

CALLED TO ACTION

— seeing ourselves as agents of God —



In *Christus Vivit*, Pope Francis calls us not to observe life from a balcony, not to be a parked car, but to dream freely and make good decisions. To take risks, even if it means making mistakes. As the previous units have focused on personal transformation, based on a rediscovery of the Gospel, of silence and prayer to the Holy Spirit, this unit moves that inner work into outward action.

What does 'faith in action' look like? Letting go of fear, especially fear of failure and focusing on possibilities, not problems. Getting creative and doing something to help bring about sustainable change. Witnessing the Gospel, dispelling fears of the future and of the world as it is now, and inspiring others.

It is hoped that in this session young people might purposely and joyfully build on the previous sessions, using their knowledge of social justice issues and spiritual practice.



Reflections

For a short reflection:

Christus Vivit 143: 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 anaesthetised or approach the world like tourists. Make a ruckus! Cast out the fears that paralyse 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.

How can we ensure we are making the most of the years of our youth?

For a longer reflection:

Christus Vivit 168: ‘... 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.’

And/or

Christus Vivit 174: “Please, do not leave it to others to be protagonists of change. You are the ones who hold the future! Through you, the future enters into the world. I ask you also to be protagonists of this transformation. You are the ones who hold the key to the future! Continue to fight apathy and to offer a Christian response to the social and political troubles emerging in different parts of the world. I ask you to build the future, to work for a better world. Dear young people, please, do not be bystanders in life. Get involved! Jesus was not a bystander. He got involved. Don’t stand aloof, but immerse yourselves in the reality of life, as Jesus did. 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 ...consumerism and superficial individualism.’

And/or

Laudato Si 14: ‘All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents.’

In *Laudato Si* 14, Pope Francis appeals to each and every one of us to contribute to the task ahead of rebuilding our world: ‘I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all. The worldwide ecological movement has already made considerable progress and led to the establishment of numerous organisations committed to raising awareness of these challenges. Regrettably, many efforts to seek concrete solutions to the environmental crisis have proved ineffective, not only because of powerful opposition but also because of a more general lack of interest. Obstructionist attitudes, even on the part of believers, can range from denial of the problem to indifference, nonchalant resignation or blind confidence in technical solutions. **We require a new and universal solidarity.** As the bishops of Southern Africa have stated: “Everyone’s talents and involvement are needed to redress the damage caused by human abuse of God’s creation”. All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents.’

Pause to reflect: Together can we create a shift in culture, values and philosophy – a renegotiation of the structure of power in our society?

A way out is to go in – to be comfortable within ourselves, our life choices, our relationships, our way of being in the world.

From 'The Second Mountain', by David Brooks: 'A life of ease is not the pathway to growth and happiness. Permanent joy comes out of an enmeshed and embedded life. Joy seems to emerge when desire is tuned outward to others.'

Clips:

Gifts & Vocation - Christ is Alive (1:41 minute):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u70Mj4p8SGI>

Rise: From One Island to Another (6:31):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HYf4yIYHVws>

Watch the following video (2 minutes 58 seconds): 'David Attenborough and Greta Thunberg's plea for the planet'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CMOEcUPGi9c>

Music and lyrics:

Miley Cyrus - Inspired (3:16 minutes):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=thQvUC8NKBg>

Social Justice and Action:

As we look to ourselves, with a heart full of love, for the Gospel and for our neighbour, we may feel compelled to put our faith in action. Indeed, we read in James (2:17),

Faith by itself, if it is not complemented by action, is dead

In the previous units, we have explored the idea of our own personal vocation. What interests you? Where do you feel compelled to act? Where is the Spirit drawing you?

To dedicate yourself to social justice, it is best to focus on possibilities, not problems. To be active citizens, shaping society, preparing the future, we can craft our own creative initiatives as individuals and communities, and come up with our own solutions to the complex problems we now face.

How can your community / school / youth group become more active citizens and mobilise to work for justice, and towards peace, and raise your voices for the voiceless?

What do we need to ask Jesus in order to do this? For courage? For vision? For trust?

What prevents us from giving ourselves over to Jesus Christ? To his mission?

Activity:

Get several tennis balls and write various social justice issues on them, one 'cause' for each ball. For example, one for homelessness, one for food poverty, one for gender discrimination, one for racism, one for refugees, one for the environment/climate change, etc. Get your group to take it in turns to juggle these balls, seeing how many they can keep in the air without dropping. The aim of the exercise is to see that one person cannot take on every challenges, but we can do at least one, **we can all do something**.

