

# WORLD DAY FOR GRANDPARENTS AND THE ELDERLY

I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS



GUIDE BOOK FOR THE CHURCH IN INDIA



**Dear Grandfathers and Grandmothers,  
Dear Elderly Friends,**

“I am with you always” (Mt 28:20): this is the promise the Lord made to his disciples before he ascended into heaven. They are the words that he repeats to you today, dear grandfathers and grandmothers, dear elderly friends. “I am with you always” are also the words that I, as Bishop of Rome and an elderly person like yourselves, would like to address to you on this first World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly. The whole Church is close to you – to us – and cares about you, loves you and does not want to leave you alone!

I am well aware that this Message comes to you at a difficult time: the pandemic swept down on us like an unexpected and furious storm; it has been a time of trial for everyone, but especially for us elderly persons. Many of us fell ill, others died or experienced the death of spouses or loved ones, while others found themselves isolated and alone for long periods.

The Lord is aware of all that we have been through in this time. He is close to those who felt isolated and alone, feelings that became more acute during the pandemic. Tradition has it that Saint Joachim, the grandfather of Jesus, felt estranged from those around him because he had no children; his life, like that of his wife Anne, was considered useless. So the Lord sent an angel to console him. While he mused sadly outside the city gates, a messenger from the Lord appeared to him and said, “Joachim, Joachim! The Lord has heard your insistent prayer”.<sup>[1]</sup> Giotto, in one of his celebrated frescoes,<sup>[2]</sup> seems to set the scene at night, one of those many sleepless nights, filled with memories, worries and longings to which many of us have come to be accustomed.

Even at the darkest moments, as in these months of pandemic, the Lord continues to send angels to console our loneliness and to remind us: “I am with you always”. He says this to you, and he says it to me. That is the meaning of this Day, which I wanted to celebrate for the first time in this particular year, as a long period of

isolation ends and social life slowly resumes. May every grandfather, every grandmother, every older person, especially those among us who are most alone, receive the visit of an angel!

At times those angels will have the face of our grandchildren, at others, the face of family members, lifelong friends or those we have come to know during these trying times, when we have learned how important hugs and visits are for each of us. How sad it makes me that in some places these are still not possible!

The Lord, however, also sends us messengers through his words, which are always at hand. Let us try to read a page of the Gospel every day, to pray with the psalms, to read the prophets! We will be comforted by the Lord's faithfulness. The Scriptures will also help us to understand what the Lord is asking of our lives today. For at every hour of the day (cf. Mt 20:1-16) and in every season of life, he continues to send labourers into his vineyard. I was called to become the Bishop of Rome when I had reached, so to speak, retirement age and thought I would not be doing anything new. The Lord is always – always – close to us. He is close to us with new possibilities, new ideas, new consolations, but always close to us. You know that the Lord is eternal; he never, ever goes into retirement.

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus tells the Apostles, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (28:19-20). These words are also addressed to us today. They help us better understand that our vocation is to preserve our roots, to pass on the faith to the young, and to care for the little ones. Think about it: what is our vocation today, at our age? To preserve our roots, to pass on the faith to the young and to care for the little ones. Never forget this.

It makes no difference how old you are, whether you still work or not, whether you are alone or have a family, whether you became a grandmother or grandfather at a young age or later, whether you are still independent or need assistance. Because there is no retirement age from the work of proclaiming the Gospel and handing down traditions to your grandchildren. You just need to set out and undertake something new.

At this crucial moment in history, you have a renewed vocation. You may wonder: How this can be possible? My energy is running out and I don't think I can do much. How can I begin to act differently when habit is so much a part of my life? How can I devote myself to those who are poor when I am already so concerned about my family? How can I broaden my vision when I can't even leave the residence where I live? Isn't my solitude already a sufficiently heavy burden? How many of you are asking just that question: isn't my solitude already a sufficiently heavy burden? Jesus himself heard a similar question from Nicodemus, who asked, "How can a man be born when he is old?" (Jn 3:4). It can happen, the Lord replies, if we open our hearts to the working of the Holy Spirit, who blows where he wills. The Holy Spirit whose freedom is such that goes wherever, and does whatever, he wills.

As I have often observed, we will not emerge from the present crisis as we were before, but either better or worse. And "God willing... this may prove not to be just another tragedy of history from which we learned nothing... If only we might keep in mind all those elderly persons who died for lack of respirators... If only this immense sorrow may not prove useless, but enable us to take a step forward towards a new style of life. If only we might discover once for all that we need one another, and that in this way our human frailty can experience a rebirth" (Fratelli Tutti, 35). No one is saved alone. We are all indebted to one another. We are all brothers and sisters.

