

Pope Francis announces World Grandparents' and Elders' Day

31 January 2021

31 january 2021 (after Angelus)

Pope Francis

Dear brothers and sisters,

The day after tomorrow, 2 February, we will celebrate the feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, when Simeon and Anna, both elderly, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, recognised Jesus as the Messiah. The Holy Spirit still stirs up thoughts and words of wisdom in the elderly today: their voice is precious because it sings the praises of God and safeguards the roots of peoples. They remind us that old age is a gift and that grandparents are the link between generations, passing on the experience of life and faith to the young. Grandparents are often forgotten and we forget this wealth of preserving roots and passing on. For this reason, I have decided to establish World Grandparents' and Elders' Day, which will be held in all the Church every year on the fourth Sunday of July, close to the feast of Saints Joachim and Anne, Jesus' "grandparents". It is important for grandparents to meet their grandchildren and for grandchildren to meet their grandparents, because – as the prophet Joel says – grandparents, before their grandchildren, will dream, and have great desires, and young people, taking strength from their grandparents, will go forward and prophesy. And 2 February is indeed the feast of the encounter between grandparents and their grandchildren.

Today we celebrate World Leprosy Day, initiated more than sixty years ago by Raoul Follereau and continued by the associations inspired by his humanitarian work. I express my closeness to those who suffer from this disease, and I encourage the missionaries, health care workers and volunteers who are engaged in their service. The pandemic has confirmed how vital it is to protect the right to health for the most fragile people: I hope that the leaders of nations will unite in their efforts to treat those suffering from Hansen's disease and to ensure their social inclusion.

I extend my cordial greetings to all of you who are connected through the various media. I wish you all a good Sunday. Please do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your meal and arrivederci!