

Catechesis in preparation for the
10th World Meeting of Families

Rome June 22-26, 2022



“Grandparents and the elderly”

Catechesis No. 6

Grandparents and the elderly

Grandparents and the elderly are also part of our families.

Today, a *throwaway culture* that tends to consider the elderly unimportant or even insignificant to society prevails. **Instead, old age is a new opportunity to respond to God's call.** It is certainly a new and different response, and in some respects even more adult and mature.

The vocation to love is a call that God makes to us at every stage of our lives. This means that grandparents and the elderly are also called to live out the grace of their relationship with the Lord through their relationships with their children, grandchildren, young people, adolescents and even children.

The answer to this call develops in two directions: one is given by **what they can offer to others** through their experience, their patience and their wisdom; the other is given by **what they can receive from others** in their condition of fragility, weakness and need.

In this way, the elderly offer themselves and those who come into contact with them a new opportunity for an authentic and mature human development.

Getting old is difficult

We can't hide how difficult it is to get to become elderly.

For some, it is an experience filled with bitterness and sadness, especially when associated with illnesses or diseases that make it difficult to carry out normal activities performed in the past.

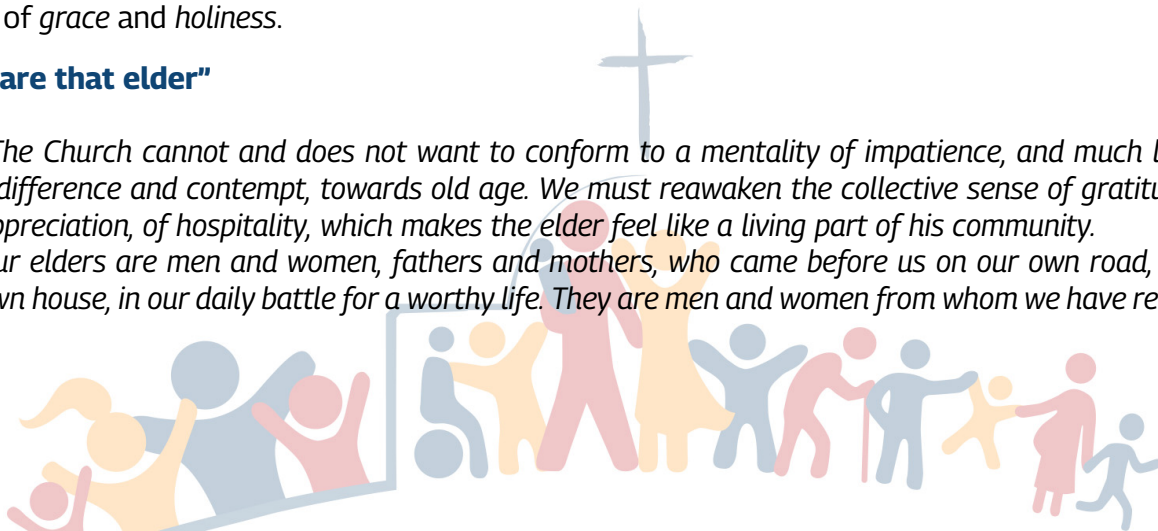
Sometimes the period of old age is also marked by the grief caused by losing one's spouse, with whom they spent a large part of their lives.

In some ways, even the season of old age, characterized by humble and simple daily events lived in concealment, silence and in a condition of apparent irrelevance to the history of the world, can be compared to the life of the Holy Family of Nazareth.

Old age is also the period during which, having become more needy and less independent, the elderly's desire for prayer and dialog with God grows. It is undoubtedly a privileged and propitious time of *grace* and *holiness*.

"We are that elder"

«The Church cannot and does not want to conform to a mentality of impatience, and much less of indifference and contempt, towards old age. We must reawaken the collective sense of gratitude, of appreciation, of hospitality, which makes the elder feel like a living part of his community. Our elders are men and women, fathers and mothers, who came before us on our own road, in our own house, in our daily battle for a worthy life. They are men and women from whom we have received





so much. The elder is not an alien. We are that elder: in the near or far future, but inevitably, even if we don't think it. And if we don't learn how to treat the elder better, that is how we will be treated»¹.

Old age: a time of grace and mission

«**The Lord never discards us.** He calls us to follow Him in every age of life, and **old age has a grace and a mission too**, a true vocation from the Lord. Old age is a vocation. It is not yet time to "pull in the oars". This period of life is different from those before, there is no doubt; we even have to somewhat "invent it ourselves", because our societies are not ready, spiritually and morally, to appreciate the true value of this stage of life. Indeed, it once was not so normal to have time available; it is much more so today. Christian spirituality has also been caught somewhat by surprise, with regard to outlining a kind of spirituality of the elderly. But thanks be to God there is no shortage of the testimony of elderly saints, both men and women!»².