Given this, I want to tell you that you are needed in order to help build, in fraternity and social friendship, the world of tomorrow: the world in which we, together with our children and grandchildren, will live once the storm has subsided. All of us must "take an active part in renewing and supporting our troubled societies" (ibid., 77). Among the pillars that support this new edifice, there are three that you, better than anyone else,

can help to set up. Those three pillars are dreams, memory and prayer. The Lord's closeness will grant to all, even the frailest among us, the strength needed to embark on a new journey along the path of dreams, memory and prayer.

The prophet Joel once promised: "Your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men will have visions" (3:1). The future of the world depends on this covenant between young and old. Who, if not the young, can take the dreams of the elderly and make them come true? Yet for this to happen, it is necessary that we continue to dream. Our dreams of justice, of peace, of solidarity can make it possible for our young people to have new visions; in this way, together, we can build the future. You need to show that it is possible to emerge renewed from an experience of hardship. I am sure that you have had more than one such experience: in your life you have faced any number of troubles and yet were able to pull through. Use those experiences to learn how to pull through now.

Dreams are thus intertwined with memory. I think of the painful memory of war, and its importance for helping the young to learn the value of peace. Those among you who experienced the suffering of war must pass on this message. Keeping memory alive is a true mission for every elderly person: keeping memory alive and sharing it with others. Edith Bruck, who survived the horror of the Shoah, has said that "even illuminating a single conscience is worth the effort and pain of keeping alive the memory of what has been." She went on to say: "For me, memory is life." [3] I also think of my own grandparents, and those among you who had to emigrate and know how hard it is to leave everything behind, as so many people continue to do today, in hope of a future. Some of those people may even now be at our side, caring for us. These kinds of memory can help to build a more humane and welcoming world. Without memory, however, we will never be able to build; without a foundation, we can never build a house. Never. And the foundation of life is memory.

Finally, prayer. As my predecessor, Pope Benedict, himself a saintly elderly person who continues to pray and work for the Church, once said: "the prayer of the elderly can protect the world, helping it perhaps more effectively than the frenetic activity of many others." [4] He spoke those words in 2012, towards the end of his pontificate. There is something beautiful here. Your prayer is a very precious resource: a deep breath that the Church and the world urgently need (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 262). Especially in these difficult times for our human family, as we continue to sail in the same boat across the stormy sea of the pandemic, your intercession for the world and for the Church has great value: it inspires in everyone the serene trust that we will soon come to shore.

Dear grandmother, dear grandfather, dear elderly friends, in concluding this Message to you, I would also like to mention the example of Blessed (and soon Saint) Charles de Foucauld. He lived as a hermit in Algeria and there testified to "his desire to feel himself a brother to all" (*Fratelli Tutti*, 287). The story of his life shows how it is possible, even in the solitude of one's own desert, to intercede for the poor of the whole world and to become, in truth, a universal brother or sister.

I ask the Lord that, also through his example, all of us may open our hearts in sensitivity to the sufferings of the poor and intercede for their needs. May each of us learn to repeat to all, and especially to the young, the words of consolation we have heard spoken to us today: "I am with you always"! Keep moving forward! May the Lord grant you his blessing.

*Franciscus*

*Rome, Saint John Lateran, 31 May 2021, Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary*

