



MARFAM 2026 YEAR OF ST FRANCIS. "OUR WORLD, A FAMILY OF FAMILIES"



THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY JULY. THEME: GRANDPARENTS ARE FAMILY ROOTS

Using a SEE-JUDGE-ACT format, a focus on grandparents and elderly and quotations from Popes Francis and Leo.

DAILY THOUGHTS published on www.marfam.org.za, facebook and whatsapp. Request email to info@marfam.org.za.

Abbreviations: Pope Francis: EG = *Evangelii Gaudium*, FM = *Face of Mercy*. LS = *Laudato Si*. AL = *Amoris Laetitia* FT = *Fratelli Tutti*. Pope Leo DT = *Dilexi Te* and *Magnifica Humanitas* (MH) This recent encyclical from Pope Leo is widely used here. It can be downloaded from www.vatican.va for study and use for synodal dialogue and faith sharing, ideally also in families.

JULY OVERVIEW. Grandparents are families' roots. Although this is changing, old age is recognized and respected in many cultures and families, guarded by offspring and the wider community, in animal as well as human society. Grandparents 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 violence towards the elderly is too common. Pope Francis instituted a Day of Grandparents and the Elderly on 4th Sunday of July. **Pope Francis:** *Very often it is grandparents who ensure that the most important values are passed down to their grandchildren and many people testify they owe their initiation into the Christian life to their grandparents.* AL 192.

MESSAGE FROM HIS HOLINESS POPE LEO XIV FOR THE SIXTH WORLD DAY FOR GRANDPARENTS AND ELDERLY.

Feast of St Joachim and Anne, 26 July 2026. Theme: I will never forget you (Is 49:15)

EXTRACTS: Through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord promises that he will never forget any of us, he has engraved our faces on the palms of his hands, his love is greater than a mother's love for her child. Each of us, and everyone can hear that "I will never forget you" spoken directly to them. Often in Sacred Scripture, especially in the Psalms, prayer springs from the despair of those who feel that their lives are of no interest to anyone and are being neglected. The lives of many elderly people seem to be covered by a veil that blurs the features of their faces and shrouds them in oblivion. This happens in homes where loneliness reigns and care facilities where each person's uniqueness risks being reduced to a bed number or an illness.

The digital culture multiplies connections and offers new opportunities for interaction; yet, the human heart retains an irrevocable need for genuine closeness" (Encyclical Letter *Magnifico Humanitas*, 239). The Church understands the suffering of her elderly members; she knows they are all too often viewed through the lens of stereotypes and considered a burden; a profit-driven economy weakens family ties; many elderly people are left behind by children who are forced to migrate or, in some cases, to fight in wars. For each of these reasons, she joyfully proclaims the Lord's promise: "But I will never forget you!"

Even if it does not come naturally to think this way, the truth is that even in old age we do not cease to be sons and daughters; therefore, the invitation to return to the arms of God, - whose love is both paternal and maternal - remains worthwhile at any age. For many, the discovery of God's tenderness takes place over the course of their lives, sometimes even in its final stages. It is increasingly common to reach old age without having had a genuine experience of faith. Old age, beginning with the questions that arise with greater urgency, can become the right time to begin or resume a spiritual life

The celebration of the World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly on 26 July is an opportunity to rediscover that the Church is called to be a mother to all. May this day be an inspiration for everyone, especially the young, to revive the beautiful custom of visiting their grandparents, the elderly members of the family and even those who have no one to visit them. Bring them, through this message and your presence, the closeness and affection of the Pope. Do not be afraid of fragility! It is precisely this weakness that holds within itself a new potential, that also illuminates the other stages of life. When "we acknowledge our fragility, our hearts become open to supporting one another and to invoking the One who can grant what no human power can ensure: the profound reconciliation of hearts and, with it, true peace" (*Meeting with the Algerian community*, 13 April 2026).

Dear elderly brothers and sisters, I thank you for supporting me every day with your prayers, especially when you recite the Holy Rosary. I return this gratitude from the bottom of my heart and leave you with this prayer: May the Lord always renew us in faith, hope and love - He who never forgets us!

