

[Readings: Genesis 18:20-32; Psalm 138; Colossians 2:12-14; Luke 11:1-3]

A year and a half ago, Our Holy Father Pope Francis announced the establishment of a World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly as a reminder of the important role they play as a link between generations. The day will be celebrated every year on the Sunday closest to the Feast of Saints Joachim and Anne, parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and Jesus' grandparents. He said,

“It is important for grandparents to meet their grandchildren and for grandchildren to meet their grandparents because — as the prophet Joel says — grandparents, before their grandchildren, will dream and have great desires, and young people — taking strength from their grandparents — will go forward and prophesy.” Referring to the Feb. 2 Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, the pope said the recognition of Christ as the Messiah by the elderly Simeon and Anna is a reminder that “the Holy Spirit still stirs up thoughts and words of wisdom in the elderly today.”

“Their voice is precious because it sings the praises of God and safeguards the roots of peoples,” he said. “They remind us that old age is a gift and that grandparents are the link between generations, passing on the experience of life and faith to the young.”

“Grandparents are often forgotten and we forget this wealth of preserving roots and passing on,” he added.

In the encyclical, [‘Fratelli Tutti,’](#) the Holy Father reminds us that no one is saved alone. With this in mind, we must treasure the spiritual and human wealth that has been handed down from generation to generation,” he said.

“Today, more than ever, we are committed to making every effort to dismantle the throwaway culture and to enhance the charisms of grandparents and the elderly.”

On this World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, Pope Francis said he is worried about how an individualistic society treats its older members, and he urged young people to give them love and attention.

“I worry when I see a society full of people in constant motion, too caught up in their own affairs to have time for a glance, a greeting or a hug. Our grandparents, who nourished our own lives, now hunger for our attention and our love; they long for our closeness. Let us lift up our eyes and see them, even as Jesus sees us,” he stated.

In his message for the second World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, the Holy Father urges the Catholics to pray for grandparents and elderly people, calling them "teachers of tenderness."

Pope Francis highlighted the importance of the elderly to our society. He exhorted Catholics to pray for them and to take extra care of them.

“We elderly people often have a special sensitivity for care, for reflection, and affection”, Pope said. They also have many gifts to offer the community.

“Let us pray for the elderly, that they may become teachers of tenderness so that their experience and wisdom may help young people to look towards the future with hope and responsibility”, he added.

He also stated that our world, which is rife with conflict, needs "a true revolution of tenderness" and that the elderly may help reduce some of society's harshness.

The pope asked all believers to pray for the longevity of the elderly so that their experience and knowledge may inspire young people to look to the future with optimism and responsibility.

The theme for this year's observance of the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly is "In Old Age They Will Still Bear Fruit" (Ps. 92:15). The theme is intended to highlight how grandparents are a blessing to society and the Church.

Pope Francis encouraged the elderly to continue to spread the Gospel even in their old age. “There is something beautiful here. Your prayer is a very precious resource: a deep breath that the Church and the world urgently need,” he stated. Francis said the Church needs “a new covenant between young and old.”

He urged young adults to visit their grandparents, their elderly relatives, and the older people in their neighborhood.

“They protected us as we grew, and now it is up to us to protect their lives, to alleviate their difficulties, to attend to their needs and to ensure that they are helped in daily life and not feel alone,” he said.

The ideas shared in the following paragraphs are the simple life experiences of grandparents evangelizing. I hope they inspire ideas in you that meet the needs and circumstances of your family and fill you with the confidence to put them into action.

One grandmother took every opportunity to point out God’s work in their lives and expressed gratitude for the smallest of blessings. “Thank you, Jesus,” she would say continuously throughout each day. This simple prayer leaves an impression. Make your faith known, tell your story and shed light on others.

Invite the Holy Spirit into your conversations; remember Jesus promised, “He will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you” (Jn 14:26). Create relationships where young people feel free to express their thoughts. Listen respectfully. Someone once told me that people remember how we make them feel more than what we say.

If health and practical considerations allow, consider getting involved in activities the kids love and find ways to bring Jesus along.

Include your grandchildren in your Christian service work. Service can be a reentry point for young people who have fallen away from the faith.

Consider bringing back old or creating new faith-based traditions for every holiday celebration.

Finally, teach them to pray. Pray with them and over them. It is a powerful witness for a child to see their grandparent openly express their faith.

Pope Francis noted that for many of us, our grandparents “cared for us, ever since we were children. Despite lives of hard work and sacrifice, they were never too busy for us, or indifferent to us. They looked at us with care and tender love.”

“When we were growing up and felt misunderstood or fearful about life’s challenges, they kept an eye on us; they knew what we were feeling, our hidden

tears and secret dreams,” he continued. “They held us in their arms and sat us on their knees. That love helped us grow into adulthood.”

“May we never regret that we were insufficiently attentive to those who loved us and gave us life,” he stated. At the funeral of baseball great Stan Musial, one of his grandsons said, “My grandfather always made nobodies feel like somebodies.” God does the same to us. Let us do the same for ourselves and for each other. AMEN!