The language that young people understand is spoken by those who radiate life, by those who are there for them and with them. And those who, for all their limitations and weaknesses, try to live their faith with integrity.” (#211)

“Along these lines, our institutions should provide young people with places they can make their own, where they can come and go freely, feel welcome and readily meet other young people, whether at times of difficulty and frustration, or of joy and celebration… In such places, much can be offered, without great expenditure of funds. Then too, the person-to-person contact indispensable for passing on the message can happen, something whose place cannot be taken by any pastoral resource or strategy.” (#218)

“Christian service represents a unique opportunity for growth and openness to God’s gifts of faith and charity. Many young people are attracted by the possibility of helping others, especially children and the poor. Often this service is the first step to a discovery or rediscovery of life in Christ and the Church. Many young people grow weary of our programs of doctrinal and spiritual formation, and at times demand a chance to be active participants in activities that benefit others.” (#225)

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Think about your experience as a young person in the Church. What kinds of programming have you found helpful in cultivating your faith? What kinds were not helpful?
2. How does the Church incorporate service learning into education and ministry? Why is it important to do so?
3. What does the Church need to do to become more welcoming and accessible to young people?

Take Action

1. Consider your parish’s youth outreach programming. What is offered? What programs are successful? How can you become more involved?
2. Think about the young people in your parish. Do they feel welcome in the Church? How can you encourage more youth participation in your parish?
“Work allows young adults to meet their practical needs but even more importantly to seek meaning and fulfilment of their dreams and visions.” (268) (USCCB, Sons and Daughters of Light: A Pastoral Plan for Ministry with Young Adults, November 12, 1996, Part One, 3)

“Work is an expression of human dignity, a path of development and of social inclusion. It is a constant stimulus to grow in responsibility and creativity, a protection against the tendency towards individualism and personal gratification. At the same time, it is an opportunity to give glory to God by developing one’s abilities.” (271)

“The Lord cannot fail in his promise to provide the Church with shepherds, for without them she would not be able to live and carry out her mission. If it is true that some priests do not give good witness, that does not mean that the Lord stops calling. On the contrary, he doubles the stakes, for he never ceases to care for his beloved Church.” (275)

Reflection/Discussion Questions
1. Why is it important to find meaning in your work?
2. How can you find meaning in work you did not choose to do?
3. How can you encourage young people to seek careers which will give them joy?
4. What are the difficulties young people encounter when it comes to discerning vocation?
5. What attracts young people to various vocations?

Take Action
1. Do you find meaning and joy in your work? If not, what can you do to change that?
2. How can your parish better assist young people in discerning their vocation?
Chapter Nine:
Discernment
(#278-298)

“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.” (#285)

“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?” (#285)

“If you are to accompany others on this path [of discernment], you must be the first to follow it, day in and day out.” (#298)

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Are you intentional about finding moments to spend in silence? Are you comfortable with silence?
2. Do you spend time considering your vocation?
3. How can our Church better accompany young people on their path of discernment?

Take Action

1. Make an effort to step back from your daily life and spend time in silence and listen to God’s call.
2. Talk with other people in your community about their vocational journeys.
3. Remember that vocational discernment is an ongoing process