



MARFAM FAMILY YEAR PLANNER 2024.

THEME: OUR WORLD, A FAMILY OF FAMILIES

THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY: JULY – GRANDPARENTS ARE FAMILY ROOTS



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Abbreviations: Pope Francis: LS = Laudato Si. AL = Amoris Laetitia. FT = Fratelli Tutti. EG – Evangelii Gaudium. FM = The Face of Mercy
Quotations are used from Old or New Testament passages of the time. It is recommended that the longer scripture passages be read to understand these stories better.

JULY OVERVIEW. Grandparents are families' roots. Old age has traditionally been recognized with respect in many cultures and families, where they are guarded by their offspring and the wider community, in animal as well as human society. This is changing now, but grandparents still belong in families and are its historical memory. Not all grandparents are elderly, many are active in their own lives, many others play a great role in the lives of their children, practically and spiritually. Celebrate with them during this month, conscious that neglect and violence towards the elderly is too common. Pope Francis has made the last Sunday in July a special day of celebration of Grandparents and the Elderly. His theme for 2024 shows his understanding of the loneliness and abandonment experienced by the elderly. **Pope Francis:** *“Do not cast me off in my old age.” God never abandons his children, even when our age advances and our powers decline, when our hair grows white and our role in society lessens, when our lives become less productive and can risk appearing useless. Using the OT example of Ruth who remained with her mother-in-law let us show tender love to the elderly and remain close to them as they play their unique role in the family, society and the Church. 2024 Message*

Setting the scene. For these reflections to focus on grandparents and elderly, groups and families were invited to reflect on and discuss their reality. This could differ quite extensively across the greater community and is very often associated with their socio-economic reality. One sharing group of elderly called themselves the BBT (born before technology) luncheon club. It was also recommended that grandparents from different communities could meet and share some experiences. Pope Francis 2024 Message for Grandparents and the Elderly is used for reference. Download from www.vatican.va

GRANDPARENTS DAY. The Sunday after the feast of St Joachim and St Ann on 26th July can be given to a celebration and blessing of grandparents. Grandparents can pray for their grandchildren and grandchildren for their grandparents. Below is a simple format.

PRAYING FOR GRANDCHILDREN. Bring to mind each of your grandchildren and their special qualities and needs.

GRANDPARENTS' PRAYER: Heavenly Father, I give you praise and thanks for the great gift of life you have given to me. With wonder and awe I acknowledge that through my life you granted life to my children and they in turn became the parents of my grandchildren. The world in which they live is different from my world and sometimes we do not understand each other. We need your gifts of acceptance and forgiveness so that we can be at peace. We need your gifts of love and joy so that together we may live your plan for our family and all the families of the world. We ask you to grant us these gifts in Jesus' name. Amen.

GRANDCHILDREN'S PRAYER. Lord, today we bring to you in prayer our grandparents. They may be here with us now, or may already have died and are now at peace. As parents, they gave life and cared for our own parents. We thank you for them and for that gift. We thank you too for the memories they created and that they have shared with us. They were born into a world different to ours. As times have changed they may have struggled to keep up and sometimes lost touch. Forgive us for the times we have been impatient with them and help us to be generous with our love and care for them in their old age. We ask this in Jesus name. Amen.



Blessing: We pray for God's blessing on the grandparents of our families and community: Bless with eternal rest those grandparents who have died. Bless all grandparents with peace and contentment and an acceptance that their lives were well spent in your service. We ask St Joachim and St Anne, the grandparents of Jesus, to pray with us. In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Blessing for all elderly. We pray for God's blessing on all the elderly members in our families and communities. Not everyone is a grandparent but all are important, have had a role to play and continue to do so. We thank God for the gift of their lives and ask God to be present to them in this last stage of their lives. In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

BEATITUDES FOR GRANDPARENTS AND ELDERLY

Blessed are the poor in spirit as they will not see their grandparents as a mealticket to the future.

Blessed are the gentle, as they will recognise and be patient with the weaknesses of old age.

Blessed are they who mourn, and who comfort the bereaved and lonely in their loss.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for justice, that the old and weak will not be cast aside but be treated with dignity and respect.

Blessed are they who are merciful and who forgive the old for the faults and failings of yesteryear.

Blessed are the pure in heart, who see the old and young as they really are.

Blessed are the peace-makers and the agents for reconciliation between generations.

Blessed are they who accept with grace the wisdom of old age.

Blessed are they who can look back on a life of integrity and know they are loved.

Blessed are they who do not judge their young, so that they will not be judged.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because they do what is right, standing up with courage to defend what they have learned through the years.

Blessed are the old and the young, children, parents and grandparents who acknowledge with gratitude the great gift of life they have been given to share.

..... for the Kingdom of God is theirs.