# FIRST WORLD DAY FOR GRAND PARENTS AND THE ELDERLY

## LITURGY NOTES

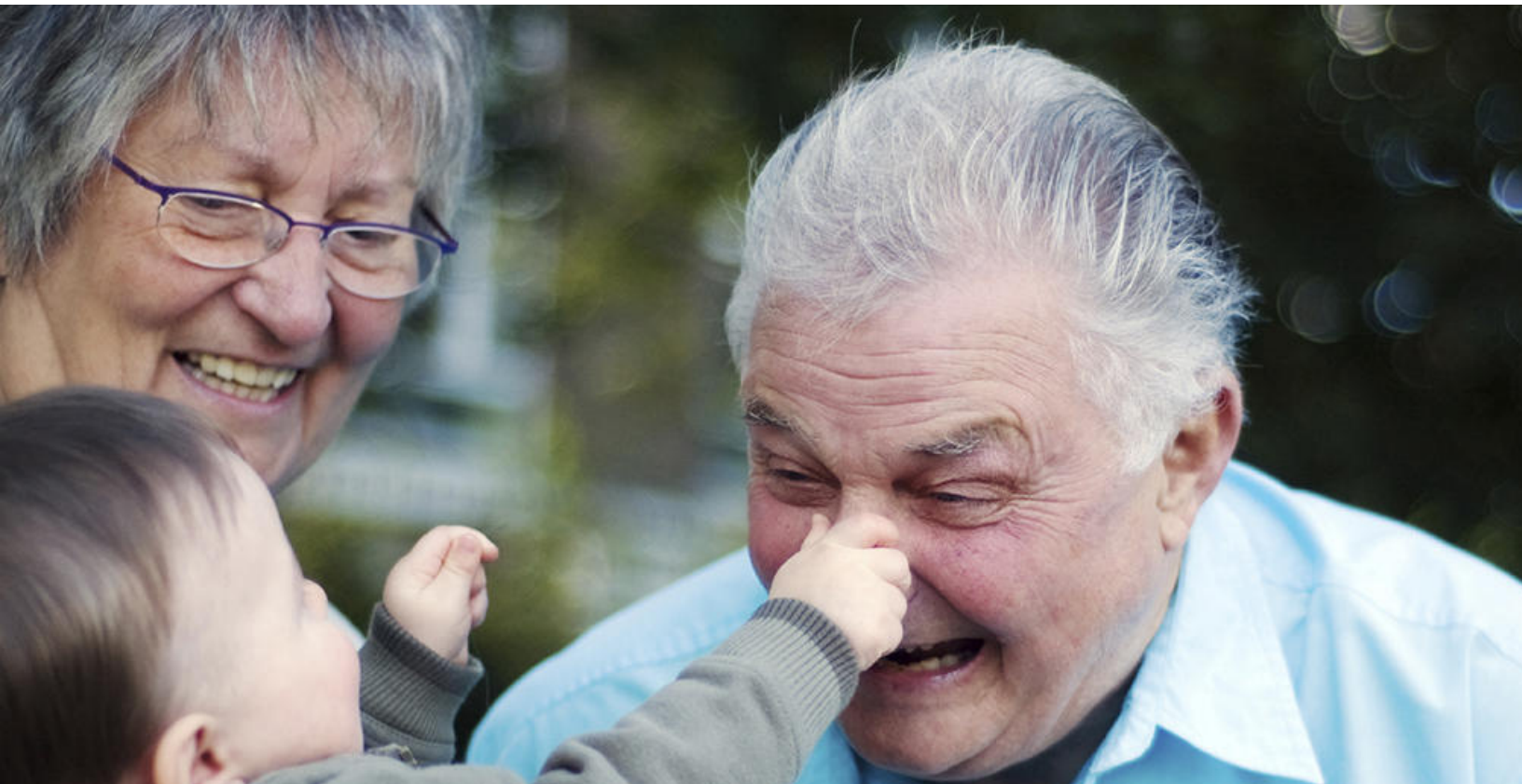
- ✦ One of the Masses on Sunday 25 July may be dedicated to the celebration of this World Day with grandparents and elderly people of the parish or community.
- ◆ To encourage the presence of older people at Mass, members of the community can be involved in organising transport for those who are unable to get there independently.
- ◆ During the celebration, young people from the parish or community can present the Holy Father's message to grandparents and the elderly.
- ◆ On 25 July and on the days immediately preceding and following it, liturgical celebrations for World Day could take place in hospitals and homes for the elderly. Where possible and in accordance with health regulations, members of the parish should be involved so that the Masses may be well animated.
- ◆ The collection from the Masses for this World Day can be dedicated to supporting projects to help poor elderly people in the community.

## HOMILY RESOURCES

**17 SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**

**2KINGS 4:42-44; PSALM 144; EPHESIANS 4:1-6; JOHN 6:1-15**

This World Day that we are celebrating today can help us to understand that all of us, young and old, grandparents and grandchildren, whether or not we belong to the same family, are “one body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call”. This awareness comforts us and shapes us as a people as we gather around the altar on which the Lord multiplies the bread of life and the Word of our salvation. The elderly – like the young – are important. Without them the body of the Church lacks something. That is



why it is necessary for them to have their rightful place within each of our communities. It is crucial that we share in the lives of older people in the same way that the Lord, in giving us his Body and Blood, has made us sharers in his own.

