

AUTHENTIC

ACCOMPANIMENT

*Reflections of our practice
with the young*



SYNOD FRUITS

Extracts from the 2018 Synod Final Document taken from synod2018.va

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HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

This resource is intended to help you think more deeply about your ministry and work with the young by engaging with extracts from the 2018 Synod on Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment final document.

This can be used as a standalone resource for contemplation or reflection, or can be built into more regular times of prayer on a daily or weekly basis.

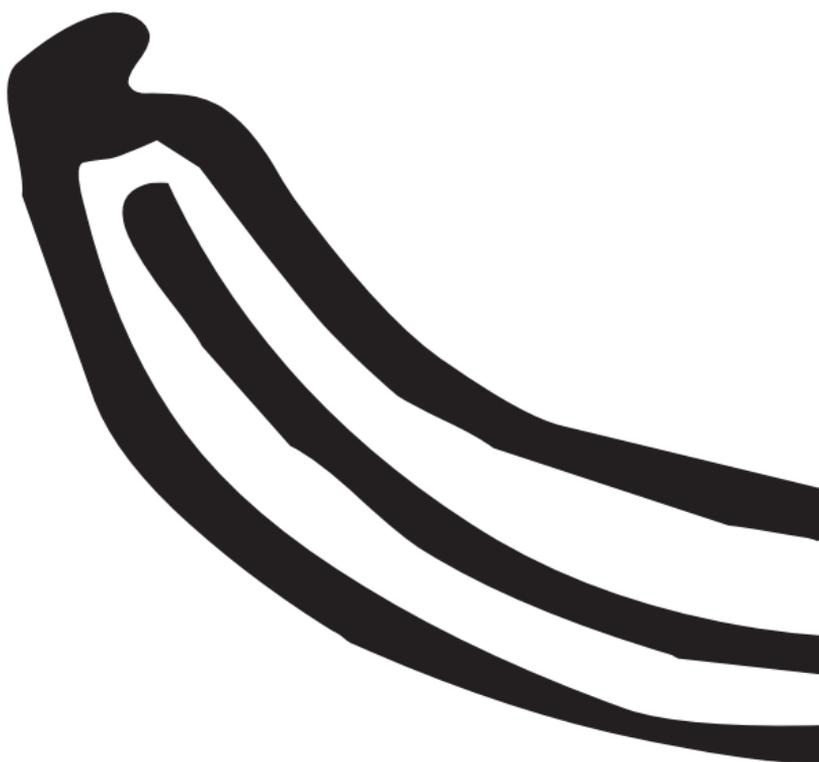
This booklet is one of a pair, both of which hope to enrich our ministry for and with the young. While this booklet looks more at our ministries themselves, the other booklet looks more to ourselves as individuals.

Spend some time reflecting on these extracts, using the questions as prompts for your reflections.

On the inside of the back cover is a prayer from Pope Francis about the synod.

I. Christ in the young

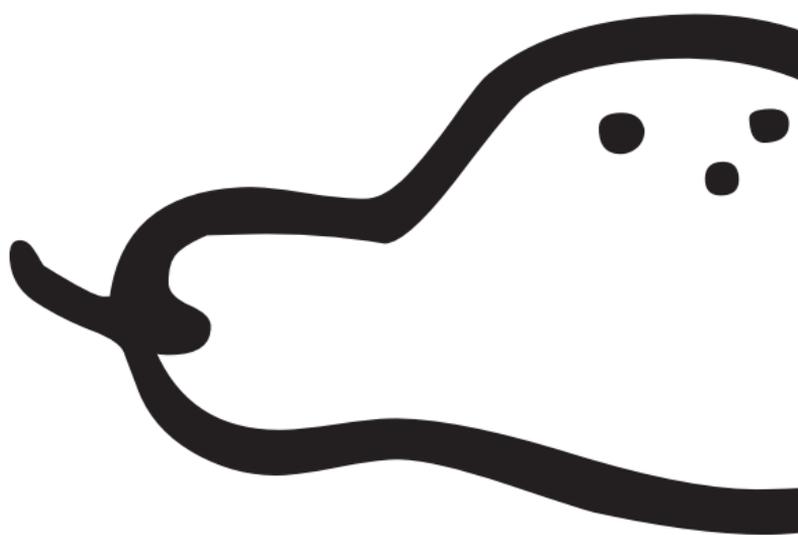
Listening to Christ and communion with him help pastors and educators to cultivate a wise interpretation of this stage in life. The Synod tried to look at the young with the attitude of Jesus, to discern in their lives the signs of the Spirit's activity. We believe that even today God speaks to the Church and to the world through the young, their creativity and their commitment, as well as their sufferings and their pleas for help. With them we can read our era more prophetically and recognize the signs of the times; hence the young are one of the "theological arenas" in which the Lord tells us some of his expectations and challenges for building tomorrow. #64



- Do we always look to the young with the attitude of Jesus?
- How can we encourage others to see the young in this way?

