**Reflection Point**

Significance

***To mark National Youth Sunday 2019, this CYMFed Faith in Action Award Reflection Point explores the theme of significance, encouraging young people to reflect on their own significance and that of those around them through the lens of service.***

**Objectives:**

**Explore** what makes our lives significant.

**Understand** that we are all made in God’s image and are His beloved children.

**Reflect** on how acknowledging our individual significance transforms our lives and the lives of others.

**Before you begin:**

Create a reverent, quiet and comfortable space for the group. Ensure that all relevant materials are printed and readily available for the group and that the sacred space and activity materials have been prepared for the Closing Liturgy.

**Each reflection point should include:**

Reading a passage from the Bible

Exploration of the Church’s Story (teachings from the Catechism and/or the Pope, research into the life of a saint)

The opportunity for participants to reflect on their personal experience

An activity

A liturgy

**You will need:**

* Print-outs of:
	+ The Faith in Action Prayer
	+ Chosen scripture passage
	+ Church’s story for participants
	+ Activity instructions
* Scissors
* Black marker pens

**For the liturgy:**

* Metallic silver card, cut to the approximate size of a smartphone

(participants can do this themselves prior to the liturgy)

* Focal Candle
* Sacred Space Materials
* Device to play music from, if not being played live
* Print-outs of:
	+ Reflection (requires a minimum of two readers)
	+ Closing Prayer
	+ Hymn Lyrics

**Welcome, Introduction & Opening Prayer**

*Gather the group together and briefly introduce the theme:*

The theme for National Youth Sunday 2019 is: ‘Significance’, inspired by the words of Pope Francis in his Apostolic Exhortation, Christus Vivit: “For him you have worth; you are not insignificant. You are important to him, for you are the work of his hands” (p.115).

Christus Vivit was written as a follow-up to the recent Synod which focused on Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment. The exhortation was written for everyone to hear, but is especially important for young people, because it tells them how important they are – not only to their family and friends – but to the Church, and the entire world.

This Reflection Point explores what it is that makes our lives *truly* significant. In a world where we measure ourselves largely on how wealthy, attractive, popular and successful we are, we need to ask ourselves, is this really it? Many of us may feel as though life is simply passing us by: you may not be wealthy or popular; you may not feel attractive; you may view your life as unsuccessful; you feel as though you merely exist. This Reflection Point encourages young people to ask themselves: is it enough to just survive in this world; am I simply existing or am I living my life to the full?

Hopefully, participants in the Faith in Action Award are already beginning to see that their lives have meaning beyond their social status, popularity, looks and wealth. During this Reflection Point, participants will gain a very simple understanding of who created them and what (or who) they were created for, and thus their lives hold great significance. Once young people realise how significant they are as individuals, their lives begin to be transformed, and they, in turn, begin to transform the lives of those around them.

**Say the Faith in Action Prayer together:**

God our Father,

We thank you for the gift of your love which you give to every person in the world. We thank you that because of your love, we are never alone and should never feel afraid.

We thank you for the gift of faith which allows us to know you, one God, three persons. We thank you that because of that faith, the whole of our lives are directed to living for other people.

Through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our friend and brother, you show us how to love.

Give us the strength we need, through your Holy Spirit, to live lives of love and Faith. May the world come to know your Son more and more through our actions and words as we seek to live lives which help to build your kingdom here on earth.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen

**The Good News**

*Choose a passage from scripture that will help the group to reflect on the theme.*

*Below are some suggestions:*

**First Letter of St. Paul to Timothy** (4:12-14)

Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young. Set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in faith and in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you.

**St. Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians** (2: 4-10)

But God loves us deeply. He is full of mercy.  So he gave us new life because of what Christ has done. He gave us life even when we were dead in sin. God’s grace has saved you. God raised us up with Christ. He has seated us with him in his heavenly kingdom. That’s because we belong to Christ Jesus. He has done it to show the riches of his grace for all time to come. His grace can’t be compared with anything else. He has shown it by being kind to us. He was kind to us because of what Christ Jesus has done. God’s grace has saved you because of your faith in Christ. Your salvation doesn’t come from anything you do. It is God’s gift.  It is not based on anything you have done. No one can brag about earning it.  We are God’s creation. He created us to belong to Christ Jesus. Now we can do good works. Long ago God prepared these works for us to do.