- ◆ Gathered together as a people around the Lord, we discover the beauty of being part of the same family and of being able to feel that we are all children – even those of us who are advanced in years – beloved of the one Father. So we understand that, as the Pope says in *Fratelli Tutti*, we are not saved alone. This is what those five thousand gathered around Jesus experienced, and it is clearer today to all of us who live at a time still affected by the pandemic. The elderly are not saved by themselves alone because they need strong legs on which to make their dreams walk. Young people are not saved by themselves alone because they need someone to tell them that even from a dark night, the sun of a new dawn can rise.
- ◆ The scene presented in the Gospel helps us to understand how, even in everyday family life, whatever each of us possesses can be a great resource for all of us. In the passage we have heard, a boy brings to Jesus “five barley loaves and two fish”; today it is more common for grandparents to possess material goods. But what counts is not having a little or a lot, but presenting it to the Lord who multiplies our bread and ensures that it satisfies the desire of every living person (Ps 144). Grandparents, then, have the specific task of transmitting the faith to the younger generations and accompanying their grandchildren with their wisdom. They need to help them to avoid losing touch with their roots and to build their lives on solid foundations.
- ◆ Sometimes what we possess is not material. If we think of our grandparents, what they often bring to our families is precisely the gift of gratuitousness. Their way of loving and pampering their grandchildren, to the point of spoiling them, may seem exaggerated to us, but exaggeration is the only measure of love. St. Ephrem the Syrian comments on this passage from John’s Gospel in words that seem to describe the attitude of a grandfather towards his grandchild. He writes, “Not only has he showered us with his gifts gratuitously, but he has also pampered us with affection. [...] He has drawn us with this food that is pleasing to the palate to draw us towards that which enlivens our souls...”.
- ◆ The Church is mother to a people who gather around the Lord and who do not seem to be able to feed themselves. It needs each and every one of us. Just as we heard in today’s Gospel how the Lord allowed a boy to assist, today it seems necessary to multiply the faith and wisdom of the elderly. In their spiritual depth there is a treasure to be discovered. The Pope has often spoken of this. On the occasion of the conference “The richness of many years of life” organised by the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, he said that the elderly “are the indispensable link in educating children and young people in the faith. We must get used to including them in our pastoral horizons and to considering them, in a non-episodic



way, as one of the vital components of our communities. They are not simply people whom we are called to safeguard. They can be the protagonists of a pastoral evangelizing ministry, privileged witnesses of God's faithful love".

- ◆ Even the most impoverished and frail of us possesses those two fishes of love and prayer. To pray is a vocation accessible to all. In his message for this World Day, the Pope quotes Benedict XVI when speaking of prayer as a specific mission of the elderly: "the prayer of the elderly can protect the world and help it perhaps more incisively than the toil of so many. Your prayer is a most precious resource: it is a lung of which the Church and the world cannot be deprived (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 262). Especially at this time [...], your intercession for the world and for the Church is not in vain, but shows everyone the serene confidence of having a firm foothold".
- ◆ In the parallel passage in Mark (6:41), the Lord Jesus entrusts the disciples with the task of distributing the loaves to the crowd. It is a task that he continues to entrust to the Church today. We alone cannot perform the miracle, but Jesus needs our hands so that the bread can feed those who need it. Let us think of how many elderly people in our parishes are ministers of the Eucharist or have other ministries, and how precious this is for the life and the liturgy of our communities.

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR THE PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL AND FOR THE COMMEMORATION OF THE ELDERLY WHO DIED IN THE PANDEMIC**

- ◆ For the Church to perform every day the miracle of the multiplication of the bread of life and the word of salvation. May no one lack nourishment for the body or lack hope that is born of faith. For Pope Francis' ministry. Let us pray.
- ◆ For all of us older people to live in a manner worthy of the call we have received with humility, gentleness and generosity. May our frailty never prevent us from being strong in love, nor from being consolation for the poor and support for the young. Let us pray.
- ◆ For young people when they come face to face with hunger for bread and a hunger for peace in this world. May they never be discouraged by how little they have, but may they obey the Lord's invitation to help feed everyone else. Let us pray.
- ◆ For those of us who are grandparents, may we know how to accompany our families with wisdom and may we learn to pass on the treasure of faith to our grandchildren and to the younger generations. Let us pray.
- ◆ For all the elderly who are alone and seek the tenderness of an embrace. May no one have to live in isolation, and may all receive a visit from an angel and feel that the Lord's promise "I am with you always" is addressed to their lives. Let us pray.
- ◆ For every sick person to be healed and for the storm of the pandemic to subside. May we learn never to leave anyone alone when they are facing the onslaught of evil, and may care be guaranteed for everyone, including in the poorest countries. Let us pray.
- ◆ May we all, young and old, in recognising that we have received one call, one faith and one baptism, devote our lives in serving peace, fellowship and social friendship. Let us pray.
- ◆ Dear God, we remember all the elderly in our community who have died in recent months as a result of the pandemic, including those who are not remembered by anyone. Welcome them all into your kingdom of peace and mercy.
- ◆ In particular, we remember ...

