



Presentation of the message for the second World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly

(Vatican City, May 10, 2022) Today, May 10, Pope Francis' message for the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly 2022 was presented with the theme ***“In old age they will still bear fruit” (Ps 92:15)***. The Holy Father addresses his generation to remind them that those in old age have an important mission in life. They are called to be “artisans of the revolution of tenderness” and to “set the world free from the spectre of loneliness and the demon of war”. Furthermore, the Pope invites them to rediscover this stage as “the gift of a long life.”

This Day was established in 2021 and is celebrated throughout the Church on the fourth Sunday of July, around the feast of St. Joachim and St. Anne, the “grandparents” of Jesus. This year it takes place on July 24.

In his message, Pope Francis acknowledges the difficulties that old age entails in the lives of individuals and in society. However, he invites the elderly to “persevere in hope” and points out that a long life is also a gift for the whole of society: “Blessed is the house where an older person lives! Blessed is the family that honours the elderly!” Precisely in a world torn by the violence of war, it is necessary “a profound change, a conversion, that disarms hearts and leads us to see others as our brothers or sisters.” For this reason, the Pope recalls that the testimony of the elderly is of great importance and invites them to “be teachers of a way of life that is peaceful and attentive to those in greatest need.” This mission begins with everyone’s own family but does not end there and continues to embrace “the many frightened grandchildren whom we have not yet met and who may be fleeing from war or suffering its effects” in Ukraine, Afghanistan or South Sudan, among other places.

The Holy Father invites grandparents and the elderly to continue to bear fruit and proposes to them to live in a particular way the dimension of prayer. This –Francis points out– is “the most valuable instrument at our disposal and, indeed, the one best suited to our age”. A “trustful prayer can do a great deal: it can accompany the cry of pain of those who suffer, and it can help change hearts.”

The Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life indicates two ways to live the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly: to celebrate in every parish a Mass dedicated to the elderly and to reach out those who are not visited. Moreover, in his Message, the Pope affirms that “visiting the elderly who live alone is a work of mercy in our time.”

During the press conference, the logo of the World Day was also presented, which shows an embrace in its core, a symbol of the encounter and dialogue between generations (see over).

In addition to Cardinal Kevin Farrell, Prefect of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, and Dr. Vittorio Scelzo, in charge of the pastoral care of the elderly, Giancarla Panizza and Maria Francis explained how the ideas contained in the Message are paths that every community can live in its concrete reality. Giancarla Panizza is an elderly woman who collaborated with her town in northern Italy to welcome refugees from Ukraine. From Bangalore, Maria Francis recounted how, during the month of July 2021, she promoted and organized visits by young people to lonely elderly people in many places in India on the occasion of the first World Day.



During the presentation, it was also announced that the Day will have the hashtag #ElderlyAndGrandparents and that a series of pastoral indications will be sent to all the Episcopal Conferences before the end of May.

The number of people over the age of 65 in the world is growing at an ever-increasing rate. In the last 60 years, this age group has increased fourfold and is expected to continue to grow. In 2019, 1 out of every 11 inhabitants worldwide was in this age group, but it is estimated that in 30 years the proportion will have increased to 1 out of every 6. Moreover, for the first time in history, since four years ago, people over 65 years of age have outnumbered children under five years of age. Aging population particularly affects the most developed countries. More than 25% of the elderly in these regions live alone.

With the celebration of its second edition, the *World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly* enters the ordinariness of the pastoral practice of our ecclesial communities and is set to become a tradition.

Attention to grandparents and the elderly, in fact, cannot be something extraordinary since their presence is not exceptional but an established fact of our societies. The Holy Father invites us to become aware of their relevance in the life of our countries and communities and to do so in a way that is not episodic but structural. That is, it is not a matter of chasing after an emergency, but of laying the foundations for long-term pastoral work that will involve us for decades to come. After all, in some places in the world-especially in Europe and North America-they represent 20 percent or more of the population. Within our communities, therefore, a change of perspective is required, putting aside those arguments that make the elderly appear as distant and extraneous people to be taken care of and getting used to a pastoral focus marked by ordinariness and long-term planning.

In the perspective of a commitment destined to develop over long periods of time, the catechesis that the Holy Father is dedicating to old age are of particular relevance. They offer an articulate and innovative reflection on this age of life and can be both the basis for immediate pastoral work in preparation for this year's Day and for long-term planning.



This year's Day comes at a particular time, unexpectedly marked by war. In the message, the Holy Father recognizes a link between the fading testimony of those who lived through World War II and the resurgence of conflict in Europe. This is the reason why he calls on grandparents and the elderly to be "creators of the revolution of tenderness" and to live especially intense prayer for peace, in Ukraine and beyond.

The mission that the Holy Father entrusts to the elderly at this particular juncture manifests how he believes that grandparents and the elderly have their own particular vocation that makes them a

relevant part of God's holy faithful People. This is the real alternative to the culture of discarding: it is not about making a gesture of charity or begging for a little better treatment, but about the affirmation of the centrality of the elderly in society and grandparents in the family.

It is hoped that the second *World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly* will contribute to making grandparents and the elderly protagonists in the life of our communities.

Visiting the Elderly

- The second World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly will be celebrated in a situation in which in many countries the health emergency has ended, which will allow initiatives to be taken with greater freedom and to put personal encounter and embrace at the center of each one.

- *In order for the message of closeness and consolation that the Day wants to express to reach everyone - even those who are most isolated - we ask people to make a visit to their grandparents and the lonely elderly in their community and to deliver the Holy Father's message to them.*

- The visit, a tangible sign of the outgoing Church, is a way to reaffirm that the elderly, even the loneliest, are at the center of our communities.

- The visit shows the personal choice to get up and go quickly to others (cf. Lk. 1:39), just as Mary did to visit the elderly Elizabeth.

- The visit can be an opportunity to bring a gift, such as a flower, and to read the Day's prayer together.

- Visiting a lonely elderly person is one of the possibilities for obtaining the Plenary Indulgence granted on the occasion of the Day.

- The encounter between young and old, the friendship that can result, is one of the signs that "In old age they will still bear fruit."

- To spread the message of the day, pictures of the visits can be posted on social media with the hashtag **#ElderlyAndGrandparents**

- Since the pandemic, in many contexts, the participation of the elderly in Sunday Mass has declined. Influencing this is the persistent fear of contagion, but also the habit, acquired during the various lock downs, of attending celebrations on television or online. The Day can be an opportunity to help the elderly regain the habit of attending Mass in presence.



Plenary Indulgence

- The Apostolic Penitentiary promulgated a decree granting Plenary Indulgence on the occasion of World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly.

- For the elderly, it is possible to obtain the Indulgence by attending one of the Masses celebrated on the occasion of the Day.

- Considering that some elderly people are unable to attend Mass in person for health reasons, the Indulgence is extended to those who take part through television, radio or the web.

- The Indulgence is also granted to all those who, on the occasion of the Day, perform a 'work of mercy through visiting a lonely elderly person.

PRAYER FOR THE SECOND WORLD DAY FOR GRANDPARENTS AND THE ELDERLY

I give thanks to you, Lord,
for the blessing of a long life
for, to those who take refuge in You,
grant always to bear fruit.

Forgive, O Lord,
resignation and disillusionment,
but forsake me not
when my strength declines.

Teach me to look with hope
to the future you give me,
to the mission you entrust to me
and to sing your praises without end.

Make me a tender craftsman
of Your revolution,
to guard with love my grandchildren
and all the little ones
who seek shelter in You.

Protect, O Lord, Pope Francis
and grant Thy Church
to deliver the world from loneliness.

Direct our steps in the way of peace.

Amen