**St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans** (12:1-8)

Brothers and sisters, God has shown you his mercy. So I am asking you to offer up your bodies to him while you are still alive. Your bodies are a holy sacrifice that is pleasing to God. When you offer your bodies to God, you are worshiping him in the right way.  Don’t live the way this world lives. Let your way of thinking be completely changed. Then you will be able to test what God wants for you. And you will agree that what he wants is right. His plan is good and pleasing and perfect.

God’s grace has been given to me. So here is what I say to every one of you. Don’t think of yourself more highly than you should. Be reasonable when you think about yourself. Keep in mind the faith God has given to each of you. Each of us has one body with many parts. And the parts do not all have the same purpose. So also we are many persons. But in Christ we are one body. And each part of the body belongs to all the other parts. We all have gifts. They differ according to the grace God has given to each of us. Do you have the gift of prophecy? Then use it according to the faith you have. If your gift is serving, then serve. If it is teaching, then teach.  Is it encouraging others? Then encourage them. Is it giving to others? Then give freely. Is it being a leader? Then work hard at it. Is it showing mercy? Then do it cheerfully.

**The Book of Jeremiah** (1:4-10)

The word of the Lord came to me, saying, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”

“Alas, Sovereign Lord,” I said, “I do not know how to speak; I am too young.”

But the Lord said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am too young.’ You must go to everyone I send you

to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will

rescue you,” declares the Lord.

Then the Lord reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, “I have put my words in your mouth. See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant.”

**The Church’s Story**

*To help reflect and explore the Good News further, share with the group some of the Church’s teachings from the Catechism, the Pope’s writings or the lives of holy people:*

**Catechism of the Catholic Church**

Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone. He is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons. And he is called by grace to a covenant with his Creator, to offer him a response of faith and love that no other creature can give in his stead. (357)

God created everything for man, but man in turn was created to serve and love God and to offer all creation back to him. (358)

**Pope Francis: Key excerpts from Christus Vivit**

Christ is alive! He is our hope, and in a wonderful way he brings youth to our world, and everything he touches becomes young, new, full of life. The very first words, then, that I would like to say to every young Christian are these: Christ is alive and he wants you to be alive! (p.1)

He is in you, he is with you and he never abandons you. However far you may wander, he is always there, the Risen One. He calls you and he waits for you to return to him and start over again. When you feel you are growing old out of sorrow, resentment or fear, doubt or failure, he will always be there to restore your strength and your hope. (p.2)

We cannot just say that young people are the future of our world. They are its present. (p.64)

For him, you have worth; you are not insignificant. You are important to him, for you are the work of his hands. That is why he is concerned about you and looks to you with affection. 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’ from us every trace of evil. He does not keep track of your failings and he always helps you learn something even from your mistakes. Because he loves you. Try to keep still for a moment and let yourself feel his love. Try to silence all the noise within, and rest for a second in his loving embrace. (p.115)

His is “a love that does not overwhelm or oppress, cast aside or reduce to silence, humiliate or domineer. It is the love of the Lord, a daily, discreet and respectful love; a love that is free and freeing, a love that heals and raises up. The love of the Lord has to do more with raising up than knocking down, with reconciling than forbidding, with offering new changes than condemning, with the future than the past. (p.116)

...Christ, out of love, sacrificed himself completely in order to save you. His outstretched arms on the cross are the most telling sign that he is a friend who is willing to stop at nothing: “Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.” (p.118)

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 anaesthetized or approach the world like tourists. Make a ruckus! Cast out the fears that paralyze 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. (p.143)

The Holy Spirit wants to make us come out of ourselves, to embrace others with love and to seek their good. That is why it is always better to live the faith together and to show our love by living in community and sharing with other young people our affection, our time, our faith and our troubles. (p.164)

There is also a beauty, unrelated to appearances or fashionable dress, in all those men and women who pursue their personal vocation with love, in selfless service. (p.183)

So often in life, we waste time asking ourselves: ‘Who am I?’ You can keep asking ‘Who am I?’ for the rest of your lives. But the real question is: ‘For whom am I?’” Of course, you are for God. But he has decided that you should also be for others, and he has given you many qualities, inclinations, gifts, and charisms that are not for you, but to share with those around you. (p.286)

**Lives of the Saints**

Go to <https://nationalyouthsunday.com/foryou/> for some National Youth Sunday ‘People of Significance’ resources.