One by one, the names of the elders of the parish/community who died during the pandemic are read out and, after each name, a candle is lit.

The reading can be accompanied by background music.

## FINAL BLESSING

### *Blessing on a long life*

God of mercy,  
You have given your children the gift of long life,  
And they ask for your blessing.  
Let them feel the tenderness and strength of your presence.  
As they look back to the past,  
let them rejoice in your mercy.  
As they look to the future,  
May they persevere in hope that does not fade.  
To you be praise and glory for ever.



## PASTORAL GUIDELINES

The decision to hold a World Day for Grandparents and Older People has come at a time marked by a pandemic and by the suffering of our older generations in recent months in every part of the world. Reports of elderly people having to die alone and then not even being given a funeral, have been a cause of deep pain to the Church. It is one of the crosses of our time that was rightly brought to mind during the Way of the Cross with the Pope on Good Friday this year: “People jumped out of the ambulance dressed like astronauts, wearing protective suits, gloves, masks and face shields. They took away my grandfather who had been having difficulty breathing. That was the last time that I saw my grandfather. He died a few days later in hospital. I think of how lonely he must have felt. I could not be near him physically to say goodbye and to comfort him”.<sup>1</sup>

To be unable to be close to those who suffer is at odds with a Christian’s calling to show compassion. This World Day is an opportunity to reaffirm that the Church can never remain distant from those who carry a cross. The theme chosen by the Holy Father, “I am with you always”, expresses clearly that, during the pandemic and in the better times that will hopefully follow, every ecclesial community wishes to be with the elderly always.

It was over a year ago when the first wave of the pandemic was at its height that the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life wrote: “as individuals and as local Churches, we can do a lot for the elderly: pray for them, cure the disease of loneliness, activate solidarity networks and much more. Faced with the scenario of a

generation hit so severely, we have a common responsibility”.<sup>2</sup> When the storm has subsided, this task must take on an ordinary dimension in the life of parishes and the entire Church. The annual celebration of a day dedicated to older people is a way of incorporating attention for the frail elderly into the routine fabric of our pastoral work.

It cannot be said that the concern for the elderly shown by Pope Francis is something new. Recent Popes have given similar attention to the aged and have addressed them with words of wisdom and human warmth.<sup>3</sup> Pope Francis has demonstrated his spiritual closeness to the elderly throughout his pontificate, and this should be

1 The Way of the Cross led by Pope Francis on Good Friday, 2 April 2021, St Peter’s Square, 13th Station

2 DICASTERY FOR LAITY, FAMILY AND LIFE, In loneliness the coronavirus kills more, 7 April 2020. <http://www.laityfamilylife.va/content/laityfamilylife/en/news/2020/nella-solitudine-il-coronavirus-uccide-di-piu.html>

3 See, for example, JOHN PAUL II, Letter to the Elderly, 1 October 1999; BENEDICT XVI, Address during a visit to the Viva gli anziani home for the elderly run by the Sant’Egidio Community, 12 November 2012.



read in the light of the ecclesiology that distinguishes him. Like other sectors that have not always received adequate pastoral care, older people have a precise mission to fulfil as holy faithful People of God. Pope Francis identifies their task as being to keep memories alive and to transmit the faith to the younger generations, but, more importantly, he considers them to be a significant component of the Catholic laity. They are not simply ‘users’ of the Church, but they are also companions on the journey. That is why this World Day is not an occasion to produce a document on old age, but rather there is a message addressed to the elderly in which the Holy Father asks them to share responsibility for the way the Church will go in the future and to take part in the construction of the world after the pandemic. This is something new that fits into the synodal perspective advocated by Pope Francis. According to the Pope, older people form part of “all of the baptised, who are the subject of the *sensus fidei* – infallible – *in credendo*.”<sup>4</sup> This perspective shows us how important it is to provide better pastoral care for a generation that we may have often forgotten, mainly because we tend to consider older people to be already evangelised.

