

# CHAPTER THREE

CHRISTUS VIVIT- YOU ARE THE "NOW" OF GOD

## Summary *authored by Andrea Tornielli*

We cannot just say that *"young people are the future of our world"*, says Pope Francis. *"They are its present; even now, they are helping to enrich it"* (64). For this reason it is necessary to listen to them even if *"there is a tendency to provide prepackaged answers and ready-made solutions, without allowing their real questions to emerge and facing the challenges they pose"* (65).

*"Today, we adults can often be tempted to list all the problems and failings of today's young people... But what would be the result of such an attitude? Greater distance, less closeness, less mutual assistance"* (66). Whoever is called to be a father, pastor and youth guide should have the ability *"to discern pathways where others only see walls, to recognize potential where others see only peril. That is how God the Father sees 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'**"* (67). Francis also invites us not to generalize, because *"the worlds of today's 'youth' are so many"* (68).

Speaking of what happens to young people, the Pope recalls those who live in contexts of war, those who are exploited, the victims of kidnappings, organized crime, human trafficking, slavery and sexual exploitation, rape. And also those who live by committing crimes and acts of violence (72). *"Many young people are taken in by ideologies, used and exploited as cannon fodder or a strike force to destroy, terrify or ridicule others. Worse yet, many of them end up as individualists, hostile and distrustful of others; in this way, they become an easy target for the brutal and destructive strategies of political groups or economic powers"* (73). Even more numerous are those who suffer forms of marginalization and social exclusion for religious, ethnic or economic reasons. Pope Francis cites adolescents and young people who *"become pregnant, the scourge of abortion, the spread of HIV, various forms of addiction (drugs, gambling, pornography and so forth), and the plight of street children without homes, families or economic resources"* (74), situations that are made doubly painful and difficult for women. *"As a Church, may we never fail to weep before these tragedies of our young. May we never become inured to them... The worst thing we can do is adopt that worldly spirit whose solution is simply to anesthetize young people with other messages, with other distractions, with trivial pursuits"* (75). The Pope invites young people to learn to weep for their peers who are worse off than they are (76).

It is true, Pope Francis explains, *"that people in power offer some assistance, but often it comes at a high price. In many poor countries, economic aid provided by some richer countries or international agencies is usually tied to the acceptance of Western views of sexuality, marriage, life or social justice. This ideological colonization is especially harmful to the young"* (78). The Pope also warns against today's culture that presents the youthful model of beauty and uses young bodies in advertising: *"it has very little to do with young people. It only means that adults want to snatch youth for themselves"* (79).

Referring to *"desires, hurts, and longings"*, Pope Francis speaks about sexuality and its *"essential importance"* for young peoples' lives and for their *"process of growth in identity"*. The Pope writes that: *"in a world that constantly exalts sexuality, maintaining a healthy relationship with one's body and a serene affective life is not easy"*. For this and other reasons, sexual morality often tends to be a source of *"incomprehension and alienation from the Church, inasmuch as she is viewed as a place of judgment and condemnation"*, despite the fact there are young people who want to discuss these issues (81). Faced with developments in science, biomedical technologies and neuroscience, the Pope recalls how these can *"make us forget that life is a gift, and that we are creatures with innate limits, open to exploitation by those who wield technological power"* (82).

The Exhortation then turns to the theme of the “digital world” which has created “a new way to communicate”, and which can “facilitate the circulation of independent information”. In many countries, the web and social networks “*already represent a firmly established forum for reaching and involving young people*” (87). But they can also be a place of “*loneliness, manipulation, exploitation and violence, up to the extreme case of the ‘dark web’*. Digital media can expose people to the risk of addiction, isolation and gradual loss of contact with concrete reality... New forms of violence are spreading through social media, for example cyber-bullying. The internet is also a channel for spreading pornography and the exploitation of persons for sexual purposes or through gambling” (88). It should not be forgotten that in the digital world “there are huge economic interests”, capable of creating “mechanisms for the manipulation of consciences and of the democratic process”. There are closed circuits that “*facilitate the spread of fake news and false information, fomenting prejudice and hate... The reputation of individuals is put in jeopardy through summary trials conducted online. The Church and her pastors are not exempt from this phenomenon*” (89). In a document prepared by 300 young people from all over the world before the Synod it is stated that “online relationships can become inhuman”, and immersion in the virtual world has favored “*a kind of “digital migration”, involving withdrawal from their families and their cultural and religious values, and entrance into a world of loneliness*” (90).