**St. Thérèse of Lisieux**

Marie-Francoise-Thérèse Martin was born on January 2, 1873, and baptised two days later on January 4th. Thérèse described her home life in Alencon, France as the “sunny years of [her] childhood” and she proclaimed that for all of her life, “God surrounded [me] with love.”

It was at the age of 14, on Christmas Eve, that Thérèse had a powerful conversion that transformed her life. From then on, her energy and spirit were turned toward God and toward love. At 15, she entered the Carmelite convent in Lisieux to give her whole life to God. She took the religious name Sister Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face. Living a hidden, simple life of prayer, she was gifted with great intimacy with God.

Thérèse’s years in the Carmelite Convent were not always easy. She suffered with bouts of depression and found life in the convent oppressive. Many of her fellow nuns were particularly unkind to her and bullied her, mocking Thérèse’s interest and passion for the “smaller things” in life. But throughout all of her struggles, Thérèse radiated such humility that she would show only love and kindness towards those who despised her. Through dark nights of doubt and fear, and even throughout sickness, she remained faithful to God, rooted in His merciful love. After a long struggle with tuberculosis, Thérèse died on September 30th, 1897, at the very tender age of 24. Her last words were the story of her life: "My God, I love You!"

It was through her autobiography, *Story of a Soul*, that the world came to know Thérèse better. She described her life as a "little way of spiritual childhood." Each day she lived with an unshakable confidence in God's love. "What matters in life," she wrote, "is not great deeds, but great love." Thérèse lived and taught a spirituality of attending to everyone and everything with love. She believed that just as a child becomes enamoured with what is before her, we should also have a childlike focus and totally attentive love. Thérèse's spirituality is of doing the ordinary, with extraordinary love.

She loved flowers and saw herself as the "little flower of Jesus," who gave glory to God by just being her beautiful little self among all the other flowers in God's garden. Because of this beautiful analogy, the title "little flower" remained with St. Thérèse.

Her inspiration and powerful presence from heaven touched many people very quickly. She was canonized by Pope Pius XI on May 17, 1925. Had she lived, she would have been only 52 years old when she was declared a Saint.

"My mission - to make God loved - will begin after my death," she said. "I will spend my heaven doing good on earth. I will let fall a shower of roses." Countless millions have been touched by her intercession and imitate her "little way." In 1997, Pope John Paul II declared St. Thérèse a Doctor of the Church - the only Doctor of his pontificate - in tribute to the powerful way her spirituality has influenced people all over the world.

Pope Francis also has a special devotion to St Thérèse and he used to keep a photo of her on his library shelf when he was Archbishop of Buenos Aires. He has said that when he has a problem, he asks St Thérèse “not to solve it, but to take it in her hands and help me accept it”. Pope Francis canonised St Thérèse’s parents, [Zelie and Louis](https://nationalyouthsunday.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/StZellieLouis.pdf), on October 18th 2015.

**St. José Luis Sanchez del Rio**

José Sanchez del Rio was born in the western Mexican state of Michoacan de Ocampo, on March 28th, 1913. For many years, Mexico had been embroiled in a nasty internal conflict between the Catholic Church and the State government. As a result, war erupted between the Catholics and the state in 1926.  The war became known as the “Cristero War,” named by faithful Catholics for “Christ the King,” It lasted three years. José emerged as an unlikely hero and eventual martyr of the struggle, sacrificing his life as a witness to his Catholic faith.

José begged his mother to allow him to join his brothers as a soldier in supporting the Catholic efforts.  She refused but he persisted.  Even at his tender age, José possessed a remarkable faith.  When his mother relented, the boy performed menial tasks for the Cristeros forces. His dedication to Christ the King never wavered: despite governmental prohibition of the public practice of religion, José attended Mass whenever possible, received Holy Communion and never hesitated to proclaim his faith.