This first World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly is being celebrated midway through the year dedicated to family by the Holy Father on the fifth anniversary of the apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*. This is a deliberate choice that stems from awareness of how the elderly – all the elderly, including those who are not grandparents – need a family environment in which to live, and also how it is necessary for families to become aware of the role being played by their older members. In a globalised world, the relationship between the elderly and families is no longer taken for granted, but is, on the contrary, constantly being called into question. This is a trend that has different connotations according to geographical and cultural context, but there are some recurring features that suggest that there may be a crisis under way between the elderly and family, a sign of the times that must be taken into account. Family pastoral work itself, often concerned only with couple relationships and those between parents and children, has difficulty in focusing on the relationship between elderly parents and adult children and between grandparents and grandchildren.

The Pope wrote clearly about this in the encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*. He said, “We have seen what happened to the elderly in certain places in our world as a result of the coronavirus. They did not have to die that way. Yet something similar had long been occurring during heat waves and in other situations where older people found themselves cruelly abandoned. We fail to realize that, by isolating the elderly and leaving them in the care of others without the closeness and concern of family members, we disfigure and impoverish the family itself. We also end up depriving young people of a necessary connection to their roots and of wisdom that the young cannot achieve on their own” (FT 19). These are important words that deserve to be raised up again. They can help us to reflect on the debt that families – and family pastoral care – owe to a generation that has in some respects fallen into oblivion.

This complex scenario (the pandemic, the search for a new leading role for the elderly, and the crisis in family relations), in addition to the need to help people avoid discouragement and despondency, has led the Church to choose a simple way of setting out on a collective journey and of nurturing solidarity: to celebrate. Seniors and young people together: parents and children; grandparents and grandchildren; people who may not belong to the same family. The Church is aware of the need for reconciliation between generations and of the difficulties experienced by older people, but blame is not attached to the failings of anyone. The way chosen is to have an occasion of joyful celebration together.

As we see in the parable of the prodigal son and the merciful father, festivities can overcome the divisions that have scarred a family. The son had probably considered his father to be old and near death, and so he asked for his inheritance which he then squandered. His father welcomed him back and forgave him, and so he is reconciled with his elderly parent and also with himself. This is all celebrated with a feast in which they took part together. The merciful father is not unaware of the problems, betrayals and ambiguities, but he

4 Note by the Synod of Bishops, 21.05.2021

still chooses to celebrate. This is because only the joy of the Gospel is capable of filling the heart and setting us free “from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness” (EG 1). It is the basis on which to build renewed relationships between the generations and, thanks to the wisdom shown by the elderly, it is a rock on which to build our societies after the pandemic.

That is why we want the celebration of the first World Day of Grandparents and Older People to be experienced as a moment of celebration involving all generations. It is not a matter simply of happiness, but of joy born from the knowledge that the Lord is close to the lives of the elderly as well as the young, for God is with us always.

There are many pastoral tools that can give concrete expression to our pastoral concern for older people. For this purpose, it would be helpful to refer to a document concerning older people that was published years ago by the Pontifical Council for the Laity.<sup>5</sup> It contains a wide-ranging reflection on the meaning and value of old age and gives concrete pastoral suggestions that are equally valid and relevant today. Among the many ways in which local churches and individuals can be close to older people, we would like to suggest one which is easy to implement and highly effective, and that is to visit them. It is a tangible sign of a Church which goes forth. To pay a visit is a way, rooted in tradition, of showing compassion, including towards those who are ill or in prison. Today it seems that we need to add to the well-known list of the seven works of mercy, the ‘work’ of visiting the elderly who are alone. The decision of the Apostolic Penitentiary to grant a Plenary Indulgence to those who carry this out underlines its urgency.

Here we would also like to offer various other ideas on how to celebrate this World Day. We suggest that each parish or ecclesial entity could celebrate a Mass on the occasion of this World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly to commemorate the elderly of their community who died as a result of Covid-19; to ask young people to visit their grandparents, and especially the elderly who are alone, to give them the Holy Father’s message. In addition to what we have proposed, we are convinced that every Church community will creatively find the best way to celebrate it in their particular context.

May this World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly be a festivity filled with the joy of the Gospel for all!