2. Renewing energy of youth

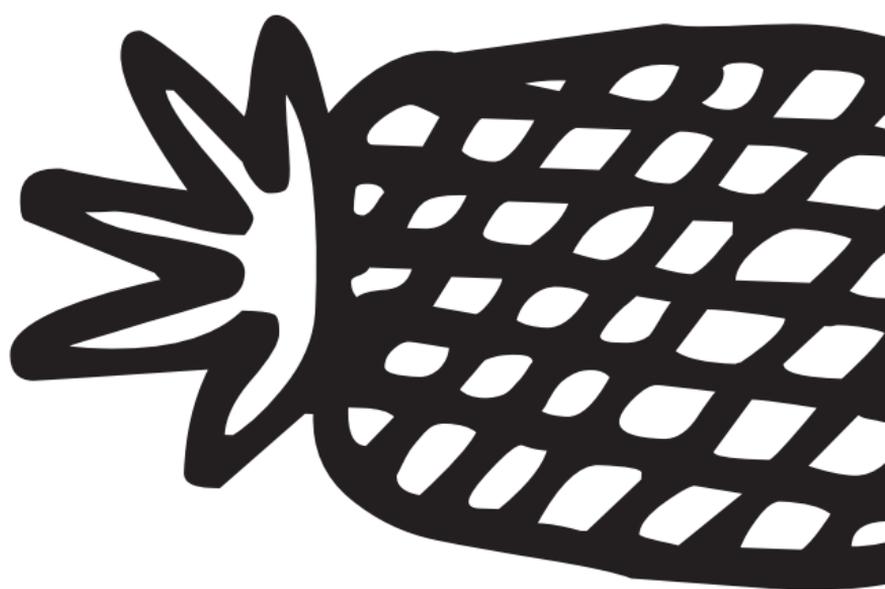
The young experience a restlessness that above all is to be accepted, respected and accompanied, with utter confidence in their freedom and responsibility. The Church knows from experience that their contribution is fundamental for renewal. Young people, in some respects, can be a step ahead of their pastors. On Easter morning the young Beloved Disciple arrived first at the tomb, before Peter, who was weighed down by age and by betrayal (cf. Jn 20:1-10); in the same way in the Christian community youthful dynamism is a renewing energy for the Church, because it helps her to shake off anything weighing her down or holding her back, so as to open up to the Risen Lord. At the same time, the attitude of the Beloved Disciple indicates that it is important to remain in touch with the experience of the elderly, to recognize the role of pastors and not to go forward alone. Hence the symphony of voices that is the fruit of the Spirit. #66



- Do we give space for young people to challenge us?
- Do we ever dismiss their restlessness, and not take them as seriously as we should?

3. Woundedness

The young, like everyone else, also carry wounds. There are the wounds of the defeats they have suffered, frustrated desires, experiences of discrimination and injustice, of not feeling loved or recognized. There are physical and psychological wounds. Christ, who consented to endure his passion and death, comes close, through his cross, to all suffering young people. Then there are moral wounds, the weight of one's errors, the sense of guilt for having made mistakes. Today more than ever, to be reconciled with one's wounds is a necessary condition for a good life. The Church is called to support all the young in their trials and to promote whatever pastoral action may be needed. #67



- Are we able to support young people who are wounded, and where appropriate help them to access other forms of support?

4. A complex world

In the modern world, marked by an ever more evident pluralism and by an ever wider range of possible options, the theme of choices arises with particular force at a variety of levels, especially in the face of life journeys that are less and less linear and marked by great precariousness. Often the young oscillate between approaches as extreme as they are ingenuous: from considering themselves in thrall to a predetermined and inexorable destiny, to finding themselves overwhelmed by an abstract ideal of excellence, within a framework of unregulated and violent competition. #9 |



- **Do we always take the time to remember the difficulty young people face in making choices our complex world?**
- **How can we help young people live and flourish in this complex environment?**

5. Community and networks

Jesus accompanied his group of disciples, sharing his daily life with them. Community experience highlights the qualities and the limits of every person and helps us to recognize humbly that unless we share the gifts we have received for the common good, it is not possible to follow the Lord.

