

World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly: July 23rd, 2023

"Let us honour them, neither depriving ourselves of their company nor depriving them of ours.

May we never allow the elderly to be cast aside!"



Article by Deborah Castellano Lubov, Published by Vatican News

This is Pope Francis' heartfelt invitation in his Message for the Third World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, which the Church will celebrate on Sunday, 23 July.

The Church observes the World Day each year on the fourth Sunday in July, close to the feast of Jesus' grandparents, Saints Joachim and Anne. On the World Day, the Holy Father often presides over a Mass in St. Peter's Basilica, and invites parishes, dioceses, associations and ecclesial communities from all over the world to celebrate the Day in their own pastoral context.

Pope Francis instituted this Day in 2021 since, he believes, grandparents are often forgotten, yet they "are the link between generations, passing on the experience of life and faith to the young."

Pope Francis chose as this year's theme "His mercy is from age to age" (Lk 1:50), which he recalled, takes us back to the joyful meeting between the young Mary and her elderly relative Elizabeth (Lk 1:39-56). The Holy Spirit had descended upon Elizabeth, and had earlier, descended upon Mary, prompting her to respond with the *Magnificat*, in which she proclaimed that the Lord's mercy is from generation to generation.

That same Spirit, the Pope observes in the Message, "blesses and accompanies every fruitful encounter between different generations: between grandparents and grandchildren, between young and old."

The Pope expressed the delight that young people can offer older generations.

The Pope lamented how often they tragically are pushed aside.

This year, the World Day, the Pope recalled, takes place close to World Youth Day, stressing how maintaining quality connections with the older generations has priceless value for the young.

"The Lord," the Pope suggested, "trusts that young people, through their relationships with the elderly, will realize that they are called to cultivate memory and recognize the beauty of being part of a much larger history."

Friendship with an older person, he said, can help the young "to see life not only in terms of the present and realize that not everything depends on them and their abilities." For the elderly, on the other hand, he noted, the presence of a young person in their lives "can give them hope that their experience will not be lost and that their dreams can find fulfilment."

God's loving plan, the Pope expressed, spans past, present and future. "It embraces and connects the generations."

"It is greater than we are, yet includes each of us and calls us at every moment to keep pressing forward."

(see over)

(Article continued...)

For the young, the Holy Father said, "this means being ready to break free from the fleeting present in which virtual reality can entrap us, preventing us from doing something productive." For the elderly, he continued, "it means not dwelling on the loss of physical strength and thinking with regret about missed opportunities.

"Let us all look ahead!" the Pope said, insisting we must "allow ourselves to be shaped by God's grace, which from generation to generation frees us from inertia and from dwelling on the past!"

In the meeting between Mary and Elizabeth, the Pope said, God points us toward the future that He is opening up before us.

The Holy Father encouraged everyone to reflect on that meeting, "to picture, like a snapshot, that embrace between the young Mother of God and the elderly mother of Saint John the Baptist, and to frame it in their minds and hearts as a radiant icon."

The Pope made another appeal for us to never forget or abandon the elderly.

"Their presence in families and communities," the Pope highlighted, "is a precious one, for it reminds us that we share the same heritage and are part of a people committed to preserving its roots."

"From the elderly we received the gift of belonging to God's holy people. The Church, as well as society, needs them, for they entrust to the present the past that is needed to build the future.

The World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, the Holy Father said, is meant "to be a small but precious sign of hope for them and for the whole Church."

The Holy Father renewed his invitation to everyone, and in a special way, dioceses, parishes, associations and communities, to celebrate this Day and to make it "the occasion of a joyful and renewed encounter between young and old." To the young who are preparing to meet in Lisbon or to celebrate World Youth Day in their own countries, the Pope asked that before they set out on their journey, that they visit their grandparents or an elderly person who lives alone.

The Holy Father also asked the elderly to accompany the young people about to celebrate World Youth Day with their prayers. "Those young people are God's answer to your prayers, the fruits of all that you have sown, the sign that God does not abandon His people, but always rejuvenates them with the creativity of the Holy Spirit."

Before giving his blessing with "great affection," Pope Francis concluded by addressing grandparents and the elderly, praying that "the blessing of the embrace between Mary and Elizabeth come upon you and fill your hearts with peace."

(see over)

Reflection and Activities

- Attend Mass on the weekend of July 23, 2023. If possible invite Grandparents to attend with you.
- If they are unable to attend mass, pay them a visit this weekend.
- Plant a tree or plant in memory of all Grandparents and elders.
- Host a Novena or Holy Hour for Grandparents and the Elderly on the eve of Sunday, July 23.
- Forget-me-not flowers are the official flowers for Grandparents. Bring a bouquet of flowers to your grandparent(s).

On the occasion of the *Third World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly*, Pope Francis has granted a Plenary Indulgence for the faithful. The Plenary Indulgence is granted “under the usual conditions (Sacramental Confession, Eucharistic Communion and prayer in accordance with the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff) to grandparents, the elderly and all the faithful who, motivated by a true spirit of penance and charity, will participate in the solemn celebration that the Holy Father Francis will preside over in the Vatican Papal Basilica, or in the various functions that will be held throughout the world”. In the same manner, the Plenary Indulgence will be granted to the faithful who visit their elderly brothers and sisters in need or in difficulty, “such as the sick, the abandoned, the disabled” and to “all those who, unable to leave their homes for serious reasons.

Official Prayer for Grandparents and the Elderly:

Virgin Mary, Mother of faith and hope,
an example for this humanity bent by indifference,
make me as willing as You to accept the will of God, to magnify and praise His Mercy.

Mary, Mother of fortitude, you who knows my heart,
do not allow me to become discouraged.

I confidently surrender my life into your hands.

Heal my wounds.

May your tenderness accompany me on the way.

Your presence, Mother of love, brings us to experience the joy of seeing our families united.

Help me to transmit the tenderness and Love of God to the grandchildren and youth so that, in addition to praying for them, we can pray with them.

Mary, may the gift of the Holy Spirit intercede for me: sustain my weakness;
breathe into my heart the consolation that I may leave traces of faith among the young,
bearing witness to the beauty of life, knowing that life has a limit and that beyond it
lies before us our Father's embrace.

Amen



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