T ROWLAND MARFAM 2024

July 1. Joseph and Theresa had been married for 52 years and as they sat together in the evenings they would think back on all they had done. He shared, "Although it wasn't my job, woodwork was my hobby and my losing one's capabilities is natural, but there are times when I resent it and see it almost as a punishment. Do you think that is crazy, my dear?" "Well, that is normal but I think what is a bigger problem is that society and even our own family can be inclined to push us aside, neglect us and our needs." she replied.

Reflect, share, scripture: *Thus says the Lord, "I will not revoke the punishment because they sell the righteousness for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes – they trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth and turn aside the way of the afflicted. From Amos 2:6-16. **Pope Francis:** A family that fails to respect and cherish its grandparents, who are its living memory is already in decline. A society that has no room for the elderly or discards them because they create a problem has a deadly virus. It is torn from its roots. AL 193. **ACTION AND PRAYER.** As elderly and for elderly consider how responsible your behaviour has been. Pray and work for reconciliation.*

July 2. The Biblical students in the group explained how the prophet Amos is one of the prophets of justice. "He was a simple shepherd but when the need arose he was called by God to warn the people that their transgressions of abusing the poor and living immoral lives would not be excused. God's punishment would be stronger and swifter than man's. In a family too if any of the members have been taught and warned and if they still disobey, parents and elders have a right to punish those who disobey."

Reflect, share, scripture: *Hear this word that the Lord has spoken, O Israel which I brought up out of Egypt. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities. Amos 3:1-8. **Pope Francis:** Many people can testify that they owe their initiation into the Christian life to their grandparents. Their words, affection or simply their presence help children to realise that history did not begin with them and that they need to respect all that came before them. AL 192. **ACTION AND PRAYER.** Consider the needs of all the elderly in the family, not only grandparents. Others may be particularly lonely,*

July 3. St Thomas. The members of the luncheon club were grateful that Fr Nicholas was able to come and say Mass for them. Afterwards Paulina said, "when Father raises up the host at the consecration I always say those words, 'My Lord and My God.' They are words of worship but for me there is also that question of believing. I pray that God will increase

my faith.” Jack added, “Talking of faith my sight has almost gone and as I walk around I certainly have to go “by faith and trust.”

Reflect, share, scripture: *Jesus said to Thomas, “put your finger here and put out your hand and place it in my side. Do not be faithless but believing.” Thomas answered, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus said to him, “You have believed because you have seen me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.” John 20: 27-29. Pope Francis: “All that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us, we will not hide from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord. AL16. ACTION AND PRAYER.* Reflect on the deepest meaning of the words, “My Lord and my God!”

4 July. Reading the signs of the times is an important but challenging skill that the group often discussed. “If evil is allowed to triumph over good as we see in countries ravaged by war it should not just be a question of numbers when reports are broadcast of people raped, killed or abducted. These are people, members of families. It is interesting that suddenly in the war in Gaza and also in Sudan there is a big focus on the number of children who are affected. Does that really make us more conscious of the evils of war.”

Reflect, share, scripture: *Thus says the Lord “Go, prophesy to my people Israel. Your wife shall be a harlot in the city and your sons and daughters shall fall by the sword and your land shall be parcelled out by line. You yourself shall die in an unclean land and Israel shall surely go into exile away from its land. ” From Amos 7:10-17. Pope Francis. Forced migration of families, resulting from situations of war, persecution, poverty and injustice and marked by the conditions that put lives at risk traumatises and destabilises families. AL46. The development of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and the enormous and growing possibilities offered by new technologies have granted war an uncontrollable destructive power over great numbers of innocent civilians. Never again war!” FT 258. ACTION AND PRAYER.* What are the signs of the times to be addressed in our day?

July 5. Susan said, “in his message for the grandparents and elderly this year Pope Francis is quite critical of society as a whole, who abandon, abuse and neglect their elderly even blaming them for robbing the young of what they want and need.” like the 140 old people who died in the Life Esidimeni case, because of the uncaring attitudes of those who should have cared for them and even of their own families thinking .

Reflect, share, scripture: *“Hear this, you who trample upon the needy, and bring the poor of the land to an end, behold the days are coming,” says the Lord God, when I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east, they shall run back and forth , to seek the word of the Lord, but they will not find it. From Amos 8:4-12 Pope Francis: An accusation that the elderly “rob the young of their future” is nowadays present everywhere. It appears under other guises even in the most advanced and modern societies. For example, there is now a widespread conviction that the elderly are burdening the young with the high cost of the social services that they require, and in this way are diverting resources from the development of the community and thus from the young. This is a distorted perception of reality. It assumes that the survival of the elderly puts that of the young at risk, that to favour the young, it is necessary to neglect or even suppress the elderly. Intergenerational conflict is a fallacy and the poisoned fruit of a culture of conflict. To set the young against the old is an unacceptable form of manipulation: “What is important is the unity of the different ages of life, which is the real point of reference for understanding and valuing human life in its entirety” (Catechesis, 23 February 2022). ACTION AND PRAYER.* Do an examination of conscience on this matter.

