

CALLED TO FAITH

— as society appears divided we turn to the Gospel —



It is easy to be shocked by stories of conflict, poverty and violence. They can make us feel hopeless, disillusioned and indifferent. Where do we turn? Where are the leaders to show us the way? Where is humanity heading?

The Gospels gives us a guide for how to live, but also provide a message of promise and hope. It is the best news in all of history! We can gain so much from getting back to basics, rediscovering the teachings and life of Jesus. By doing so, we come to realise that the Gospel message is relevant for our time, too. The living, active, Word of God!

This session will explore: How do we apply the Gospel to the age in which we live? How do we ensure we have integrity before God when things get difficult?



Reflections

For a short reflection:

In his letter to young people, Pope Francis tells us:

"If you are young in years, but feel weak, weary or disillusioned, ask Jesus to renew you. With him, hope never fails. You can do the same if you feel overwhelmed by vices, bad habits, selfishness or unhealthy pastimes. Jesus, brimming with life, wants to help you make your youth worthwhile. In this way, you will not deprive the world of the contribution that you alone can make, in all your uniqueness and originality. Yet let me also remind you that when we live apart from others, it is very difficult to fight against the temptations of the devil, and the selfishness of the world ... whenever you are united, you have marvellous strength. Whenever you are enthused about life in common, you are capable of great sacrifices for others and for the community. Isolation, on the other hand, saps our strength and exposes us to the worst evils of our time."

Pope Francis, Christus Vivit #109-110

Do you feel inspired by Jesus?

What is it about Him that inspires you?

Do you know Him? How well do you know Him?

If we were to follow His example, what would our life look like?

What would the world look like?

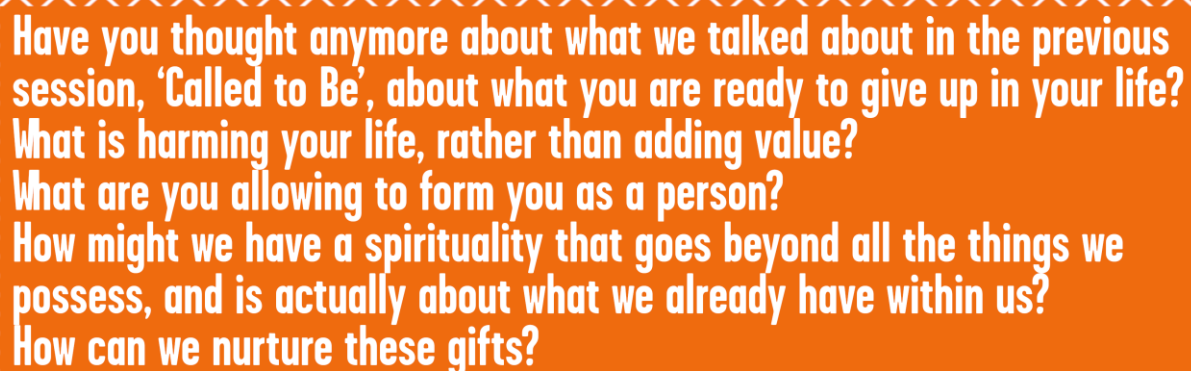
For a longer reflection:

“Christian spirituality proposes an alternative understanding of the quality of life, and encourages a prophetic and contemplative lifestyle, one capable of deep enjoyment free of the obsession with consumption. We need to take up an ancient lesson, found in different religious traditions and also in the Bible. It is the conviction that “less is more”. A constant flood of new consumer goods can baffle the heart and prevent us from cherishing each thing and each moment. To be serenely present to each reality, however small it may be, opens us to much greater horizons of understanding and personal fulfilment. Christian spirituality proposes a growth marked by moderation and the capacity to be happy with little. It is a return to that simplicity which allows us to stop and appreciate the small things, to be grateful for the opportunities which life affords us, to be spiritually detached from what we possess, and not to succumb to sadness for what we lack. This implies avoiding the dynamic of dominion and the mere accumulation of pleasures.”

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, #222

[Full document: http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html]

Simplified version: The Christian way of life is an alternative approach to the way we live our lives, and changes our worldview. It is one where we dare to be different, and rather than defining ourselves by what we wear, what phone we have and constantly buying ‘stuff’, we discover that ‘less is more’. Having less frees us to focus on the more important things in life. It makes us more present to life around us, and encourages us to value it. True happiness is being content with what you already have. If we live more simply, and are grateful for what we have, and the opportunities that life presents us, we have the power to live our lives free from pressures, material desire and greed. This is what being a Catholic is about. Being in touch with our own Spirit and living a life in God.



Have you thought anymore about what we talked about in the previous session, ‘Called to Be’, about what you are ready to give up in your life?
What is harming your life, rather than adding value?
What are you allowing to form you as a person?
How might we have a spirituality that goes beyond all the things we possess, and is actually about what we already have within us?
How can we nurture these gifts?