This practice continues in the Church today, as the young join groups, movements and associations of various kinds, where they experience a warm and welcoming environment and the intensity of relationships that they desire. Joining organizations of this kind is particularly important once the journey of Christian initiation has been completed, because it offers the young an opportunity to bring their Christian vocation to maturity. Pastors should maintain a presence in these environments, so as to guarantee suitable accompaniment.

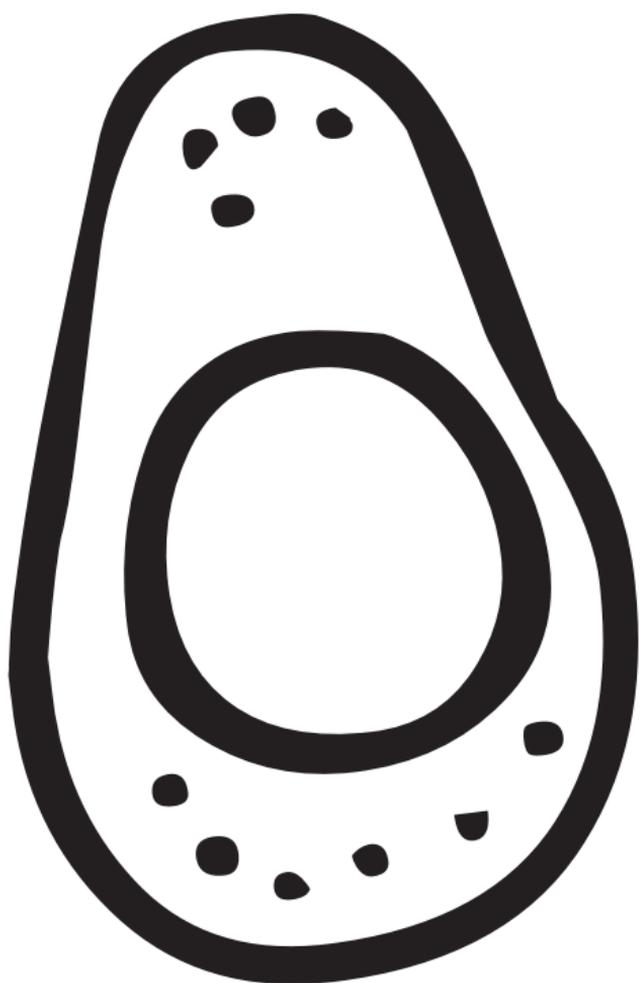
In these groups, the formators and animators represent a point of reference in terms of accompaniment, while the friendships that develop within them prepare the ground for peer accompaniment. #96



- Do those young you work with have opportunities to join groups, movements or associations beyond your context, places that can continue to help them to grow in their faith when they ‘fly the nest’?

6. Ministry as a two way street

Passion for seeking truth, amazement at the Lord's beauty, the capacity to share and the joy of proclamation are still alive today in the hearts of many young people who are living members of the Church. This is not about simply doing something "for them", but living in communion "with them", growing together in understanding of the Gospel and in the search for more authentic ways of living it and bearing witness to it. The responsible participation of young people in the life of the Church is not optional, but it is a demand of baptismal life and an essential element for the life of every community. The trials and frailties of young people help us to be better; their questions challenge us, their doubts cause us to reflect on the quality of our faith. Their criticisms are also necessary for us, because often it is through them that we hear the voice of the Lord asking us for conversion of heart and renewal of structures. #116