July 6. St Maria Goretti. Mama Brigitte liked to tell the story of little Maria Goretti who lived in Italy in the 19th century. She had been taught to love God and follow his ways. When a young man, a tenant in their house, tried to rape her she resisted and he killed her. The young man later repented and for many years worked in the Church. Maria was canonised and declared to be a model for young girls and for boys too. We, even the elderly all need to be strengthened in our faith as we face temptation and know that God is with us wherever we go.

Reflect, share, scripture: *Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you. You are not your own, you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. From 1 Cor 13-20 Pope Francis: The sexual abuse of children is all the more scandalous when it occurs in places where they ought to be most safe, particularly in families, schools, communities and Christian institutions. AL 45. ACTION AND PRAYER.* Educate yourselves about the safeguarding programme.

July 7. 14th Sunday of the Year B. Granny Beatrice had been a strong Justice and Peace member in her parish for many years and had taken on the environmental awareness portfolio in recent years. She had studied Pope Francis' Laudato Si' and his other writings and was becoming quite challenging. Saving rhinos is one thing but economic justice is more of a challenge. Some of her own family too didn't like to hear her say, "Do you know that we all need to adopt the saying, live simply so that others may simply live."

Reflect, share, scripture: *A prophet is not without honour except in his own country and among his own kind and in his own house. Mark 6:1-6. Pope Francis: The weakening of faith and religious practice in some societies has an effect on families, leaving them more isolated amid their difficulties. AL 43. The Church has a public role over and above her charitable and educational activities. She works for the advancement of humanity and of universal fraternity. She does not claim to compete with earthly powers but to offer herself as a family among families, open to bearing witness in today's world, to faith, hope and love for the Lord and for those whom he loves with a preferential love. A home with open doors. FT276. ACTION AND PRAYER.* Reflect on the saying, "Live simply so that others may simply live."

July 8. Portia told her friend, "In our Bible study group Marcia explained the book of the prophet Hosea to us and how different it is from the harsher judgemental sayings of the prophet Amos. She said God was using the image of marriage and relating it to the prophet's life. Some of it made me quite nostalgic, it was really romantic. But then it came out that the prophet's wife became a harlot, she was unfaithful to her husband, but he didn't reject her. That isn't very often what happens today, is it? Not in the case of my daughter. She left after her affair and her family broke up. I ended up caring for the children for quite a while.

Reflect, share, scripture: *The Lord says, "I will espouse you forever, in righteousness, in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy and faithfulness. You shall know the Lord. From Hosea 2:14-20. Pope Francis. One spouse may not feel fully appreciated or may be attracted to another person. Jealousy and tensions may emerge. But many other things, rather than threatening love, are so many occasions for reviving and renewing it. AL237. ACTION AND PRAYER.* How often do grandparents have to do the loving thing and pick up the pieces in a family breakdown?

July 9. Pauline shared, "When we were young sex and sexuality were not talked about. Some even considered it sinful. I remember feeling excited when gradually we came to hear that sex is good. Marriage Encounter and later Theology of the Body helped us to deepen that understanding." Others added, "There is too much promiscuity these days and purity and chastity have gone out the window. Our children – men and women – have relationships with other partners." But so do some older people." Kids are into sex much too early and in schools these days the whole issue of LGBTQI+ is seen as normal." "There is too much focus on individuals living for themselves alone" "And yet there is a deeper honesty about sexuality as well." "Who know the best way?"

Reflect, share, scripture: *How long will it be till they are pure in Israel? From Hosea 8:4-13. Pope Francis In no way can we consider the erotic dimension of love simply as a permissible evil or burden to be tolerated for the good of the family. Rather it must be seen as a gift from God that enriches the relationship of the spouses. AL152. Nowadays many women and men seek personal fulfilment in a life as independent as possible and detached from other people. The family, which is the first and most radical argument against the notion that we can save ourselves by ourselves, has been one of the victims of this individualistic culture. Message to the Elderly 2024. ACTION AND PRAYER.* Is sexuality still respected in our day?

July 10. The group members reminisced about their earlier years. "We used to have a wonderful farm, we grew lots of fruit and vegetables and became quite wealthy I must say. But we were also so busy that we hardly had time for God and stopped going to church. I suppose our idols, what the reading calls "sacred pillars" were money, new cars, expensive holidays. As I look back I realise a time came when our children all left home and those material things didn't matter any more."

Reflect, share, scripture: *Israel is a luxuriant vine that yields its fruit. The more his fruit increased the more altars he built; as his country improved he improved his sacred pillars. Their heart is false; now they must bear their guilt. Hosea 10:1-2. Pope Francis: An empty nest obliges a couple to redefine their relationship. There are also personal crises that affect the life of couples often involving finances, work, emotional, social and spiritual difficulties requiring a process of forgiveness and reconciliation. AL 237 ACTION AND PRAYER.* Where do you draw the line on consumerism?

