

MISSION INTENTIONS

MAY 2021 - 2022

We pray for all young people called to live life to the fullest: may they see in Mary's life the way to listen, the power of discernment, the courage made possible by faith, and a dedication to service.

Country Focus: Ireland

In a country that once produced more priests than it had parishes, Ireland, like many European countries, is seeing a decline in the number of people who attend Mass weekly.

But there is good news for the Church in Ireland: the country's young people between the ages of 16-29 are some of the most religious in Europe, according to Europe's Young Adults and Religion study conducted by St. Mary's University and the Institut Catholique de Paris. About half of the young people surveyed claimed Catholicism as their religion, and about 25



percent of young Catholics said they attended Mass weekly. In addition, when Ireland hosted the World Meeting of Families in 2018, more people under the age of 18 registered to attend than at any other World Meeting.

Let us join Pope Francis in prayer this month, that all young people will continue to follow Mary's example and look to Jesus as their guide to living holy lives.

Leading to Knowledge of the Faith

In 2019, Pope Francis wrote an Apostolic Exhortation specifically with young people in mind. While we will learn more about this Apostolic Exhortation, *Christus Vivit*, on page 2 of this newsletter, the following quote helps us understand Pope Francis' hope for young people today:

"Dear young people, my joyful hope is to see you keep running the race before you, outstripping all those who are slow or fearful... The Church needs your momentum, your intuitions, your faith. We need them! And when you arrive where we have not yet reached, have the patience to wait for us" (no. 299).

Saint Spotlight

Saint Aloysius Gonzaga

Saint Aloysius Gonzaga was born into riches and royalty in 1568. His parents were Italian nobility, and, as the oldest son, he was destined to inherit his father's title of Marquis and the family fortune. But there was just one problem: Aloysius didn't want any of it.

Instead, Aloysius wanted to become a Jesuit priest. But as a child, he was scared to tell his parents his true wishes, and so they prepared him for the life they dreamed Aloysius would live. At just five years old, he was sent to a military camp to begin training. Following his military training, he was sent to royal courts to prepare him for a life of prestige.

During this time, Aloysius became very ill. While he was sick, he began to pray and read spiritual books. Since he



was surrounded by military leaders and royalty, Aloysius didn't have a spiritual role model, so he tried to figure out on his own how best to follow Jesus. He began to fast regularly and made a private vow of chastity.

When Aloysius finally told his father he wanted to become a priest, his father refused. But Aloysius was determined, and his father eventually agreed. When Aloysius was 18, he renounced his inheritance and became a Jesuit novice.

Sadly, Aloysius never got the chance to be ordained. He died from the plague in 1591, when he was 23, after caring for the sick. He was named a saint in 1726. Saint Aloysius is the patron saint of young people. We celebrate his feast day on June 21.

Formation for Life in Christ

As Pope Francis states in his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Christus Vivit* (“Christ is Alive”), young people are not the future of the Church, they are the “now,” the “present” of the Church (no. 64). By virtue of our baptism, all of us are called to bear witness to Christ. This is not a call meant only for adulthood, but a call meant to be lived at every stage of life.

Young people bring many gifts to the Church. They “have a unique zeal for justice, faith, and the love of the Gospel, longing for truth and purpose, challenging convention and the status quo, and inspiring innovation and action” (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, <https://www.usccb.org/topics/youth-and-young-adult-ministries>). They “are meant to dream great things, to seek vast horizons, to aim higher, to take on the world, to accept challenges and to offer the best of themselves to the building of something better” (Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit*, no. 15). Accordingly, the Church is called to listen to young people, hear their concerns, recognize their wisdom, and allow them to share their gifts in



service of the community.

Young people can answer their missionary call in a variety of ways: with words and through actions, and “in whatever company we find ourselves: in our neighborhoods, in school or sports or social life, in volunteer service or in the workplace” (Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit*, no. 177).

In this month’s video, we will learn more about World Youth Day, one of the ways the Church tries to help young people grow in their faith. Saint John Paul II began

World Youth Day in 1986, as a way for young people around the world to connect with the Holy Father, other Catholics their age, and develop the courage to be Christ’s light to all. As you watch the video, think about how you are being called to bear witness to Christ in your own community and ways that you can share the Gospel with and without words. How are you being called to be a leader in the Church in the “now”? What are some challenges to answering this call? How can you address those challenges? How can the Church help you address those challenges?

Celebrating the Mystery

The Sacrament of Penance helps all Catholics live life to the fullest. When we fall short of the grace of God, the Sacrament of Penance restores us to right relationship with the Father and with one another. When we receive God’s mercy and forgiveness, we respond by making amends for what we have done wrong. This might include apologizing to someone we’ve wronged, making better choices about what we consume to help protect the environment, or thinking about how a company treats its workers before making a purchase. By fixing what has been broken by our sin and working for peace and justice in the world, we also restore our own spiritual health.

Teaching Prayer: The Rosary

The Rosary as we pray it today was developed over centuries. A prayer in honor of Mary, the Rosary is contemplative, meant to lead us into reflecting on the lives of Jesus and his mother. By allowing ourselves to enter into the quiet rhythm of the Rosary, we are better able to hear the voice of God and follow the path he has planned for us. For a guide on how to pray the Rosary, [click here >>](#).

World Youth Day: Lisbon 2023 [Click Here>>](#)



- ✚ What can you learn about the young Church community from the video?
- ✚ How do Pope Francis’ words in *Christus Vivit* help increase your sense of belonging to the Church?
- ✚ How can young people help build up the Church community?
- ✚ What are some challenges young people face in helping to build up the Church community?