From the Vatican, 15 June 2026 LEO PP. XIV

SETTING THE SCENE. In an imaginary parish to offer special support to elderly parishioners a special effort was made to invite and include them in different kind of groups where they could share their particular needs, their joys and their worries, which included fellowship and spiritual and practical advice. Some older persons were living with family, some in retirement homes and some alone and many were keen to be part of a regular faith sharing group. Some opportunities were also considered to offer support to those who are caring for their elderly relatives. MARFAM has a number of resources on these themes. See www.marfam.org.za/grandparents

A simple MOVEMENT OF PRAYER OF GRANDPARENTS AND GRANDCHILDREN

We know how grandparents are seriously concerned about their beloved grandchildren, young and older. They are often close but also often find it difficult to understand one another. Older people may have more time and a greater desire for a deeper prayer life. They also feel helpless and no longer useful in life. This movements can help grandparents to recognise the important contribution they can still make in the lives of their families no matter how far away. There is no formal structure or procedure but it is nice to be able to share with others and form a group for mutual support. Specific Bible passages can be used or the reading for the day. A valuable part of this movement is to strengthen our relationship with God and with grandchildren through the awareness that is created and the love than can blossom.



Step 1. Bring to mind each of your grandchildren and reflect on their special qualities and their needs. Put up their photographs or other mementoes, share with any others present.

Step 2. Select and read and share on a scripture passage. What is God saying to me?

Step 3. Pray the Grandparents Prayer. Add any special prayers.

BLESSING AND PRAYER FOR GRANDPARENTS at a special Mass or service on the Day)

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 service.

We ask St Joachim and St Anne, the grandparents of Jesus, to pray with us.

We pray too for all the elderly in our community.

May God bless the grandparents and the elderly, in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Daily Prayer for the month. *We pray for God's blessing on the grandparents and elderly of our families and community. Bless them 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.*

Peace Prayer of St Francis,

Lord make me an instrument of Your peace

Where there is hatred let me sow love, where there is injury, pardon.

Where there is doubt, faith, where there is despair, hope.

Where there is darkness, light, where there is sadness joy.

O Divine master grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console

To be understood, as to understand, to be loved. as to love.

For it's in giving that we receive and it's in pardoning that we are pardoned

And it's in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

July 1. SEE. Johnson spoke up in his parish community. "Migration in general, but migrants as people in particular, has been a very hot potato worldwide but with very specific elements in different countries. South Africa has its own very current reality. Catholics included, are divided in their position, some are accepting and others totally reject foreigners. Many of us are unsure, as this present situation, which is specifically intended to target undocumented foreigners, while going far beyond that aspect, and has been tolerated for years, has now got out of hand. Persons and families from neighbouring African countries, even those with legal papers, are intimidated by radical, militant groups and most are living with deep fear of violence. The law clearly states that the matter is for government to deal with. Undocumented migrants do not have rights to be in this country and should go home, but to what. The Church, following God's law of justice and love, considering that these foreigners do have a reason to have come here, and considering that they have families and are often separated from one another, ought to be treated with compassion and mercy. We should be assisting where possible in whatever paths they have to follow. There is no simple answer to this problem we are all faced with. Dialogue, listening to one another's stories must be a way forward towards a livable outcome in everyone's best interests and for the common good. For now, let us focus on peace and safety for all."

JUDGE. Reflect, share and act. Scripture. *Hate evil and do good and establish justice in the gate; it may be that the Lord, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph. I hate, I despise your feasts and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. But let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. Amos 5:21-24* **Pope Francis:** *Authentic development includes efforts to bring about an integral improvement in the quality of human life and this entails considering the setting in which people live their lives. LS147.* **Pope Leo:** *A litmus test for social justice today is the treatment of migrants, refugees and those forced to move due to poverty, violence, climate change and environmental disasters. The way a society treats them reveals whether its sense of justice is driven by fear or by the spirit of fraternity. Pope Francis urged us to see migrants not simply as a problem to be managed, but as a living image of the People of God on the move.]They are people with dignity, resources and dreams, who have the right to be treated with respect and to ask to become active members of the societies that welcome them. MH81. The Social Doctrine of the Church calls for a shared responsibility. It asks that processes be guided with foresight: by institutions capable of regulating without stifling, and protecting without taking over; by businesses that recognize work and dignity as measures of success; by intermediary organizations and educational communities that rebuild trust and relationships; and by citizens who cultivate responsibility, moderation, discernment and a sense of truth. MH 181.*

ACT AND PRAY. Examine your conscience on how well you are able to keep a healthy attitude on this migration issue. Pray the Prayer of St Francis and pray for grandparents and the elderly. *We pray for God's blessing on the grandparents and elderly of our families and community, bless them 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.*