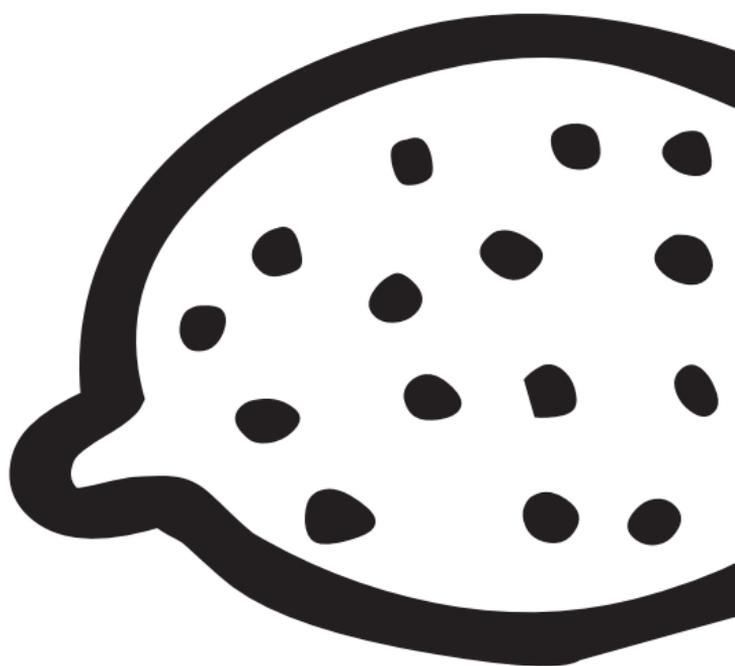


- **Do we sometimes simplify our ministry by making it something we do at or for young people, rather than something we do with them, in authentic communion with them?**

7. Stretching out our hands

At the Synod we have always questioned ourselves about young people, by which we mean not only those who belong to the Church and work actively in her, but also all those who have other visions of life, who belong to other religions or who distance themselves from religion altogether. All the young, without exception, are in the heart of God and therefore also in the heart of the Church. But we recognize frankly that this statement on our lips does not always find real expression in our pastoral actions: often we remain closed in our environments, where their voice does not penetrate, or else we dedicate ourselves to less demanding and more enjoyable activities, suppressing that healthy pastoral restlessness that would urge us to move out from our supposed security. And the Gospel too asks us to be daring and we want to be so without presumption and without proselytizing, testifying to the love of the Lord and stretching out our hands to all the young people in the world.

#117



- **With time pressures upon us all, is there a risk we too often take the easier option?**
- **Can we shy away from daringly stretching out our hands to people of good will and finding new ways to bear witness and discovering fresh opportunities to engage in mission through charity, evangelisation?**

8. Synodality

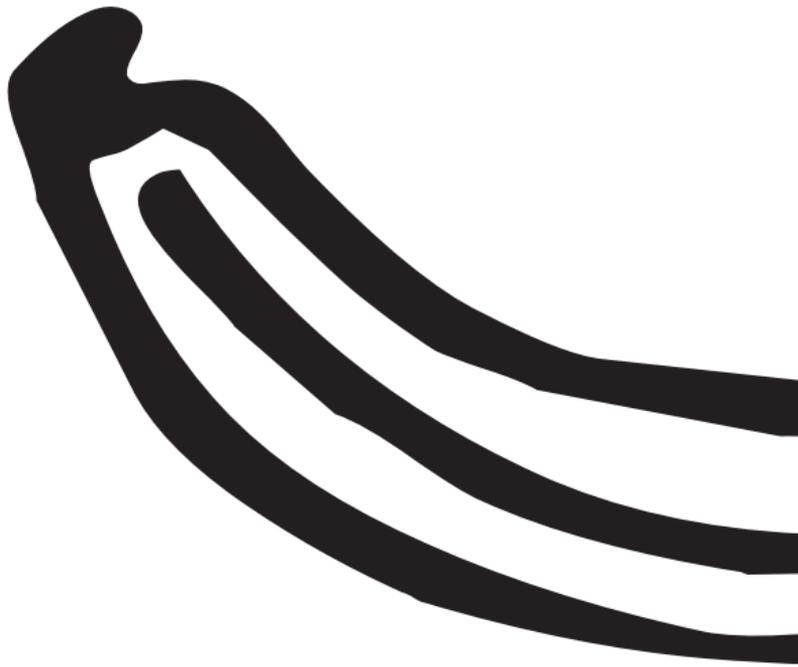
The Church as a whole, when choosing through this Synod to concern herself with the young, took a very definite option: she considers this mission a pastoral priority of epoch-making significance, in which to invest time, energy and resources. From the start of the journey of preparation, young people have expressed the desire to be involved and appreciated and to feel themselves co-protagonists of the life and mission of the Church. In this Synod we have experienced how co-responsibility lived with young Christians is a source of profound joy for bishops too. We recognize in this experience a fruit of the Spirit which continually renews the Church and calls her to practise synodality as a way of being and acting, promoting the participation of all the baptized and of people of good will, each according to his age, state of life and vocation. In this Synod, we have experienced how the collegiality that unites the bishops cum Petro et sub Petro in solicitude for the people of God is called to express itself and enrich itself through the practice of synodality at all levels. # 119



- In the ways in which we minister, do we practice synodality by ensuring the young genuinely feel co-protagonists of the life and mission of the Church?

