

# I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS

# WORLD DAY FOR GRANDPARENTS AND THE ELDERLY

## #IAMWITHYOUALWAYS



# FIRST WORLD DAY FOR GRANDPARENTS AND THE ELDERLY

## LITURGY NOTES

- One of the Masses on Sunday 25 July may be dedicated to the celebration of this World Day with grandparents and elderly people of the parish or community.
- To encourage the presence of older people at Mass, members of the community can be involved in organising transport for those who are unable to get there independently.
- During the celebration, young people from the parish or community can present the Holy Father's message to grandparents and the elderly.
- On 25 July and on the days immediately preceding and following it, liturgical celebrations for World Day could take place in hospitals and homes for the elderly. Where possible and in accordance with health regulations, members of the parish should be involved so that the Masses may be well animated.
- The collection from the Masses for this World Day can be dedicated to supporting projects to help poor elderly people in the community.

## HOMILY RESOURCES

### 17<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – YEAR B

**2 KINGS 4:42-44; PSALM 144; EPHESIANS 4:1-6; JOHN 6:1-15**

- This World Day that we are celebrating today can help us to understand that all of us, young and old, grandparents and grandchildren, whether or not we belong to the same family, are “one body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call”. This awareness comforts us and shapes us as a people as we gather around the altar on which the Lord multiplies the bread of life and the Word of our salvation. The elderly – like the young – are important. Without them the body of the Church lacks something. That is why it is necessary for them to have their rightful place within each of our communities. It is crucial that we share in the lives of older people in the same way that the Lord, in giving us his Body and Blood, has made us sharers in his own.
- Gathered together as a people around the Lord, we discover the beauty of being part of the same family and of being able to feel that we are all children – even those of us who are advanced in years – beloved of the one Father. So we understand that, as the Pope says in *Fratelli Tutti*, we are not saved alone. This is what those five thousand gathered around Jesus experienced, and it is clearer today to all of us who live at a time still affected by the pandemic. The elderly are not saved by themselves alone because they need strong legs on which to make their dreams walk. Young people are not saved by themselves alone because they need someone to tell them that even from a dark night, the sun of a new dawn can rise.

- The scene presented in the Gospel helps us to understand how, even in everyday family life, whatever each of us possesses can be a great resource for all of us. In the passage we have heard, a boy brings to Jesus “five barley loaves and two fish”; today it is more common for grandparents to possess material goods. But what counts is not having a little or a lot, but presenting it to the Lord who multiplies our bread and ensures that it satisfies the desire of every living person (Ps 144). Grandparents, then, have the specific task of transmitting the faith to the younger generations and accompanying their grandchildren with their wisdom. They need to help them to avoid losing touch with their roots and to build their lives on solid foundations.
- Sometimes what we possess is not material. If we think of our grandparents, what they often bring to our families is precisely the gift of gratuitousness. Their way of loving and pampering their grandchildren, to the point of spoiling them, may seem exaggerated to us, but exaggeration is the only measure of love. St. Ephrem the Syrian comments on this passage from John's Gospel in words that seem to describe the attitude of a grandfather towards his grandchild. He writes, "Not only has he showered us with his gifts gratuitously, but he has also pampered us with affection. [...] He has drawn us with this food that is pleasing to the palate to draw us towards that which enlivens our souls...".
- The Church is mother to a people who gather around the Lord and who do not seem to be able to feed themselves. It needs each and every one of us. Just as we heard in today's Gospel how the Lord allowed a boy to assist, today it seems necessary to multiply the faith and wisdom of the elderly. In their spiritual depth there is a treasure to be discovered. The Pope has often spoken of this. On the occasion of the conference “The richness of many years of life” organised by the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, he said that the elderly “are the indispensable link in educating children and young people in the faith.

We must get used to including them in our pastoral horizons and to considering them, in a non-episodic way, as one of the vital components of our communities. They are not simply people whom we are called to safeguard. They can be the protagonists of a pastoral evangelizing ministry, privileged witnesses of God's faithful love”.

- Even the most impoverished and frail of us possesses those two fishes of love and prayer. To pray is a vocation accessible to all. In his message for this World Day, the Pope quotes Benedict XVI when speaking of prayer as a specific mission of the elderly: “the prayer of the elderly can protect the world and help it perhaps more incisively than the toil of so many. Your prayer is a most precious resource: it is a lung of which the Church and the world cannot be deprived (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 262). Especially at this time [...], your intercession for the world and for the Church is not in vain, but shows everyone the serene confidence of having a firm foothold”.
- In the parallel passage in Mark (6:41), the Lord Jesus entrusts the disciples with the task of distributing the loaves to the crowd. It is a task that he continues to entrust to the Church today. We alone cannot perform the miracle, but Jesus needs our hands so that the bread can feed those who need it. Let us think of how many elderly people in our parishes are ministers of the Eucharist or have other ministries, and how precious this is for the life and the liturgy of our communities.

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR THE PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL AND FOR THE COMMEMORATION OF THE ELDERLY WHO DIED IN THE PANDEMIC**

- For the Church to perform every day the miracle of the multiplication of the bread of life and the word of salvation. May no one lack nourishment for the body or lack hope that is born of faith. For Pope Francis' ministry. Let us pray.
- For all of us older people to live in a manner worthy of the call we have received with humility, gentleness and generosity. May our frailty never prevent us from being strong in love, nor from being consolation for the poor and support for the young. Let us pray.
- For young people when they come face to face with hunger for bread and a hunger for peace in this world. May they never be discouraged by how little they have, but may they obey the Lord's invitation to help feed everyone else. Let us pray.
- For those of us who are grandparents, may we know how to accompany our families with wisdom and may we learn to pass on the treasure of faith to our grandchildren and to the younger generations. Let us pray.
- For all the elderly who are alone and seek the tenderness of an embrace. May no one have to live in isolation, and may all receive a visit from an angel and feel that the Lord's promise "I am with you always" is addressed to their lives. Let us pray.
- For every sick person to be healed and for the storm of the pandemic to subside. May we learn never to leave anyone alone when they are facing the onslaught of evil, and may care be guaranteed for everyone, including in the poorest countries. Let us pray.

- May we all, young and old, in recognising that we have received one call, one faith and one baptism, devote our lives in serving peace, fellowship and social friendship. Let us pray.
- Dear God, we remember all the elderly in our community who have died in recent months as a result of the pandemic, including those who are not remembered by anyone. Welcome them all into your kingdom of peace and mercy.
- In particular, we remember ...

***One by one, the names of the elders of the parish/community who died during the pandemic are read out and, after each name, a candle is lit.***

***The reading can be accompanied by background music.***

# FINAL BLESSING

## BLESSING ON A LONG LIFE

God of mercy,  
You have given your children the gift of long life,  
And they ask for your blessing.  
Let them feel the tenderness and strength of your presence.  
As they look back to the past,  
let them rejoice in your mercy.  
As they look to the future,  
May they persevere in hope that does not fade.

To you be praise and glory for ever.