**Rev. Alexandre Awi Mello, I. Sch. *Secretary Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life***  
**Card. Kevin Farrell, *Prefect Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life***

## **VISITING GRAND PARENTS AND OLDER PEOPLE WHO ARE ALONE**

- ◆ The first World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly will be celebrated in circumstances in which it will still not be possible in many countries for the elderly to physically attend Mass.
- ◆ In order for the message of closeness and consolation to reach everyone on this World Day – even those who are most isolated – we ask people to visit their grandparents and the elderly living alone in their community and to give them the Holy Father’s message.
- ◆ A visit is a tangible sign of a Church of outreach. At a time of social distancing because of the pandemic, a visit shows that there is a way of being close to older people while still observing safety measures.
- ◆ A visit is a personal choice to arise and go in haste to others (cf. Lk 1:39), just as Mary did when she visited her elderly cousin Elizabeth.
- ◆ A visit is an opportunity for a grandchild to say to his or her grandparent and for a young person to say to an elderly person they are visiting, “I am with you always”.
- ◆ A visit can be an opportunity to bring a gift, such as a flower, and to read the World Day prayer together.

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE LAITY, *The dignity of older people and their mission in the Church and in the world*, 1 October 1998

- ◆ A visit can also be an occasion to offer the elderly, especially those who have not left their homes for a long time, an opportunity to receive the sacraments of reconciliation and the Eucharist.
- ◆ A visit to an older person living alone is one of the ways of obtaining a Plenary Indulgence granted on the occasion of this World Day.
- ◆ In places where health emergency measures still make it impossible to visit in person, love can use imagination to find ways of reaching lonely elderly people by phone or social media.
- ◆ The World Day message can be shared by posting pictures of visits on social media with the hashtag #IamWithYouAlways.

### **Preparing the World Day with the Elderly**

- ◆ The elderly are the main target group of the Day's activities. The Holy Father's message is addressed to them.
- ◆ It is important to ensure that as many older people as possible participate in person in the Sunday liturgy celebrated on the occasion of the World Day.
- ◆ Older people from the parish or Church group can be invited for a moment of reflection on the Pope's message for their World Day. A printed version can be distributed to all those present and the video message can be watched together.
- ◆ Anyone visiting elderly people living alone can give the text of the message to those who are unable to attend the meetings.
- ◆ All grandparents and all elderly people that have been reached on the occasion of their World Day can be commended with the Holy Father's prayer intentions, together with the special intentions of their own community.

### **Preparing this World Day with young people**

- ◆ You can convene the young people of your community a few weeks before the World Day to explain it and to make sure that they reach as many older people as possible with their visits.
- ◆ Similarly, you can meet with the young people after the celebration so that they can share their feedback of the visits.
- ◆ Young people can organise social campaigns to spread information about the World Day by using the hashtag #IamWithYouAlways.

### **Remembering the Elderly who died because of COVID-19**

- ◆ During the Eucharistic celebration for the World Day, or at a dedicated time, there can be a moment to recall the elderly people in the parish or community who died as a result of the pandemic, and in particular those for whom it had not been possible to hold a funeral service.
- ◆ One possible way is to read out the names of the elderly at the end of the prayers of the faithful, and to light a candle for each person remembered.


### **Plenary Indulgence**

- ◆ On 13 May, the Apostolic Penitentiary promulgated a Decree granting a Plenary Indulgence on the occasion of the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly.
- ◆ The elderly can obtain an Indulgence by participating in one of the Masses celebrated on the occasion of this World Day.
- ◆ In view of the continuing health emergency and the fact that some elderly people are unable to attend Mass in person for health reasons, the Indulgence is extended to those who participate via television, radio or the internet.
- ◆ The Indulgence is also granted to all those who perform a 'work of mercy' on this World Day by visiting an elderly person who is alone.
- ◆ In places where visiting in person is expressly forbidden by the public authorities in order to avoid contagion, it is also possible to obtain the Indulgence through a virtual meeting.

## FOR YOUNG PEOPLE I INDIA

- ◆ Meet your grand parents during the month of July and make it a regular habit to visit them.
- ◆ Make them part of your celebrations. Bring smile on their face
- ◆ Give them a hug. #send your hug. The youth Commission will run campaigns in the month of July; # sendyourhug and #mygrandparentsmytreasure. You may click phototos (selfies) with them and post them.
- ◆ Spend a day parying with them and pray for them
- ◆ Cook a meal for them or share a meal with them
- ◆ Youth groups in the parish can organise a Eucharistic celebration (if the situation permits) for the elderly who can visit the church. Young people can also make arrangements to bring them to the church.
- ◆ Youth groups can pay a visit to the homes of elderly people and spend time
- ◆ Young people can visit elderly people who are living alone.
- ◆ Make albums and videos; record their stories and experiences and share it on social media during the month of July.
- write them a letter; Zoom them; call them on their phone;
- arrange to attend a live-streamed Mass with them
- send them a parcel of their favourite treats, or some flowers, maybe even a food parcel if they are likely to struggle to get out to the shops themselves.