During one battle, a Cristero leader, General Guizar Morfín, lost the horse he was riding to enemy fire. Young José offered his own horse to the General to prevent his capture by federal troops but, in the process, was himself apprehended. The anti-Cristeros soldiers imprisoned and violently tortured him. Efforts to free him proved unsuccessful. José prayed the Rosary daily throughout his imprisonment.

Upon transfer to another prison, José was told he would be executed for his unbending dedication to his faith.  He received the news with the courage of his religious convictions. As his captors beat him mercilessly, he could be heard praying “Long live Christ the King! Long live Our Lady of Guadalupe!”  They took his shoes and removed the skin from the bottom of his feet, forcing him to walk to the cemetery, barefoot and bleeding, where soldiers repeatedly stabbed him.  He refused to reject his faith in order to spare his own life. José Sánchez del Río was shot twice and his martyred body was thrown into an open grave on February 10th, 1928, one month short of his 15th birthday.

On October 16th 2016, Pope Francis canonised José Sánchez del Río a saint.  His feast day is February 10th.

**Discussion Points**

Do people treat you differently because you are young?

Do you think your life has any significance or purpose?

Are gifts and talents based only skill, expertise or academia?

If you are more gifted at something than someone else, is it better to work on your own?

How does living for this world differ from living for Christ?

What is our society’s idea of happiness?

Is something designed, thought-out and purposefully created different to something that came about by accident or by chance?

Does the knowledge that God created you in His image and likeness change how you view yourself?

Does the fear of making a mistake prevent you from doing something?

Is there a difference between existing and being alive, between surviving and being significant?

**Personal Story**

During this time, the young people should be encouraged to think about their FIAA journey so far, and share with the group how they have been serving others. They might wish to discuss what they have enjoyed about serving others and what they have found more difficult and challenging.

You could discuss with participants how they think their acts of service make their lives - and the lives of others - more significant: are their acts of service helping them see their own worth and dignity as members of God’s creation; are they witnessing how we are all members of Christ’s body and that we all have important and significant roles to play in doing God’s work on earth?

You can also, at this point, review the acts of service young people have participated in thus far, and give them the opportunity to reflect in their journal the acts of service they have done, if they have not done so already.

**Activity Suggestions**

**Exploration**

Research the life of a saint or exemplary Christian. Make a list of the significant things they did throughout their life.

Create a piece of artwork that expresses what makes you special and significant.

Create a piece of artwork or compose a list which shows the difference between what the world views as valuable and what God views as valuable.

**Understanding**

Using play-dough, bricks, or another versatile material, experiment with creating a product firstly with a blindfold, and secondly without.

Write about or discuss your experience:

Was there a difference between the final products?

Which version was better?

Were you able to pay more attention to detail and be more careful without a blindfold? Which product were you the most proud of?

Write a letter from God the Father to you, his beloved child. What life advice and expectations does God have for you, as your loving Father?

Create a job description for a disciple of Christ.

**Reflection**

For a day, a week, or even a month, challenge yourself to only upload pictures of the significant things you have done – or representations of these things - rather than pictures of yourself, onto Instagram/Facebook.

Create a photo album depicting of all the significant things you do.

Surviving, Succeeding or Significant? Interview peers, teachers and family to find out which category they would put themselves into and why. What do they think it means to survive, to succeed or to be significant?

**Liturgy**

*Begin with the Sign of the Cross*

*Create a reverent atmosphere, ready for worship, by singing (or listening to) a hymn your participants are familiar with.*

**Music suggestions:**

Be Thou my Vision

Here I am, Lord – Dan Schutte

O God, You search me and You know me – Bernadette Farrell

You Are Near – Dan Schutte

You never Let Go – Matt Redman

Build Your Kingdom Here – Rend Collective

I can do all things – Jay Stocker, Scripture Lullabies

I Will Never Leave You – Jay Stocker, Scripture Lullabies

**Reflection**

**The Response is:** You created us, You call us, we are Yours.

**Reader 1:** *God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created Him; male and female He created them.*

**Reader 2:** Heavenly Father, we know of your greatness and majesty, and of your grace and your compassion; may we come to acknowledge and realise our own value and worth as your creation, the work of your hands. **/R.**