July 11. It was nice in the group to have a few men, some of them grandfathers. Andrew was in an unusual position. His wife and daughter had been killed in a car accident some years ago. "I chose to become father and mother to the little boy who survived. There were some aunts but I had considered it my task to nurture the boy." Then he shared how angry he was that the boy, who had been so committed as a teenager, had stopped going to church. "I don't know what he has got into, but what has happened to his faith I keep asking myself?"

Reflect, share, scripture: *When Israel was a child, I loved him and out of Egypt I called my son. My heart recoils within me, my compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my fierce anger. From Hosea 11:1-9. **Pope Francis.** Solitude and abandonment have become recurrent elements in today's social landscape. They have multiple roots. In some cases, they are the result of calculated exclusion, a sort of deplorable "social conspiracy"; in others, tragically, a matter of an individual's personal decision. In still other cases, the elderly submit to this reality, pretending that it is their free choice. Increasingly, we have lost "the taste of fraternity" (*Fratelli Tutti*, 33); we find it difficult even to think of an alternative. *Message to the elderly 2024.* **ACTION AND PRAYER.** Is it anger or sadness when our young ones go astray?*

July 12. "You know us oldies still have something to offer and hope it will accepted. I am happy to do some mentoring to the unemployed youth to try to teach them some useful skills. We women can teach sewing and knitting and the men can teach carpentry or other practical skills too." "We tried that. I thought it would be easy, and that they were keen to learn. But sometimes I do get despondent, as I have to beg them to come rather than them coming eagerly for help."

Reflect, share, scripture: *The Lord says, 'return O Israel for you have stumbled because of your iniquities. In you the orphan finds mercy. Whoever is wise, let him understand these things, whoever is discerning, let him know them, for the ways of the Lord are right and the upright walk in them. But transgressors stumble in them. From Hosea 14:1-9. **Pope Francis:** Just as God asks us to be his means of hearing the cry of the poor, so too he wants us to hear the cry of the elderly. We must reawaken the collective sense of gratitude of appreciation and hospitality which makes the elderly feel like a living part of the community. AL 191 **ACTION AND PRAYER.** How tolerant and accepting are we elderly amongst ourselves?*

July 13. Sheila was already 83 and had been caring for her husband now 94 for more than 5 years after he had become bed-ridden. They had been married for more than 60 years and there had been good and also not so good times. At this stage in their lives she was finding it increasingly difficult to cope and there was no money for expert care. "Where are the children now," she thought to herself, "and even for me and my attitude towards him, do none of us value my old Morris as God does?"

Reflect, share, scripture: *Jesus said, "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father's will. But even the hairs of your head are numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows." Matt 10: 29-30. **Pope Francis:** On this Fourth World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, devoted to them, let us show our tender love for the grandparents and the elderly members of our families. Let us spend time with those who are disheartened and no longer hope in the possibility of a different future. In place of the self-centred attitude that leads to loneliness and abandonment, let us instead show the open heart and the joyful face of men and women who have the courage to say "I will not abandon you", and to set out on a different path. *Message 2024.* **ACTION AND PRAYER.** How well do I genuinely value the elderly in my life?*

July 14. 15th Sunday Year B. Fr Joseph decided that in his homilies he would focus strongly on the letter to the Ephesians for the next few weeks because he liked to see it as a mini-catechism, a guidebook for daily living. "It begins with a greeting, a blessing from God to us and from us to God. It is especially important to recognise that we have been chosen from all time. Think about that from a family angle. You have been chosen to belong as a grandparent and parent to your child and as child to your parent and grandparent, as well as husband and wife? How does that make you feel?"

Reflect, share, scripture: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. From Eph1:3-10. **Pope Francis:** The Trinity is a communion of love and the family is its living reflection. "Our God in his deepest mystery is not solitude but a family, for he has within himself fatherhood, sonship and the essence of the family which is love. That love is the Holy Spirit. AL 11 **ACTION AND PRAYER.** Reflect on and pray a blessing across the generations.*

July 15. Joseph Jackson was the conscience of the luncheon group. Admittedly he was a bit younger than some who found it easier to do the praying but they realised that at times there was more they could do especially in the area of

climate change and ecology which many of them took very seriously. He led them into setting up a letter-writing campaign, writing to newspapers, radio programmes even to the government whenever they came across something unjust. Laurel had her computer so she would type while the others gave their verbal input. Joseph was happy that they were become more “socially and environmentally conscious.”

Reflect, share, scripture: *Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; defend the fatherless, plead for the widows. Is 1: 15-17. Pope Francis: we cannot overlook the social degeneration brought about by sin, as when human beings tyrannise nature, selfishly and even brutally ravaging it. This leads to desertification. AL26. The loneliness and abandonment of the elderly is not by chance or inevitable, but the fruit of decisions – political, economic, social and personal decisions – that fail to acknowledge the infinite dignity of each person, This happens once we lose sight of the value of each individual and people are then judged in terms of their cost, which is in some cases considered too high to pay. Even worse, often the elderly themselves fall victim to this mindset; they are made to consider themselves a burden and to feel that they should be the first to step aside. ACTION AND PRAYER.* Are you able to live life and still give life?