The Pope goes on to present “migrants as an epitome of our time”, and recalls the many young people involved in migration. “*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); they search for an opportunity, a dream of a better future. Other migrants are “*attracted by Western culture, sometimes with unrealistic expectations that expose them to grave disappointments. Unscrupulous traffickers, frequently linked to drug cartels or arms cartels, exploit the weakness of migrants... The particular vulnerability of migrants who are unaccompanied minors is worth noting... In some host countries, migration causes fear and alarm, often fomented and exploited for political ends. This can lead to a xenophobic mentality, as people close in on themselves, and this needs to be addressed decisively*” (92). Young migrants often also experience a cultural and religious uprooting (93). Francis asks 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*” (94).

The Pope also speaks of child abuse, makes the Synod’s commitment to the adoption of rigorous measures of prevention his own, and expresses gratitude “*to those who had the courage to report the evil they experienced*” (99). He recalls that, “thank God”, those who committed these horrible crimes are not the majority of priests, who carry out their ministry with fidelity and generosity”. He asks young people, if they see a priest at risk because he has taken the wrong path, to have the courage to remind him of his commitment to God and to his people (100).

Abuse, however, is not the only sin in the Church. “*Our sins are before the eyes of everyone; they appear all too clearly in the lines on the age-old face of the Church, our Mother and Teacher*”, but the Church does not resort to any cosmetic surgery, “*she is not afraid to reveal the sins of her members*”. “*Let us never forget that we must not abandon our Mother when she is wounded*” (101). but stand beside her, so that she can summon up all her strength and all her ability to begin ever anew. This dark moment, with the help of the young people, “*can truly be an opportunity for a reform of epoch-making significance*”, opening us to a new Pentecost (102).

## Summary Continued...

Pope Francis reminds young people that “there is a way out” in all dark and painful situations. He recalls the Good News given on the morning of the Resurrection. He explains that even though the digital world can expose us to many risks, there are young people who know how to be creative and brilliant in these areas. Like the Venerable Carlo Acutis, who “*knew how to use the new communication technologies to transmit the Gospel*” (105), he did not fall into the trap and said: “*Everyone is born as an original, but many people end up die as photocopies*”. “*Don’t let that happen to you*” (106), warns the Pope. “*Don’t let them rob you of hope and joy, or drug you into becoming a slave to their interests*” (107), seek the great goal of holiness. “*Being young is not only about pursuing fleeting pleasures and superficial achievements. If the years of your youth are to serve their purpose in life, they must be a time of generous commitment, whole-hearted dedication*” (108). “*If you are young in years, but feel weak, weary or disillusioned, ask Jesus to renew you*” (109). But always remember that “*it is very difficult to fight against... the snares and temptations of the devil, and the selfishness of the world...if we grow too isolated*” (110). That’s when we need a life of community.

Summary Authored by: Andrea Torielli, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2019-04/pope-francis-apostolic-exhortation-christ-is-alive-synthesis.html>

## Thoughts for your own reflection submitted by Nicole McCowell

“If the years of your youth are to serve their purpose in life, they must be a time of generous commitment...”(108) What opportunities were offered to you in your youth that inspired you to serve your purpose in life? In your community what opportunities or experiences are you offering young people to help discover their purpose?

Take some time to examine your community and how you are caring for young people and the challenges they face today.

In paragraph 102 Pope Francis shares that young people can help us during this time of darkness to reform. How are we in our parishes and schools creating environments where: “Young people will be all the more helpful if they feel fully apart of the “holy and patient, faithful People of God...”(102)? In times of darkness and struggle how do we make our young people feel like they play a role in change and improvement?