**Reader 1:** *If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new.*

**Reader 2:** Loving Father, you do not count our sins or make note of our mistakes. You hold your arms wide open to us regardless of our flaws and failures, and rejoice in our very being. Through your Son, Jesus Christ, our past is deleted, our future is restored, our lives renewed. **/R.**

**Reader 1**: *For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

**Reader 2:** Creator God, you knew us before we were formed in the womb, you have set us apart. For each of us you have created a unique and individual purpose and have tasked us to build your Kingdom. Help us to recognise how significant and valuable our lives are, so that we may use this knowledge to love and serve others. **/R.**

**Reader 1:** *You are the light of the world...let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*

**Reader 2:** Lord Jesus Christ, you are the light of our lives. Ignite a flame within us that will empower us to share our gifts and talents with others, living our best and most authentic selves. **/R.**

**Reader 1:** *Do not be afraid, I have redeemed you. I have called you by your name, you are mine.*

**Reader 2:** Lord God, we are yours. You created us, you love us, you want us. Help us to understand your love more deeply, so that we can truly accept who we are - who you created us to be. **/R.**

**Reflection Activity**

All participants should have received a marker pen and piece of metallic card prior to the Liturgy, and the card should have been cut to the approximate size of their mobile phone case.

Explain to the participants that this piece of card is a sort of replacement for a mirror/selfie camera, and could fit inside their phone case.

**Introduction**

It has been reported we spend, on average, over three hours looking at our phone screens every day. Much of this time is spent looking through social media accounts, at the lives of our family, friends, celebrities, and even complete strangers. A lot of this time is also spent taking selfies, with around 93 million selfies taken every day! It is so easy to be sucked in by what we see on our screens – to start judging ourselves and comparing our lives to the lives of others, to think that all of our worth and value comes from how we measure against those we see on our social media pages. At these times, and the times when you are looking at yourself on your selfie camera, feeling like all you are worth is the number of likes you have accumulated that day, take the card out of your phone case. Remind yourself of what makes you *truly* significant*.*

This small card is to help us remember that it isn’t the number of likes or followers we have that makes our lives significant; it isn’t how perfect our faces and bodies appear on a screen; it isn’t what exciting people we have hung out with or the places we have been to that weekend, or the number of cities and countries we have visited. What makes us special is that we are God’s creation and we are loved beyond measure, despite any imperfections, regardless of where we have been, no matter how pretty or popular we are. God made us and He loves us, and when we allow ourselves to believe this it shines through us, onto others and those whom it shines on to begin to see their own significance too.

**Activity**

Invite participants to reflect on the scripture and prayers they have just heard. Reiterate the core message: that God created them and loves them, that they are truly significant, and that their lives full of purpose and meaning of which can be found in the acts of love and service they carry out. Ask them to write onto the card a list of things that make them significant, for example:

God made me;

God loves me;

I am kind/compassionate/generous/forgiving etc.;

I am a good friend/listener;

I make others happy/smile;

I am welcoming and hospitable;

I am generous with my time.

Additionally, participants could write on one another’s cards, adding what they think is significant and special about their peers.

Play reflective music during the activity, and once all participants have completed the task, take a few moments to sit and reflect, take in everything from the session and just listen to God.

**Concluding Prayer**

St. John Henry Newman’s ‘Fragrance Prayer’

Dear Jesus, help me to spread your fragrance everywhere I go.
Flood my soul with your spirit and life.
Penetrate and possess my whole being so utterly,
that my life may only be a radiance of yours.

Shine through me, and be so in me
that every soul I come in contact with
may feel your presence in my soul.
Let them look up and see no longer me, but only Jesus!

Stay with me and then I shall begin to shine as you shine,
so to shine as to be a light to others;
The light, O Jesus will be all from you; none of it will be mine;
it will be you, shining on others through me.

Let me thus praise you the way you love best, by shining on those around me.
Let me preach you without preaching, not by words but by my example,
by the catching force of the sympathetic influence of what I do,
the evident fullness of the love my heart bears to you.

AMEN.