«When the days were completed for their purification according to the law of Moses, they took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, just as it is written in the law of the Lord, [...]. Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout, awaiting the consolation of Israel, and the holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Messiah of the Lord. He came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to perform the custom of the law in regard to him, **he took him into his arms and blessed God**, saying:

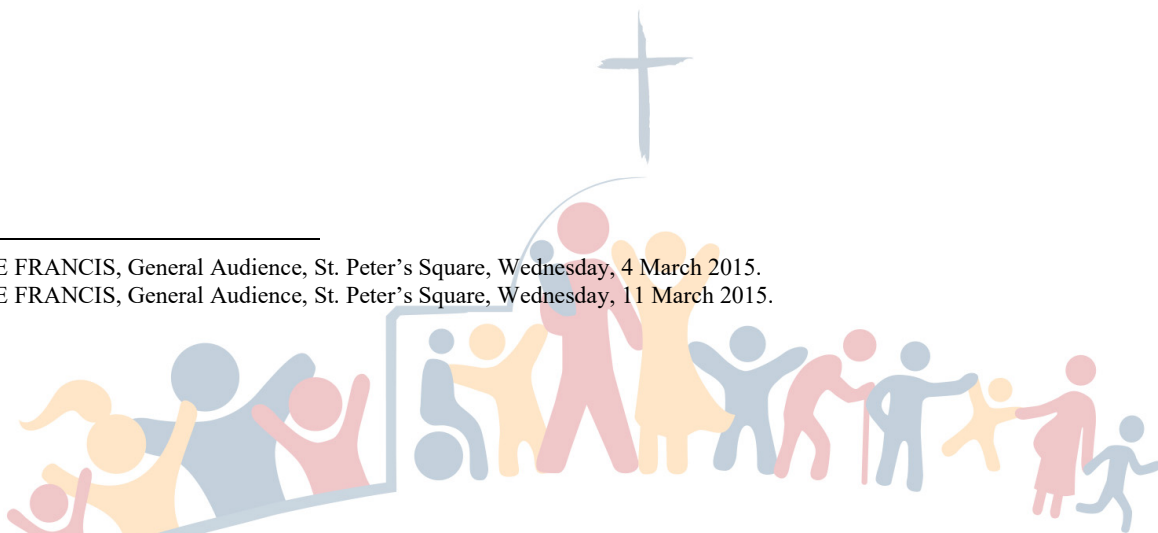
"Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace,
according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in sight of
all the peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and glory for your people Israel."

The child's father and mother were amazed at what was said about him; and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted (and you yourself a sword will pierce) so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived seven years with her husband after her marriage, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple, but worshiped night and day with fasting and prayer. And coming forward at that very time, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem» (Lk 2: 22-38).

¹ POPE FRANCIS, General Audience, St. Peter's Square, Wednesday, 4 March 2015.

² POPE FRANCIS, General Audience, St. Peter's Square, Wednesday, 11 March 2015.

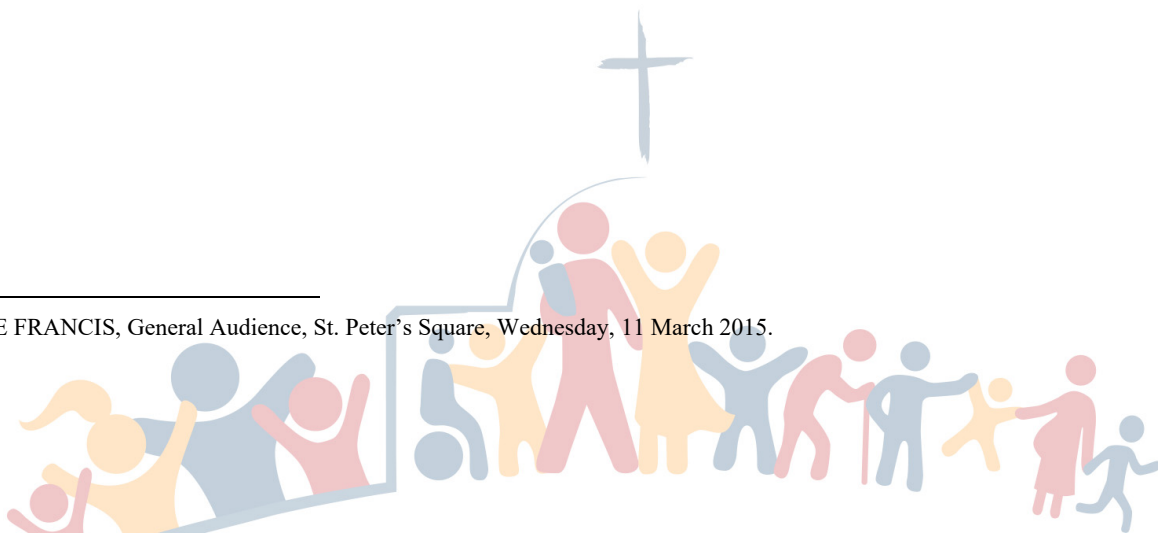


Poets of Prayer

«The Gospel says that they [Simeon and Anna] awaited the coming of God every day, with great trust, for many years. They truly wanted to see Him that day, to grasp the signs, to understand the origin. By then, they were also perhaps more resigned to die first: that long wait, however, continued to occupy their whole life, having no commitments more important than this: to await the Lord and pray. So, when Mary and Joseph went to the temple to fulfil the provisions of the Law, Simeon and Anna moved quickly, inspired by the Holy Spirit (cf. Lk 2:27). The burden of age and waiting disappeared in an instant. They recognized the Child, and discovered new strength, for a new task: to give thanks for and bear witness to this Sign from God. Simeon improvised a beautiful hymn of jubilation (cf. Lk 2:29-32) – in that moment he was a poet – and Anna became the first woman to preach of Jesus: she “spoke of him to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem” (Lk 2:38).