July 2. SEE. God uses all kinds of people young and old, educated and simple people, to spread his message and send out warnings. Amos was a herdsman but called by God to warn the people of the time about their evil ways. It can be frightening to look into the signs of the times and speak out. Student movements have sprung up and they often protest about rights while older people in Seniors groups share their concerns and their wisdom as a fruit of their years Mrs Lois said, "I am pleased that young people in movements such as the YCS, i.e. Young Christian Students, are being trained to read the signs of the times today, to act, not just to react and demand their own way. Together with their leaders and guides they have an important role to play"

JUDGE. Reflect and share. Scripture. *"The Lord said to me, "Go and prophesy to my people Israel! Amos 7: 10 - 17. Pope Francis:* *"I would like to reiterate the appeal for peace, justice and fraternity that I and the Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb made together. In the name of God who has created all human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity, and who has called them to live together as brothers and sisters, to fill the earth and make known the values of goodness, love and peace*
in the name of innocent human life, the poor, destitute and those most in need, orphans, widows, refugees and exiles, victims of war,..... and in the name of human fraternity and freedom we declare the adoption of a culture of dialogue, mutual cooperation and reciprocal understanding." *From 2019 Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together. 285. Pope Leo:* *For young people, job insecurity is particularly devastating. As the Bishops of the United States of America have recalled, work is not merely a source of income but a crucial sphere in which identity is formed, friendships and relationships are forged, practical responsibilities are learned and one's vocation is discerned. When access to work is hindered by high levels of unemployment, inadequate systems of training or structural barriers, many young people find the path to their human and professional fulfilment blocked. MH167.*

ACT AND PRAY. Who are the prophets of our day and how can we support their call? Pray the Prayer of St Francis and pray for grandparents and the elderly. *We pray for God's blessing on the grandparents and elderly of our families and community, bless them 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.*

July 3. SEE. "I don't know that I want to come to a Bible study programme," Susan told the PPC rep. "I'm quite happy coming to daily Mass. Father gives us a few words about the readings, I greet my friends and go home." Ernest said, "That somehow is not enough for me. My mind jumps around as I reflect during Adoration time and I often want to have someone to share my thoughts with. I would like there to be a faith sharing group."

JUDGE. Reflect, share. Scripture: "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." Amos 8: 9-12. **Pope Francis:** 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 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. Pope Francis message 2022. **Pope Leo:** For many, the discovery of God's tenderness takes place over the course of their lives, sometimes even in its final stages. It is increasingly common to reach old age without having had a genuine experience of faith. Old age, beginning with the questions that arise with greater urgency, can become the right time to begin or resume a spiritual life. Message for Grandparents and Elderly 2026

ACT AND PRAY. With St Thomas, whose feastday it is let us pray and act for an increase in faith. Pray the Prayer of St Francis and pray for grandparents and the elderly. *We pray for God's blessing on the grandparents and elderly of our families and community, bless them 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.*

July 4. SEE. "When I hear about drinking I get all knotted up inside." Mabel shared. "At church gatherings at least they shouldn't have wine because alcoholism and drunkenness is such a big problem these days. I know I had it in our family and it affected all of us, all ages." "But should we not also be able to appreciate a good wine. It is a gift from God too," Dorothy said. "Moderation my dear, is what I always say." Joseph concluded.

JUDGE. Reflect and share. Scripture. Behold the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit." From Amos 9:11-15. **Pope Francis:** "In old age they will still bear fruit." Ps 92:15) These words of the Psalmist are glad tidings, a true gospel that we can proclaim to all. They run counter to what the world thinks about this stage of life, but also to the attitude of grim resignation shown by some of us elderly people, who harbour few expectations for the future. 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! **Pope Leo:** 166. The family, is a fragile social good immediately affected by the economic and technological transformations, Supporting families and young people requires choices that make stability feasible. Measures are needed to ensure a healthy way of living, for without a proper balance between work, leisure and rest, families are weakened and young people struggle to develop a sense of responsibility. MH 169

ACT AND PRAY. Check out your work-family balance at this critical time. Pray the Prayer of St Francis and pray for grandparents and the elderly. *We pray for God's blessing on the grandparents and elderly of our families and community, bless them 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.*

