

## **In old age, they will still bear fruit (Psalm 92:14)**

### **Fond Memories**

As we gear up to celebrate the **SECOND WORLD DAY FOR GRANDPARENTS AND THE ELDERLY**, I warmly recollect my growing years, and how I eagerly awaited the summer holidays so I could spend them with my maternal grandparents. They were always my only choice for the holidays. The love and kindness they showered on me made me feel so special; those were indeed glorious summers!

### **Present day...**

Ancestral homes which once housed the entire family are being sold and replaced by “towers”. The members of the family are given their share and move out. Over the last decade or two, the “joint family system” has given way to “nuclear families” with both parents working and maids to take care of the home and children. Their demanding but extremely well-paid jobs leave them no time for phone calls or visits to their parents and other elderly members in the family. Another aspect that is becoming increasingly unsettling is the younger generation migrating to the “West” with dreams of a better tomorrow. The elderly are thus left alone, albeit in a fancy apartment, and at the mercy of maids and neighbours.

### **Are we in a Catch-22 situation?**

How do we justify our need to live the way we do? We fail to realise that someday, we may be in a similar situation, perhaps feeling equally unwanted. That’s how the elderly in society feel; thoroughly alone, especially if they suffer from co-morbidities, longing to meet their children and grandchildren, or just to hear their voices on the phone. Why do we consider our grandparents and the elderly in our families useless, a burden, best left to their own devices?

### **Can we be the Light at the end of the Tunnel?**

The SCCs have done an amazing job of ensuring that **NO ONE IS IN WANT**, right through the pandemic, and the acts of mercy continue. From monetary assistance to a great extent, to visits or calls to the homebound and elderly, to helping people living alone to procure their groceries and medication, to demonstrating online connectivity so that they could participate in Church services; the list is endless.

Here are a few suggestions to cheer up our elderly in our own families and in our communities:

- Phone calls every week; give them a heads-up that you would be calling on so-and-so day and at so-and-so time
- Visit them as often as you can, and make sure they have enough provisions always
- Try to remember what savoury dish and dessert they like, and take some for them
- Politely try and find out if they need any financial assistance
- An early evening visit and walk would surely cheer them up
- Bring them up-to-date on current affairs, sports etc. by reading the newspaper to them
- Some of the elderly are still active and eager to participate in community activities; involve them
- Recite a decade of the Rosary with them, especially dedicating the decade to their wellbeing
- Try and include them in the Family/Community Feast Day celebrations
- Remember to wish them on their birthdays.

These are just a few suggestions. We can do much more, time and inclination permitting.

Remember, our grandparents and the elderly in our families, to a great extent, can take credit for our success today. Our fancy jobs, our degrees, etc. are incomparable with the wisdom, knowledge and life experiences they have endured. **They are the jewels in our crown.**

I conclude with an excerpt from His Holiness Pope Francis' message on this auspicious Feast.

*Dear grandparents, dear elderly persons, we are called to be artisans of the revolution of tenderness in our world! Let us do so by learning to make ever more frequent and better use of the most valuable instrument at our disposal, and indeed, the one best suited to our age: prayer. Let us too become, as it were, poets of prayer; let us develop a taste for finding our own words, let us once again take up those taught by the word of God. A long life – so the Bible teaches – is a blessing, and the elderly are not outcasts to be shunned, but living signs of the goodness of God who bestows life in abundance. Blessed is the house where an older person lives! Blessed is the family that honours the elderly! Let us ask Our Lady, Mother of Tender Love, to make all of us artisans of the revolution of tenderness, so that together we can set the world free from the spectre of loneliness and the demon of war.*

#### **Questions for Reflection:**

1. How can we as animators lead by example in caring for the elderly in our families/community/parish?
2. How can we make the youth of today realise the value and importance of respecting and caring for the elderly?
3. How can we at the parish level engage the elderly in activities that keep them mentally and physically occupied and cheerful?

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