

2025 CATHOLIC CITIZENSHIP ESSAY CONTEST

Three Influential Vicars of Christ by Sophia

In today's society, the concept of faith among the youth is frequently being tested by secular influences, leading to a diminished presence of religion in everyday life and public culture. The pope faces an enormous challenge in inspiring young people to want to proudly live their lives with faith, hope and love. Pope John Paul II, Pope Francis, and Pope Benedict XVI are three popes who have made a profound impact on youth faith and spirituality. Each of these popes has offered unique guidance and inspiration, encouraging young people like myself to cultivate their relationship with God.

The first pope who inspired me to strengthen my faith and live as a disciple of Jesus is Pope John Paul II. He was an advocate for the youth, helping them live a life close to God in a variety of ways. He created World Youth Day, which calls all Catholic youth to rejoice in their faith. Pope John Paul II also spoke to the youth, inspiring and uplifting them to devote their life to God. His efforts are particularly significant today, as society continues to become more secular. By creating events and preaching to the youth, he has helped inspire me and many other children my age to put God above everything. Because of his teachings, I now recognize the importance of living my faith more deeply so that I can be a "force for positive change" and make a difference in the world.

The next pope that has also helped me devote my life to Christ is Pope Francis. He constantly encouraged the youth to attend Mass and be active participants in society. He has focused on connecting more to the youth's concerns about our world and has provided tremendous support. Additionally, he used social media to connect with the young people, recognizing its significance in their lives. I personally admire Pope Francis for teaching me to live life to the fullest and with a smile. Every time I see him on my devices, his joyful demeanor reflects his love for his mission, inspiring me to be thankful for my life and its blessings.

Finally, the last pope who has sparked my spiritual growth is Pope Benedict XVI. He consistently wrote pastoral letters to many young people during his papacy, emphasizing the importance of understanding their purpose, their relationship with God, and life principles. He believed it was important for the youth to think of Jesus as their best friend and encourage them to develop a more personal relationship with Him through prayer and scripture. I know he has encouraged me to push my faith to the limits and grow in small ways every day, improving my life so that one day I might make it to Heaven. I am not afraid to talk about how my relationship with God has made a difference in how I lead my life.

In short, the guidance and inspiration provided by Pope John Paul II, Pope Francis, and Pope Benedict XVI have been instrumental in shaping the spiritual lives of many young people including myself. Their commitment to addressing the concerns of the youth and fostering a connection with God illustrates the vital role that popes play in nurturing faith in a secular world. As society continues to evolve, it is essential for future popes to maintain their focus on the youth, ensuring that they feel supported and inspired to live their lives like Christ so that they might positively change the world.