July 16. As they sat together the elderly women discussed Confession. “I know Pope Francis says we should go to confession often. I find it quite hard. What sins do we oldies really have to repent about as we keep on hearing in these readings these days?” “I thought about that too and spoke to my spiritual director. I now see that for me a sense of sin is what I feel when I have done something to break a relationship, with God or someone else.” “For me it is not so much the act that you did but an inner sense that something, even thoughts was wrong, bad or even evil.

Reflect, share, scripture: *At that time Jesus began to upbraid the cities where most of his mighty works had been done because they did not repent. From Matthew 11:20-24. Pope Francis: The external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast. The ecological crisis is a summons to profound interior conversion. We all need an ecological conversion whereby the effects of our encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in our relationship with the world around us. Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential a life of virtue, not an optional extra. We must Examine our lives and acknowledge the ways we have harmed God’s creation through our actions and our failure to act. LS 217-8. ACTION AND PRAYER.* An examination can take the form of a measure of our carbon footprint.

July 17 “What you shared yesterday about sin is really very deep. I’m afraid I can’t quite see it like that. Maybe my faith over the years has become simpler, like that of the little children Jesus spoke about.” “That’s OK. Each of us has to answer to God from their own insights and conscience,” George added.

Reflect, share, scripture: *“I thank you Father, Lord of heaven and earth that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to infants. Matt 11:25-27. Pope Francis: We have been called to form consciences, not to replace. AL 37 In calling to mind the figure of St Francis of Assisi we come to realise that a healthy relationship with creation is one dimension of overall personal conversions, which entails the recognition of our errors, sins, faults and failures and leads to heartfelt repentance and desire to change. LS 218 St Francis invites us to see nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of his infinite beauty and goodness. LS12. ACTION AND PRAYER.* The simple love and faith of St Francis can enrich our own faith lives.

July 18. One to be expected aspect of life for grandparents and is the death of a spouse. Around this time of the year Maud felt herself getting anxious. It was three years now since her husband had died and while she confessed to a belief in the resurrection of the dead, she still felt his loss with her on earth around the time of the anniversary of his death. Of her two daughters one was more matter-of-fact and took the attitude “get over it, mom” while the other was more gentle and would send her an sms or call just to let her know she was thinking of her and also missed her dad.

Reflect, share, scripture: *Your dead shall live, their bodies shall rise. O dwellers in the dust, awake and sing for joy! Is 26:19. Pope Francis: From 2024 Message to grandparents and the elderly. In many older persons we can observe the sense of resignation described in the Book of Ruth, which tells the story of the elderly Naomi who, after the death of her husband and children, encourages her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, to return to their native towns and their homes (cf. Ruth 1:8). Naomi – like many elderly people today – is afraid of remaining alone, yet she cannot imagine anything different. As a widow, she knows that she is of little value in the eyes of society; she sees herself as a burden for those two young woman who, unlike herself, have their whole lives before them. For this reason, she considers it best to step aside, and so she tells her young daughters-in-law to leave her and to build a future in other places (cf. Ruth 1:11-13). Her words reflect the rigid social and religious conventions of her day, which apparently seal her own fate. ACTION AND PRAYER.* Reflect on this common reality.

July 19. The group members were not all Catholic, or even all Christian so when they shared on the subject of praying for healing there was much discussion. Some attended regular healing Masses or services. Some shared a very strong belief that prayer could heal. James and Joan had gone on a pilgrimage when she had cancer some years ago and believed her healing was the result of prayer. Some were more sceptical while some prayed the prayer of St Paul for strengthening of their faith, "Lord I believe, help my unbelief." At the same time overall they were grateful of the healing offered through their companionship.

Reflect, share, scripture: *In those days Hezekiah became sick. He turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord, and said, "Remember now, O Lord I beseech you, how I have walked before you in faithfulness and with a whole heart and have done what is good in your sight." Then the word of the Lord came through to Isaiah: "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears, behold I will add fifteen years to your life. " From Is: 38:1-5. **Pope Francis:** By taking refuge in Christ's wounds may you know the healing balm of the Father's mercy and find the strength to bring it to others, to anoint every hurt and every painful memory. In this way, you will be faithful witnesses of the reconciliation and peace that God wants to reign in every human heart and in every community. Homily in Myanmar Nov 2017. Creating a world in need of development God in some way sought to limit himself in such a way that many of the things we think of as evils, dangers or sources of suffering are in reality part of the pains of childbirth which he uses to draw us into the act of cooperating with the Creator. LS 80 **ACTION AND PRAYER.** Reflect and share on the subject of healing and prayer.*

July 20. "Sometimes you have a child who seems to really want to do bad things. It might start small like hurting animals, pulling wings of insects or even hanging a cat from a tree. Then they hurt other kids, bully them and so it goes. I think that those youth in gangs that terrorise our neighbourhoods might have started as little kids. And later are they rapists and murderers? Are they guilty of corruption and fraud, and creating political mayhem? Let us also pray especially for those who are inclined to do evil."