Dear grandparents, dear elderly, let us follow in the footsteps of these extraordinary elders! Let us too become like poets of prayer: let us develop a taste for finding our own words, let us once again grasp those which teach us the Word of God. **The prayer of grandparents and of the elderly is a great gift for the Church!** The prayer of grandparents and of the elderly is a great gift for the Church, it is a treasure! A great injection of wisdom for the whole of human society: above all for one which is too busy, too taken, too distracted. Someone should also sing, for them too, sing of the signs of God, proclaim the signs of God, pray for them! [...] A great believer of the last century, of the Orthodox tradition, Olivier Clément, said: “A civilization which has no place for prayer is a civilization in which old age has lost all meaning. And this is terrifying. For, above all, we need old people who pray; prayer is the purpose of old age”. We need old people who pray because this is the very purpose of old age. The prayer of the elderly is a beautiful thing»³.

³ POPE FRANCIS, General Audience, St. Peter's Square, Wednesday, 11 March 2015.





PRAYER FOR THE FIRST WORLD DAY FOR GRANDPARENTS AND THE ELDERLY

*I thank You, Lord,
for the comfort of Your presence:
even in times of loneliness,
You are my hope and my confidence,
You have been my rock and my fortress since my youth!
I thank You for having given me a family
and for having blessed me with a long life.
I thank You for moments of joy and difficulty,
for the dreams that have already come true in my life and for
those that are still ahead of me.
I thank You for this time of renewed fruitfulness to which You
call me.
Increase, O Lord, my faith,
make me a channel of your peace,
teach me to embrace those who suffer more than me,
to never stop dreaming
and to tell of your wonders to new generations.
Protect and guide Pope Francis and the Church,
that the light of the Gospel might reach the ends of the earth.
Send Your Spirit, O Lord, to renew the world,
that the storm of the pandemic might be calmed,
the poor consoled and wars ended.
Sustain me in weakness
and help me to live life to the full
in each moment that You give me,
in the certainty that you are with me every day,
even until the end of the age.
Amen.*





It is advisable that each person have the time to reread the catechesis, and to reflect on what resonates in his or her heart in a particular manner.

Points of discussion for the family

- Let's read together and reflect on Pope Francis' message to grandparents and the elderly (http://www.laityfamilylife.va/content/dam/laityfamilylife/Anziani/KitPastorale/EN/EN_MessaggioA4.pdf)
- As a family, we should think about the elders we could give Pope Francis' message to.

Points of discussion within the community

- Let us also invite grandparents and the elderly and also get them involved in preparing and running this IMF preparatory meeting.
- As a community, what are we already doing to get grandparents and the elderly involved? What more can be done?
- Let's get organized, including involving the youth, to personally bring Pope Francis' message to the elders of our community.

For more details:

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150304_udienza-generale.html

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150311_udienza-generale.html

Pope Francis' message for World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly:

http://www.laityfamilylife.va/content/dam/laityfamilylife/Anziani/KitPastorale/EN/EN_Messaggio%20A4.pdf

Prayer for the world day for grandparents and the elderly:

http://www.laityfamilylife.va/content/dam/laityfamilylife/Anziani/KitPastorale/EN/EN_Preghiera.pdf





Family Love: Vocation and Path to Holiness

Heavenly Father,
We come before You to praise You
and to thank You for the great gift of the family.
We pray to You for all families
consecrated by the Sacrament of Matrimony.
May they rediscover each day
the grace they have received,
and as small domestic Churches,
may they know how to witness to Your presence
and to the love with which Christ loves the Church.
We pray to You for all families faced with difficulty and suffering
caused by illness or circumstances of which only You know.
Sustain them and make them aware
of the path to holiness upon which You call them,
so that they might experience Your infinite mercy
and find new ways to grow in love.
We pray to You for children and young people:
may they encounter You and respond joyfully
to the vocation You have in mind for them;
We pray for parents and grandparents: may they be aware
that they are signs of the fatherhood and motherhood of God
in caring for the children who, in body and spirit, You entrust to them;
and for the experience of fraternity
that the family can give to the world.
Lord, grant that each family
might live their specific vocation to holiness in the Church
as a call to become missionary disciples,
in the service of life and peace,
in communion with our priests, religious,
and all vocations in the Church.
Bless the World Meeting of Families.
Amen.

Official prayer for the *X World Meeting of Families*
22-26 June 2022