July 5. SEE. · Sunday 14A. Before he began to preach Fr Fidelis looked around the congregation and noted that there were quite a lot of children but the largest number was older people. He began his sermon by addressing them. "There are two parts to today's gospel but I am concentrating on the second part where Jesus says, 'come to me, all you who labour and are burdened and I will give you rest.' This month our special family focus is particularly on grandparents. We are going to have a special celebration for you later to thank you for what you do for our families but today let us give you as a gift the words of Jesus. We know you are tired, and many still labour and many do carry heavy burdens. It may be overwork or rejection and loneliness, especially if you are widowed people. Jesus promises to give you rest. We too promise to do our best to be more conscious of your needs. Can I speak for all of us here?" Almost everyone, young and the elderly themselves too nodded in agreement.

JUDGE. Reflect, share, act. Scripture: "Come to me all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls." Matthew 11: 25-30. **Pope Francis.** 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. **Pope Leo:** The Church understands the suffering of her elderly members; she knows they are all too often viewed through the lens of stereotypes and considered a burden; a profit-driven economy weakens family ties; many elderly people are left behind by children who are forced to migrate or, in some cases, to fight in wars. For each of these reasons, she joyfully proclaims the Lord's promise: "But I will never forget you!" 2026 Message.

ACT AND PRAY. During every Sunday of this month remember the elderly and grandparents in your family, visit or call and pray in thanksgiving for them. Pray the Prayer of St Francis and pray for grandparents and the elderly. *We pray for God's blessing on the grandparents and elderly of our families and community, bless them 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.*

July 6. SEE. St Maria Goretti. Anna shared her sad story. "My granddaughter was raped last week. She and a friend were taking a taxi home from school in the middle of the day and the driver drove off into the veld with them. The one girl ran away but my poor little girl was raped. He left her there. It was awful. We did all the right things and took her for counselling but I had

to spend a lot of time with her, and her mom just holding them close, listening and being there. I took them to make a pilgrimage to Ngome. I think that is what grandparents are for. We also talked about little Maria Goretti who was killed when she resisted a man. Her killer converted many years later and was present when she was canonized as a saint and model of chastity for young girls and boys too. Jessica has taken her for a model and that seems to help her."

JUDGE. Reflect and share. Scripture. *Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of mercy: break up your fallow ground for it is the time to seek the Lord, that he may come and rain salvation upon you. From Hosea 10:1-12* **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, school, communities and Christian institutions. AL 45.* **Pope Leo:** *There are times when, in order to remain human, we must set aside our reservations and take a stand. In some conflicts, it is unjust to remain neutral, nor is it enough merely to claim that we are not complicit. When we witness the bombing of civilians, attacks on hospitals, schools or vital infrastructure, and violence that affects children, we are confronted with scandals that wound humanity itself. MH 216*

ACT AND PRAY. Talk to young people, girls and boys about the story of St Maria Goretti and how she can be a model for them. Pray always for safety and protection for the young. Pray the Prayer of St Francis and pray for grandparents and the elderly. *We pray for God's blessing on the grandparents and elderly of our families and community, bless them 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.*

July 7. SEE. Some of the senior group members were reflecting on Anna's story about her granddaughter's rape. Pauline shared, "When we were young sex and sexuality were not something we talked about, or even felt comfortable with. Some people considered it sinful. I remember feeling almost excited when around the time of Vatican II we heard that sex is good. Marriage Encounter and later on Theology of the Body helped us to deepen that understanding." Other members of the group added their views. "There is too much promiscuity these days and purity and chastity have gone out the window. Our adult children – male and female – have relationships with other partners. The younger kids are also into sex much too early and in schools these days they talk too casually about LGBTQI as normal." "I do recognise and accept that some men and women are attracted to someone of the same sex." "Sexuality education is important. In the way we were brought up these matters were explained at an appropriate time by one of our elders, but that hardly happens these days. Now our kids can probably teach us a few things." "And yet there is a deeper honesty about sexuality as well."