Video clips

What is the Bible Project? (2:31 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vFwNZNyDu9k>

How to read the Bible. What is the Bible? (5:47 minutes) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ak06MSETeo4>

How to read the Bible: Biblical Story. (5:37 minutes)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7_CGP-12AE0

Take God at his Word - Christ is Alive, Southwark Diocese Youth Services (2:05 minutes)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_1I2rmlrH0

Activity / Discussion Points:

To you, what significance has the Bible had:

- At the time it was written? Over the centuries until today? Now?
- What is the point of reading the Bible today?
- Have you discovered it for yourself, or do you make judgements from what others have said?

- The Bible itself tells us that, “all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16–17). If the climate crisis, COVID-19 pandemic and Black Lives Matter movement are waking us up to the wrong in our world, how might we put it right? We can turn to the Bible. We may find that it is still just as essential and relevant to all our lives.
- If you have Bibles available, ask one or a few of your young people to open the Bible, take a look at the contents page, and choose a passage from a Gospel/ Book (either at random or one they can remember/ one that has moved them). Get them to read it aloud twice. Invite the other young people to share what struck them about the story. How might they apply this passage to their own lives?

Exploring Your Faith

What is 'faith' to you?/ What does the word faith mean to you?
How do you see people expressing their faith?
How do you feel about this?
Have there been any significant moments in your life where you have felt close to God or to Jesus? Or moments that have made you reject God, or even the concept of a God?
How do you feel about this now?
Have you read any books or seen any films or documentaries that have made you think about God, either differently/ in a new way (positive or negative)?

When we live by way of faith, we allow ourselves to begin to discover what our life is for, our vocation. Explore what Pope Francis has to say about this:

Christus Vivit #289-290 *The call of Jesus our friend*

“Vocation, while a gift, will undoubtedly also be demanding. God’s gifts are interactive; to enjoy them we have to be ready to take risks. Yet the demands they make are not an obligation imposed from without, but an incentive to let that gift grow and develop, and then become a gift for others. When the Lord awakens a vocation, he thinks not only of what you already are, but of what you will one day be, in his company and in that of others ... More than rules and obligations, the choice that Jesus sets before us is to follow him as friends follow one another, seeking each other’s company and spending time together out of pure friendship. Everything else will come in time, and even failures in life can be an invaluable way of experiencing that friendship, which will never be lost.”

Simplified: Vocation is a gift, though sometimes we have to make some efforts to discover it for ourselves. God invites us to interact with Him in order to make this discovery. Sometimes, in order to enjoy what He is calling us to do, we have to be ready to take risks. As we let our own gifts grow and develop we become a gift for others. When the Lord helps us wake up our own gifts and vocation, he doesn't only think about what we already are, but also what we will one day become. Living in Christ isn't just about rules and responsibilities, it's a choice that Jesus sets before us to follow him as friends follow one another, seeking each other's company and spending time together out of pure friendship. Everything else will come in time, and even failures in life can be an invaluable way of experiencing that friendship, which will never be lost.

Prayer:

Are you ready to be 'friends' with Jesus? What does this mean?
Do you feel like you already know what your gifts are? What the gift of the Holy Spirit and faith is?
Have you thought about your vocation?
Are we willing to make the effort to discover our vocation and live closer to God, and therefore our true selves?

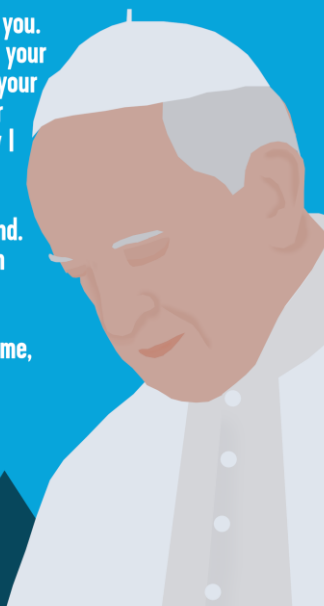
Dear Lord,

Thank you for blessing us with the gift of faith. Thank you for showing us, through your Son, how to live on this Earth in harmony with one another and creation. When we find it difficult to invite you in, give us the courage and energy to try again.

For the friendships we have, we thank you. May we also enter into friendship with your Son, so that we can live according to your will and discover the will you have for each and every one of us. Jesus, may I be a friend to you. Not a superficial friend or someone I only talk to every now and then, but a real, genuine friend. Friends who comfort one another when times are hard, who listen and offer non-judgemental support. Thank you for already being there for me, even when I haven't realised it.

In your name we pray,

Amen.



Further resources:

SYCAMORE FILM SERIES: WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE? (10 part series)

Sycamore: Session 1 - The Search for Happiness (20:07 minutes):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P8neQnYNuoo&list=PLB7HRatqrA24RDmLU4algs93vyHsKxiG5>

Sycamore: Session 2 - The Existence of God (23:12):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fz32X2AldUw>

Sycamore: Session 3 - A God Who Speaks (22:46 minutes):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2eG8Ifvuwig>

Youth for Christ resources: (11-14

years) <https://resources.yfc.co.uk/11-14s> ; (14-18

years) <https://resources.yfc.co.uk/14-18s> [Note:

Payment needed for full access.]