Dear young people let us make this first World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly a special one. Lets spread the message that they are not alone; we are with them. Give them the message of Pope Francis and most importantly make it a habit of spending time with them.



*“Grandparents are the ring linking generations, to transmit to young people the experience of life and faith.”*  
*Pope Francis (2021)*

## HOW CAN OUR DIOCESES CELEBRATE

- ◆ Translate the message of Pope Francis in local language and share with elderly through voice message or pamphlets.
- ◆ Encourage the commissions for youth, women, laity and family to produce short videos on the message of pope and circulate them.
- ◆ Identify elderly people in diocese who have contributed towards the growth of the diocese.
- ◆ Provide guidelines according to the situations and customs of the place. Bishops can issue a pastoral letter.
- ◆ A short prayer service can be prepared by the liturgy commission to help the youth and children to pray during the house visits.
- ◆ Attend the grandparents day live telecast programme (for more details contact the Diocesan secretary for women's commission)
- ◆ Send a reminder and encourage the parish clergy to observe the day meaningfully.
- ◆ Diocese can prepare a prayer card in their local language and circulate. This prayer can be said everyday during the rosary in the families.

## HOW CAN OUR PARISHES CELEBRATE

- ◆ Ward leaders will make a list of elderly and Grandparents
- ◆ Young people of the parish youth group can prepare a plan to visit them and pray for them
- ◆ Youth of the parish could coordinate with the parish priest on the convenient day of that week to exercise the sacrament of reconciliation.
- ◆ Organize a weekday afternoon lunch program for grandparents
- ◆ Organise an event where grandparents can share their wisdom about family life, history and their struggles. Let youth join to ask them questions on marriage and christian faith..
- ◆ Offer prayers and special Masses where grandparents can come together to pray for their families who are abroad
- ◆ If possible help elderly people in the parish living alone to organise a zoom meeting with grandchildren and and share the message of Pope Francis.
- ◆ The parishes celebrating the grandparents day in the church can follow the same guidelines given above to appreciate in public the good they do in the society.
- ◆ All those parishioners owning vehicles can help the elderly to reach the parish on the day of celebration.

## Ways to Honor Grandparents Who Have Passed Away

Just because you have lost your grandparents doesn't mean you shouldn't celebrate them. Try out these ideas for your beloved grandparents.

### **Visit the Cemetery**

Consider visiting your grandparents' graves spending a few moments of silence remembering them and the times you shared together can make the day special.

### **Light a Candle**

Lighting a candle is a very symbolic gesture, and it's a lovely way to pay homage to your grandparents. You could light a candle at church or light one at home and let it burn all day long in a safe location.

### **Hold a Dinner in Memory**

Gather members of your family for a special dinner to commemorate your grandparents' lives. Ask everyone to bring their favorite photos to share, and set a special place at the table for each grandparent to show they are still present in spirit, if not in person.

### **Volunteer at a Senior Center or Nursing Home**

Consider volunteering to spend time with the elderly who may not have any grandchildren to visit them. You could talk with them and let them share stories about their lives and families.

### **Design a Plaque**

Have a plaque made with Grandma or Grandpa's favorite saying on it. The plaque can be hung in the home or the yard.

### **Make a Donation**

What charities did or would your grandparents be involved in if they were alive today? Was your grandpa a social worker? Consider supporting a social cause to honor him. Did your grandmother love orphans and abandoned? Donate to an NGO each year in her honor.

### **Honor Them at Church**

If your grandparents were devout religious folk, honor them at a local church service. On Grandparents Day weekend, have a special prayer said for them or make an extra generous donation to the church on that weekend each year.

### **Do Something That They Loved**

If your grandfather loved to fish, take your own children fishing on Grandparents Day weekend in honor of his memory. If your grandma loved gardening, plant a new flower or bush in your yard on this weekend each year. Think of the things that they loved and engage in those activities to help remember them.

**It doesn't matter if you plan an elaborate celebration or plan to share some quiet time together. Your grandparents will still appreciate hearing from you and spending time with you, no matter what you have planned for the day. What really matters to them most is that you care enough to mark the day with them, so make the most of the time you have together.**



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