

REMARKS OF HIS EXCELLENCY ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES
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“BLESSED – BROKEN – GIVEN”
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My Dear Friends in Christ,

As the Apostolic Nuncio, the representative of the Holy Father to the United States, I greet you in the name of Pope Francis. Young people are dear to the heart of the Holy Father, and he wants each of you to be a blessing in turn to those around you, especially by discerning prayerfully how the Lord is calling you to serve Him and your brothers and sisters. Your lives too must be broken open and given in generous and humble service, especially to those in most need, so that they may know, as you know, the joy and love of life and friendship with Jesus.

I want to thank Christina Lamas, Executive Director of the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, for inviting me to be with you. Last year, as you know the Holy Father called a Synod on Youth. Following the synod, he wrote his exhortation *Christus vivit* - Christ is alive. I want to give you the highlights!

The first thing I would highlight is that young people are the “now of God.” Many people will say that young people are the future of the Church. The Holy Father would disagree; he writes that “They are its present; even now, they are helping to enrich it.” (POPE FRANCIS, APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION *CHRISTUS VIVIT*, 25 MARCH 2019, 64). Young people are part of the Church now and “can offer the Church the beauty of youth by renewing her ability to ‘rejoice with new beginnings, to give unreservedly of herself, to be renewed and to set out for ever greater accomplishments.’” (CV, 37) You can be a blessing to others even now!

Secondly, as members of the Church, young people are called to give witness to Christ and are certainly capable of giving effective witness. In the first two chapters of the document, the Holy Father places before us not only the figures of the young Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary, but also the host of Old and New Testament figures who prophesied on the Lord’s behalf or who carried out important missions in the early Church. He provides a list of young saints, who can serve as models for us, including St. Francis, St. Joan of Arc, St. Kateri Tekakwitha, St. Therese the Little Flower. He even mentions a young French man, Blessed Marcel Callo, who strengthened fellow prisoners in a concentration camp in Austria (CV, 61). We cannot be those saints. We can imitate them and their virtues, but God calls each of us by name to serve him a unique way. God is calling you to witness to holiness by being yourself. St. Francis de Sales says, “be who you are and be that well in honor of the Craftsman whose handiwork you are.”

Pope Francis wants you to proclaim the faith by your very lives.

Thirdly, the Pope wants to tell you that Christianity is not simply teachings and rules but a proclamation. There must be a proclamation of the faith that attracts followers and new believers. If you – if we – we are to make new disciples, it must be by proclaiming the essential truths – the God became man; that He suffered in the flesh to redeem us; and that He rose from the dead. That is, He is truly alive!

In Chapter 4 of *his exhortation*, Pope Francis speaks of three great truths: **God loves you; Christ is your Savior; and He is alive!**

God loves you. He loves you, even if at times you sin or disappoint Him or others. Pope Francis asks you to “Trust the memory of God. His memory is not a ‘hard disk’ that ‘saves’ and ‘archives’ all our data. His memory is a heart filled with tender compassion, one that finds joy in deleting every trace of evil.” (cf. *CV*, 115) Pope Francis always talks about God’s mercy and love. If we read the Scriptures, the image of God is not that of the God of Wrath, but that of the Merciful Father and the Good Shepherd. God loves you.

Christ is your Savior. The New Testament is clear that Christ is the Mediator of Salvation. He comes to save you and all of humanity. The Holy Father laments the fact that we live in a throwaway culture in which even people are discarded and excluded. The Pope invites you to reflect on, “How valuable you must be, if you were redeemed by the precious blood of Christ! Dear young people, you are priceless! You are not up for sale.” (*CV*, 122) Of course, Pope Francis immediately turns our eyes back to Christ exhorting us to keep our eyes fixed on the outstretched arms of the Crucified One. He reconciles and saves.

Christ is alive! This is the essence of the Christian Faith. Death does not have the last word. Jesus is Risen! He is alive! But is He alive in your life? In your family? In your school or parish? The Holy Father wants us to examine whether faith in Jesus or our friendship with the Risen Lord impacts our humanity, changes us, and helps us live in a different way.

The Holy Father writes:

“Christ is alive! We need to keep reminding ourselves of this, because we can risk seeing Jesus simply as a fine model from the distant past, as a memory, as someone who saved us two thousand years ago. But that would be of no use to us: it would leave us unchanged; it would not set us free. The one who fills us with his grace, the one who liberates us, transforms us, heals and consoles us is someone fully alive.” (*CV*, 124)

My young friends, something is happening here! You can feel it in the air. Christ is here! He is alive in you! May He live always in you – that you may be blessed, broken, and given to our world – so that it may be more merciful, just, and peaceful. The Holy Father is counting on you – you who are the now of God!