



DIOCESE OF HARRISBURG

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This weekend, on July 28, we celebrate the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly. This day is not just an observance; it is a reminder to us of the contribution older people make to our families, communities, and to our Church. Grateful for the wisdom and experience of our grandparents and all the elderly, we are called to embrace them with love, respect, and gratitude.

Pope Francis has beautifully articulated the importance of reverence for elderly people in his messages for this year's observance. The Holy Father also calls attention to the challenges that many of our elderly face in today's world. Loneliness, isolation, and the struggle for independence are just a few of the hurdles that can overshadow the golden years of life. "In the Bible, then, we find both the certainty of God's closeness at every stage of life and the fear of abandonment, particularly in old age and in times of pain. There is no contradiction here. If we look around, we have no difficulty seeing that its words reflect an utterly evident reality. All too often, loneliness is the bleak companion of our lives as elderly persons and grandparents." (Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the IV World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, April 25, 2024) Pope Francis continues in his message that we should follow the example of Ruth, who, even when told by her aging mother-in-law Naomi to leave and build a future, Ruth chose to stay with Naomi. In the end, Ruth was richly blessed.

Many older adults face health challenges and the loss of loved ones, and sometimes may resign themselves to a life of loneliness in their golden years. In these times, our Church must be a sanctuary of support and comfort. We have a unique opportunity to be the hands and feet of Christ, reaching out to our grandparents and the elderly with compassion and care. Visiting, listening, and simply being present to them can make a world of difference in their lives.

Our elderly are a treasure, rich with the wisdom of years past. As we honor them today, please join me in committing ourselves to strengthening a culture that cherishes and supports them. Together, we can be a community rooted in love, respect, and a deep appreciation for the gift of life at every stage.

May God continue to bless our grandparents and all our elderly sisters and brothers.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Timothy C. Senior
Bishop of Harrisburg