Reflect, share, scripture: *Woe to those who devise wickedness and work evil upon their bed. When the morning dawns they perform it because it is in the power of their hand. Micah 2:1-5. **Pope Francis:** Faith allows us to interpret the meaning and the mysterious beauty of what is unfolding. We are free to apply our intelligence towards things evolving positively or towards adding new ills, new causes of suffering and real setbacks. Freedom, growth, salvation and love can bloom or lead towards decadence and mutual destruction. The work of the Church seeks not only to remind everyone of the duty to care for nature, but she must above all protect mankind from self-destruction. LS 79. **ACTION AND PRAYER.** Consider the inclination to evil in our own society today.*

July 21. 16th Sunday year B. Fr Joseph liked the image of those being far away and those being near in the letter to the Ephesians and the importance of peace between them. In his homily he said, "I know that the letter was referring to Gentiles and Jews at that time, but are there not still places of conflict today? There is a need for peace in many ways, also between the generations. A commitment to the elderly on the part of their children and grandchildren would be a good example of peace-building. How is that relationship in each of your families, especially where so many have split up and moved away? Do you elderly feel like strangers to those from far away?"

Reflect, share, scripture: *Christ came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near, for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. Eph 2:18 **Pope Francis:** The Church lives within the communion of saints. Their holiness comes to the aid of our weakness in a way that enables the Church with her prayers and way of life to fortify the weakness of some with the strength of others. MV22. **ACTION AND PRAYER** This month why not ask one another how you feel about the distance between the generations.*

July 22. St Mary Magdalen. Magdalen loved her special feastday and had great devotion to her name saint. When she invited some friends for tea she asked them, "What words of advice would you give to your grandchildren, or any young people for that matter? Let everyone have a chance to share." They said, "Be honest." "Keep promises." "Be kind." "Don't be selfish....." Finally Magdalen concluded, "My own favourite is the one in today's reading from the book of Micah. I have it written not just on my wall but also on my heart.

Reflect, share, scripture: *"These 3 things I ask of you. Act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with your God. Micah 6:8. **Pope Francis:** God goes beyond justice with his mercy and forgiveness. Love is the foundation of true justice. MV 21. Someone is assaulted on our streets and many hurry off as if they did not notice. People hit someone with their car and then flee the scene. Their only desire is to avoid problems; it does not matter that through their fault another person*

could die. These are signs of an approach to life that is spreading. We are caught up with our own needs, the sign of an unhealthy society, a person who is suffering disturbs us, we have no time to waste on other people's problems. FT 65.

ACTION AND PRAYER. Reflect on the parable of the Good Samaritan and how it applies today.

July 23. Paul shared, "The words faithfulness and mercy often seem to come together in the bible. To me they aren't the same but are related. To be faithful - as we discovered in 49 years of marriage – you do need to practise mercy, quite often. Forgive before being asked, forgive even if you don't want to. And one does those things because of love, a love that is strong and can endure.' They sat quietly for a moment and eventually Joann shared, "We were able to decide to love for all those years. For our son and his family and maybe others, the loving thing could be for a couple to separate if things just don't work."

Reflect, share, scripture: *Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passion over transgressions? He does not retain his anger for ever because he delights in mercy. He will again have compassion upon us. Micah 7:18-20* **Pope Francis:** *Many people leave childhood without ever having felt unconditional love. This affects their ability to be trusting and open. Unresolved issues need to be dealt with and a process of liberation must take place. In some cases respect for one's own dignity and the good of the children requires not giving in to excessive demands or preventing a grave injustice, violence or chronic ill-treatment. In such cases separation becomes inevitable. AL 240-1* **ACTION AND PRAYER.** Consider your personal the realities in order to find peace.

July 24. Granny Beatrice shared, "These days there is a shortage of vocations to the priesthood but the need exists as much as ever. I don't believe parents encourage and support their young people to consider such a vocation. At the same time I know that there are young people who do feel called to serve God and the community as lay people, even in politics or a helping profession or in a kind of social justice apostolate like climate activism. I think we need to do more to promote the sense of caring for others and the common good with all our youth." Jerry added, "We also need to promote this sense of the family as a common good with the priests and religious too."

