



Christus vivit and Migration

Credit: Migrants and Refugees Section/Vatican

“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.”

- Pope Francis, *Christus vivit*, #94

Background

In his apostolic exhortation *Christus vivit*, Pope Francis shares his insights on the accompaniment, engagement, and vocational mission of youth and young adults. Many of the reflections are taken from the various conversations with young adult Catholics that occurred in the leadup to the document’s publication. *Christus vivit* is the culmination of an extended discernment and consultation process. In October 2016, the Holy Father launched a Synod process in October 2016, to provide a Catholic response to the reality of young people in connection to faith, the community of the Church, and vocational calling. With the document’s release in April 2019, youth, campus, and young adult ministries and pastoral juvenil hispana were urged to explore ways in which this teaching can be integrated into the lives of young Catholics.

Pope Francis intentionally addresses this exhortation as a letter “to all young people, and to the entire people of God” (3). The Holy Father is asking all Christians to not only respect and appreciate young people, but also to renew their confidence in young peoples’ perspectives, experiences, and insights, for young people “are the now of God.” They are influencing and impacting the Church and the world today, and every person of faith should be walking alongside them: as peers, as mentors, as guides, and as fellow travelers on the road toward Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God.

The Migration Issue in *Christus vivit*

The first two chapters of the exhortation explore what Scripture says about youth and how this theme has played out in the life of the Church, including the limited stories related to Jesus' youth, the lives of young saints, and of the importance of Mary. The section in which the Holy Father speaks of migration is in chapter 3 of the exhortation, which examines various challenges confronting youth today, including the technological environment within which they mature, the various forms of exploitation and suffering that young people confront, and the ways in which migration impinges on their lives.

The Holy Father's discussion of migration here is relatively short, comprising four paragraphs (#91-94). In his commentary he recounts concerns expressed by young Catholics about the fragmentation that occurs in the communities left behind, the pain that often occurs because of this separation, and the forms of exploitation that migrants face during their journey.

Pope Francis also comments on the advantages that young migrants bring to their new communities and the enriching perspective that they often bring with them. He warns against the temptation of young Catholics to set themselves against migrants as they arrive in their community; a spirit of welcome is crucial as migrants remind "us of a basic aspect of our faith, that we are strangers and exiles on the earth." (#91)

With *Christus vivit*, it is important that church leaders, catechists, educators, and parents continually engage young Catholics on the issue of migration; helping them to form a worldview informed by Catholic teaching and which expresses a welcome attitude toward migrant populations is important.