9. Society and community

The practice of dialogue and the search for shared solutions represent a clear priority at a time when democratic systems are challenged by low levels of participation and by a disproportionate influence of small interest groups who do not enjoy wide support in the population, with the danger of reductionistic, technocratic and authoritarian consequences. Faithfulness to the Gospel will direct this dialogue towards a search for how to reply to the twofold cry of the poor and of the earth (cf. Francis, *Laudato si'*, 49), to which the young show particular sensitivity, ensuring that social processes are inspired by the principles of social teaching: the dignity of the person, the universal destination of goods, the preferential option for the poor, the primacy of solidarity, attention to subsidiarity, care of our common home. No vocation within the Church can place itself outside this communitarian dynamism of going out and dialoguing; hence every effort of accompaniment is called to measure itself against this horizon, giving privileged attention to the poorest and most vulnerable. #127



- In our world dominated by individualism and division, do we promote a private form of Christianity, or one brought to life with this communitarian dynamism, one that hears the cry of the poor and the earth with ears of mercy?

10. Authentic living

Catechetical courses need to illustrate the intimate connection of faith with the concrete experience of every day, with the world of sentiments and attachments, with the joys and disappointments that we meet in study and in work; they should include the Church's social teaching; they should be open to the languages of beauty, music and different artistic expressions, and to the forms of digital communication.

The dimensions of bodiliness, affectivity and sexuality should be taken very much into account, as there is a profound link between education in faith and education in love. Faith, after all, should be understood as praxis, or as a way of living in the world.

In catechesis of the young, it is urgent to continue seeking out the right types of language and methodology, without ever losing sight of the essential, namely the encounter with Christ, who is the heart of catechesis. #133



- **Do we run the risk of teaching our faith as only a set of beliefs, and not a way of living authentically in our world?**

11. Openness to renewal

The young can help renew the style of parish communities and build a fraternal community that is close to the poor. The poor, the young who are cast aside, those who are suffering most, can become the principle of community renewal. They should be recognized as subjects of evangelization and they help us free ourselves from spiritual worldliness. Often the young are sensitive to the dimension of diakonia [our service to the poor and vulnerable]. Many are actively committed in voluntary work and they find in service the way to encounter the Lord. Dedication to the lowliest thus becomes a practice of faith, in which one discovers the love “in loss” that is at the heart of the Gospel and the foundation of the whole Christian life. The poor, the lowly, the sick, the elderly, are the suffering body of Christ: hence to place oneself at their service is a way of meeting the Lord and a privileged space for discernment of one’s vocation. A particular openness is required, in different contexts, towards migrants and refugees. With them it is necessary to work for acceptance, protection, promotion and integration. Social inclusion of the poor makes the Church the house of charity. #137



- **Are our communities places structured in ways that allow the poor, the young and the vulnerable to renew them, or do they resemble fortresses of ‘it’s always been done that way’?**

12. A welcoming home

Only a pastoral approach capable of renewal on the basis of care for relationships and the quality of the Christian community will be significant and attractive for the young. The Church will thus be able to present herself to them as a welcoming home, characterized by a family atmosphere built on trust and confidence. The longing for fraternity, which emerged so many times as the Synod listened to the young, asks the Church to be “a home for many peoples, a mother for all peoples” (Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 288): pastoral ministry has the task of realizing in history the Church’s universal maternity through concrete and prophetic gestures of joyful, daily welcome that make her a home for the young. #138



- How can we continue to create welcoming communities, open to the young which nourish their faith, but at the same time prevent them from being inward looking and closed in on themselves?

Lord Jesus,
inspired by the Synod,
your Church turns her attention to
all the young people in the world.

We pray that they might boldly
take charge of their lives,
aim for the most beautiful
and profound things of life
and always keep their
hearts unencumbered.

Accompanied by wise and
generous guides,
help them respond to the call
you make to each of them,
to realize a proper plan of life
and achieve happiness.

Keep their hearts open to
dreaming great dreams
and make them concerned
for the good of others.

Like the Beloved Disciple,
may they stand at the
foot of the Cross,
to receive your Mother as
a gift from You.

May they be witnesses
to your Resurrection
and be aware that you
are at their side
as they joyously proclaim
you as Lord.

Amen.

Pope Francis' Synod Prayer
(slightly adapted)