Reflect, share, scripture: *The Lord said to me, "Do not say, "I am only a youth, for to all to whom I send you, You shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Be not afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you. I have put my words in your mouth. I have set you over nations and kingdoms, to lull up and break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant." Jeremiah 1:1-10* **Pope Francis: ???** *By developing our individual God-given capacities, an ecological conversion can inspire us to greater creativity and enthusiasm in resolving the world's problems and in offering ourselves to God as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable. LS 220* **ACTION AND PRAYER.** Consider any action and prayer for a sense of vocation in life.

July 25. St Christopher. Many of the group shared on their respect for St Christopher as patron saint of travellers. His story is today considered to be a popular legend rather than historical truth. But the devotion continues and many people have a medal as a reminder in their car and pray for his protection when they set out on a journey. According to the legend Christopher was a giant of a man who wanted to serve the greatest king. After searching everywhere when he worked at ferrying people across a river he found Jesus. One day a child asked to be carried across. When he lifted the child on to his shoulders the child became unbearably heavy and almost impossible to carry but he struggled across and delivered the child safely. The child was Jesus Christ carrying the weight of the whole world.

Reflect, share, scripture: *A good angel will go with you, your journey will be successful and you will return unharmed. From Tobit 5:22* **Pope Francis:** *We want to be a Church that serves, that leaves home and goes forth from its places of worship, goes forth in order to accompany life, to sustain hope, to be the sign of unity, to build bridges, to break down walls, to sow seeds of reconciliation. FT 276.*

ACTION AND PRAYER. A MOTORIST'S PRAYER

Grant me O lord, a steady hand and a watchful eye, That no one shall be hurt as I pass by.
You gave me life, I pray no act of mine may take away or mar that gift divine.
Protect those dear Lord who bear me company, from the evils of fire and all calamity.
Teach me to use my car for others' need nor miss through love of undue speed
the beauty of the world, that thus I may with joy and courtesy go on my way.
St Christopher, holy patron of travellers, protect me and lead me safely to my destiny. Amen.

July 26th. St Joachim and St Anne. Grandparents Day. The president of the St Anne's sodality sent out a special message to all the members. "Very little is known about this couple but tradition honours them as a loving couple and the parents of Mary, and so the grandparents of Jesus. They therefore played a role in God's plan of salvation." The Women of St Anne reflected and discussed many of the realities and implications. They agreed that not only women but men too are often quietly in the background offering their support and especially praying for their grandchildren. For some families, grandparents are much more actively involved and may even have the greatest role in bringing up their grandchildren. They also recognised that at times there are more than just two grandparents who play a role. Pope Francis in his message recognises how a number the elderly experience loneliness and abandonment and invites everyone to pray for and take action.

Reflect, share, scripture: *Let us praise illustrious men and women, our ancestors in their successive generations. Their offspring will last for ever. From Sirach 44.* **Pope Francis:** *The words, affection of simply the presence of grandparents help children to realise that history did not begin with them, that they are now part of an age-old pilgrimage and that they need to respect all that came before them. AL 192 "Do not cast me off in my old age." God never abandons his children, even when our age advances and our powers decline, when our hair grows white and our role in society lessens, when our lives become less productive and can risk appearing useless. Using the OT example of Ruth who remained with her mother-in-law let us show tender love to the elderly and remain close to them as they play their unique role in the family, society and the Church. 2024 Message.* **ACTION AND PRAYER.** Use the Grandparents and grandchildren prayer and blessing and promote the MOVEMENT OF PRAYER OF GRANDPARENTS FOR THEIR GRANDCHILDREN.

July 27. The oldies really got their teeth into this discussion. "We in our generation seemed to live more just and compassionate lives overall." "I don't agree. Look at the atrocities perpetrated in the 2 World Wars." "Yet we were also concerned about others, but maybe in narrow kind of way." "Environmental issues were not even considered as they are now." "I do wonder if those people who are always protesting about ownership of the land are concerned about that, or only about the financial aspect. Surely making land productive is a matter of justice too."

Reflect, share, scripture: *The word came to Jeremiah from the Lord. "If you truly amend your ways, truly execute justice one with another, do not oppress the alien, the fatherless or the widow or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own hurt then I will let you dwell in this place that I gave of old to your fathers for ever."* *Jere 7:1-11* **Pope Francis:** *Freedom of choice makes it possible to plan our lives and to make the most of our ourselves. Yet if this freedom lacks noble goals or personal discipline it degenerates into an inability to give oneself generously to others. AL 33.* **ACTION AND PRAYER.** Consider how well you respect and treasure any property

July 28. 17th Sunday B. Fr Paul decided to share on and circulate the message of Pope Francis for this special day, give a blessing to the elderly and invite grandparents and grandchildren to pray for one another. The full message can be downloaded from www.vatican.va

A thought from Pope Francis Message for the Day for Grandparents and Elderly 2024.

