



By Bishop David M. O'Connell, C.M.

Since 2021, the Catholic Church has celebrated the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly each year on the weekend closest to the feast of Saints Joachim and Anne, Jesus' grandparents. This year it is July 27-28. The theme chosen by Our Holy Father Pope Francis for the 2024 celebration is taken from Psalm 71: "Do not cast me off in my old age."

*The Vatican announced: By cherishing the charisms of grandparents and the elderly, and the contribution they make to the life of the Church, the World Day seeks to support the efforts of every ecclesial community to forge bonds between the generations and to combat loneliness ... unfortunately, loneliness is a widespread reality, which afflicts many elderly people, often victims of the throwaway culture and considered a burden to society. ... Families and parishes are called to be at the forefront in promoting a culture of encounter, to create spaces for sharing, listening, to offer support and affection: thus, the love of Gospel becomes concrete. Our communities, with their tenderness and affectionate attention that does not forget its most fragile members, are called to manifest the love of God, who never abandons anyone.*

As time marches on for me and many of our priests, I encourage all the clergy, religious and lay faithful of the Diocese of Trenton to reach out in special ways to their own grandparents or to elderly neighbors who may simply need to know they are not forgotten or "cast off" in their old age. Show some extra love.

Make a call. Send a card. Best of all, pay a visit. Hold a hand as well as a heart. And give them a prominent place in your prayers.

On the weekend of July 27-28, as we celebrate the feast of the grandparents of Jesus, I am also mindful of the 85 priests of the Diocese of Trenton who have "borne the heat of the day (Matthew 20:12)" in our parishes and institutions, serving and ministering to us and who are now retired. They are truly our "spiritual grandparents." Many continue to offer Masses and share the Sacraments in our parishes. How can we thank them for the witness of their lives of faith? How can we help take care of and provide for them?

As Bishop, I invite all the clergy and faithful of the Diocese, once again, to show the generosity for which I have come to know you so well by contributing to the third annual collection for the retired, elderly and infirm priests of the Diocese. They, too, deserve our love and gratitude in their twilight years!

May God bless your kindness and shower his abundant graces upon all our beloved grandparents, "spiritual grandparents" and all the elderly of our Diocese.