Alternatively, you can use the **See, Judge, Act** method, using these cards made by the Young Christian Workers: <https://www.ycw.ie/resources/see-judge-act-resources-2/>; <https://www.ycw.ie/pdf/See-Judge-Act-Cards.pdf>

Ideas for practical action:

- Could you contact your local council and look at their climate change strategy/ homelessness strategy/ health inequality strategy? Do they have one? Can you send a group-letter or email?
- Could you fundraise for a specific cause?
- Might you join a climate strike or non-violent activist movement?
- Might you volunteer for a Refugee Action Group, or similar?
- One way to address the climate crisis may be to change our diets back to seasonal, locally-produced food. Could you contribute to a community allotment once a week? How might you raise-awareness and encourage a "waste-free" culture?
- How do we ensure we plan for a long-term future, that can meet our needs and the needs of future generations, as well as bring healing and nourishment to the earth? Ideas for transitioning to a low-carbon future:
 - How can you help encourage people to walk/ cycle to work/ school? Fly less? Stop/ reduce unnecessary journeys in the car? How can we become more 'grounded' and active within our parish community, or school? And be agents of change, prophets of hope?
 - Have a think: Is my desire to achieve something beyond myself? Is the true centre of our desiring God?

Looking for allies:

Time for some research. Look on the internet, or ask around, for Justice and Peace groups in your area or campaign bodies that are working on the issues you are interested in. Look at their websites, social media pages. Why not get in touch with them and see what you can do at your school, parish, or in your local area, to raise awareness and add to their cause?

Advice from Catholic Activists:

Sr Katrina Alton, a peace activist who has been arrested for her involvement, and direct action, against the arms trade, and as climate campaigner, advises young Catholics wanting to engage in social action, activism and campaigning:

“Create networks that inspire, challenge, accept and affirm you. Form good relationships and networks, build trust with a group so that you can support, encourage and grow together, committed to action and sustained by prayer.”

Prayer

Dear Lord,

Though we may not be able to do it all, help us to put our faith into action in concrete ways.

May the Holy Spirit guide us as we try to create the Kingdom you so desired us to have on this Earth.

May we continue to be inspired by your Word in the Gospels and by the example of Jesus.

May we find great companions on the journey and be beacons of hope for our community.

May we not become complacent, but be brave in acknowledging the reality of the situation our Earth, and humanity, is in.

May we help to change the world, one action at a time.

In your name, we pray.

Amen



Various prayers for social justice:

<https://socialjusticeresourcecenter.org/prayers/justice/>

Saint Oscar Romero Intercessions:

<https://cafod.org.uk/Pray/Prayer-resources/Romero-intercessions>

Climate and environment intercessions:

<https://cafod.org.uk/Pray/Prayer-resources/Climate-intercessions>

Mother Teresa – “Never worry about numbers. Help one person at a time and always start with the person nearest you.”

Mother Teresa - “Prayer in action is love, and love in action is service. Try to give unconditionally whatever a person needs

in the moment. The point is to do something, however small, and show you care through your actions by giving your time ... Do not worry about why problems exist in the world - just respond to people’s needs ... We feel what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean, but that ocean would be less without that drop.”

St. Teresa of Avila, Mystic and Doctor of the Church - “Christ has no body now on earth but yours, no hands but yours, no feet but yours, Yours are the eyes through which he is to look out Christ’s compassion to the world; Yours are the feet with which he is to go about doing good; Yours are the hands with which he is to bless men now.”

Pope Francis, (Christus Vivit, 178): “Young friends, don’t wait until tomorrow to contribute your energy, your audacity and your creativity to changing our world.

Your youth is not an “in-between time”. You are the now of God, and he wants you to bear fruit.”

‘Things that are impossible by human resources, are possible for God.’ - Luke (18:27)

‘for the Son of man has come to seek out and save what was lost.’ - Luke (19:10)

Jesus said to his disciples: ‘Beware of men: they will hand you over to sanhedrins and scourge you in their synagogues. You will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the pagans. But when they hand you over, do not worry about how to speak or what to say; what you are to say will be given to you when the time comes; because it is not you who will be speaking; the Spirit of your Father will be speaking in you.’ - Matthew (10: 17-20)

Further resources:

Good youth social justice websites for young people:

Million Minutes of Change:
<https://millionminutes.org/change>

SPARKSocialJustice series:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUdWVM2JCs7MTtwu7Kr2skA>

Good youth social justice websites for leaders:

Church Action on Poverty:
<http://www.church-poverty.org.uk/act/resources>

Pax Christi:
<http://paxchristi.org.uk/peace-education/>

Catholic Social Teaching:
<http://www.catholicsocialteaching.org.uk/>

CAFOD:
<http://www.cafod.org.uk/Education>

Columbans:
<http://www.columbans.co.uk/resources/>

Young Christian Workers:
<http://www.ycwimpact.com/index.php?section=resources>

Shrewsbury Diocese:
<https://jpshrewsbury.wordpress.com/jp-youth/>

Anti-Racism Resource (Student Christian Movement):
<https://www.movement.org.uk/blog/anti-racism-resources>

Reflecting on Care for Creation: A New Ignatian Ecological Examen (with video):
<http://www.jesuits.org/story?TN=PROJECT-20171003114024>

Global Catholic Climate Movement: <https://catholicclimatemovement.global/>
Their website includes resources to learn about Laudato Si', Laudato Si' discussion & Study Guides and Climate Change: Learn about climate change; Climate and Environmental Science; Stories of Climate Impacts.