"Do not cast me off in my old age" (cf. Ps 71:9)

God never abandons his children, even when our age advances and our powers decline, when our hair grows white and our role in society lessens, when our lives become less productive and can risk appearing useless. In the Bible, growing old is a sign of blessing. At the same time, in the Psalms we also find this heartfelt plea to the Lord: "In my old age do not abandon me" (cf. Ps 71:9). 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 are many reasons for this loneliness: children migrate or leave for a better life, some are involved in conflict. There is a conviction that the elderly are burdening the young with the high cost of social services and are diverting resources. This situation is not by chance or inevitable, but the fruit of decisions – political, economic, social and personal decisions – that fail to acknowledge the *infinite dignity* of each person. The elderly themselves may begin to consider themselves a burden and feel that they should step aside.

At the same time many women and men seek personal fulfilment in a life as independent as possible and detached from other people. Group memberships are in crisis and individualism is celebrated. We have lost our "taste for fraternity." Using the OT example of the generosity of Ruth to remain with her mother-in-law Naomi, let us acknowledge the importance of this shared love across the generations. Let us show tender love to the elderly and remain close to them, as they play their unique role in the family, society and the Church.

ACTION AND PRAYER.

(See prayers and Beatitudes for Grandparents at the beginning of the reflections for the month. See also a Grandparents Blessing and Prayer from www.marfam.org.za)

BLESSING OF GRANDPARENTS: We pray for God's blessing on the grandparents of our families and community: Bless with eternal rest those grandparents who have died. Bless all grandparents with peace and contentment and an acceptance that their lives were well spent in your service. We ask St Joachim and St Anne, the grandparents of Jesus, to pray with us. In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

July 29. Martha. Granny Janet shared her story with the grandchildren as they sat in the shade under the tree in her yard. "When I was still quite a young woman I did struggle a bit with my faith. The man I loved was not interested in God and I didn't know what to do. I spoke to our priest and he gave me a word of encouragement and said that even faith as small as a mustard seed can survive. He gave me a few mustard seeds. I planted some and here, right where you are sitting, under this big tree, is the fruit of my faith. I hope it can be an example to you too. Maybe you can go and plant a seed somewhere and let it grow into a big tree too."

Reflect, share, scripture Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field. From Mat 13:31-35. **Pope Francis:** The human being knows, loves and accomplishes moral good by different stages of growth. AL 295. The biblical texts read in their context tell us to till and keep the garden of the world. Tilling refers to cultivating, ploughing or working, while keeping means caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving. This implies a relationship of mutual responsibility between human beings and nature. LS 67. **ACTION AND PRAYER.** Do we enjoy this responsibility to care for the earth's garden?

July 30. "I don't know if elder abuse is a new thing or if people just haven't talked about it much." Georgina opened the discussion. "I think there was more abuse of the grannies than the granddads," Abel added to the discussion. "Women, even elderly women, have too often been beaten and their money taken. The situation is still bad for them." But even if they are not abused, as in the Life Esidimeni case, many elderly are lonely, abandoned, rejected by their families if they are ill or suffering from dementia. Pope Francis has much to say about that this year. But he also adds a positive message and hope that things will change is needed as well as action to make the changes is necessary." That was the view of everyone, men and women.

Reflect, share, scripture: We acknowledge our wickedness O lord and the iniquity of our fathers, for we have sinned against you. Do not spurn us, for your name's sake. We set our hope on you. Jere 14:17b – 22. **Pope Francis:** the elderly who are vulnerable and dependent are at times unfairly exploited simply for economic advantage. AL 48. There are many reasons for the loneliness of the elderly: children migrate or leave for a better life, there is conflict or the belief that the elderly are burdening the young with the high cost of the services they need. Their dignity is not respected and the elderly may begin to see themselves as a burden. 2024 Message. **ACTION AND PRAYER.** Examine our attitudes towards the elderly and grandparents especially.

July 31. Evelyn sighed a little and smiled a little as the luncheon club met for the last time in the month of grandparents. She said, "Many of the scripture readings this month, that we have used to reflect on have been quite harsh. The writings of the prophets are often judging the evil and the harm of those days. Life is not much different and there are still prophets, old and young, in the Church and society that preach about the need for conversion. But what is our ultimate aim. We're old and our days are numbered but we are still wishing for and working for the treasure that Jesus spoke about like a pearl of great price. What is my pearl and what is yours today?"

Reflect, share, scripture: The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field, or a pearl of great price. A man sold everything he had to buy the field or buy the pearl. Matt 13:44-46. **Pope Francis:** Faith has untold power to inspire and sustain our respect for others, for believers come to know that god loves every man and woman with infinite love and thereby confers infinite dignity upon all humanity. Christ shed his blood for each of us and no one is beyond the scope of his universal love. If we go to the ultimate source of that love which is the very life of the triune God we encounter in the community of the three Divine Person the origin and perfect model of all life in society. Theology continues to be enriched by its reflection on this great truth. FT 85. **ACTION AND PRAYER.** At our time in life as elderly and grandparents what are we doing about our treasure, are we selling or buying or holding on with gratitude to the treasure that we have worked for?