JUDGE. Reflect and share. Scripture: *Thus says the Lord, "My anger burns against them. How long will it be till they are pure in Israel?" From Hosea 8:4-13.* **Pope Francis:** *it is not easy to approach the issue of sex education in an age when sexuality tends to be trivialized and impoverished. It can only be seen within the broader framework of an education for love, for mutual self-giving. AL 280.* **Pope Leo to youth in Cameroon:** *"Do not give in to distrust and discouragement," he said. "Reject every form of abuse or violence, which deceives by promising easy gains but hardens the heart and makes it insensitive. Do not forget that your people are even richer than this land, for your treasure lies in your values: faith, family, hospitality, and work."*

ACT AND PRAY. Pray the Prayer of St Francis and pray for grandparents and the elderly. *We pray for God's blessing on the grandparents and elderly of our families and community, bless them 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.*

July 8. SEE. Christopher looked at his wife and shared a story that was close to their hearts. "For us the prophet Hosea had a powerful message. We did enjoy the good times at one stage in our lives and I admit I was unfaithful to her. I know it broke her heart but we were blessed that a catechist friend introduced us to the prophet Hosea, who uses the issue of Israel's unfaithfulness by relating it to the human condition. It was gradually able to bring about a conversion for us and here we are happily together, 30 years later.

JUDGE. Reflect and share. Scripture. *Israel is a luxuriant vine that yields its fruit. Their heart is false; now they must bear their guilt. Sow yourselves righteousness; reap the fruit of mercy, for it is the time to seek the Lord. From Hosea 10:1-12.* **Pope Francis:** *When we have been offended or let down, forgiveness is possible, and desirable but no one can say that it is easy. The truth is that family communion can only be preserved and perfected through a great spirit of sacrifice. AL106.* **Pope Leo:** *When "we acknowledge our fragility, our hearts become open to supporting one another and to invoking the One who can grant what no human power can ensure: the profound reconciliation of hearts and, with it, true peace" from Algeria meeting April 2026. In Message for Grandparents and elderly. I will never forget you.*

ACT AND PRAY. Reflect, share and pray for those we know and love who are hurting in their relationships. Pray the Prayer of St Francis and pray for grandparents and the elderly. *We pray for God's blessing on the grandparents and elderly of our families and community, bless them 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.*

July 9. SEE. It was quite unusual in the prayer group of elderly to have a few men, some of them grandfathers. Andrew was in an unusual position too. 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 and disappointed he was at times that the boy, who had been so committed as a teenager, had stopped going to church and taken up with some colleagues I don't approve of. "I don't know what he has got into it, but I keep asking myself, what has happened to his faith?"

JUDGE. Reflect and share. Scripture: *When Israel was a child, I loved him and out of Egypt I called my son. The more I called them, the more they went from me. My heart recoils within me, my compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my fierce anger. Hosea 11:1-9. Pope Francis.* *The special sensibility that those of us who are elderly have for the concern, thoughts and the affections that make us human should once again become the vocation of many. It would be a sign of our love for the young generations and a contribution to the revolution of tenderness. Message to Grandparents and the Elderly 2022. Pope Leo:* *Indeed, dialogue is an ordinary part of human life and does not only concern relations between States. It involves acquiring an attitude that seeks to forge bonds of fraternity built on listening, an open demeanor, making time for each other and even wasting time together. MH 220*

ACT AND PRAY. Are you compassionate or judgemental with young people when they appear to lose faith. Pray for patience and pray the Prayer of St Francis for grandparents and the elderly. *We pray for God's blessing on the grandparents and elderly of our families and community, bless them 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.*

July 10. SEE. The seniors group members continued their discussions. "You know we oldies still have things to offer. I am happy to do some mentoring to the unemployed youth to try to teach them some practical skills. We women can teach sewing and knitting and the men can teach carpentry or other technical skills too." "Many of these can be helpful in the overall care of creation too." "We tried that. I thought it would be easy, and that they were keen to learn. But sometimes I get despondent as I have to beg them to come rather than them coming forward to ask us for help." "Yes, but do we understand their ways? They're not interested in knitting and carpentry. They're into computers and their cellphones, even using AI to do their studies and work for them. I wonder how AI is going to solve the youth unemployment problem." "Or climate change for that matter."

JUDGE. Reflect and share. Scripture. *The Lord says, 'return O Israel for you have stumbled because of your iniquities. I will heal their faithlessness. I will love them freely for my anger has turned from them. 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. Hosea 14:1-9. Pope Francis:* *Australian bishops spoke of the importance of personal conversion for achieving reconciliation with creation. 'To achieve such reconciliation, we must examine our lives and acknowledge the ways in which we have harmed God's creation through our action and our failure to act. We need a conversion or change of heart.'* LS 218. **Pope Leo:** *Practical ways of fostering fairness, participation and care for creation must be found. We proclaim a hope rooted in the One who came down from heaven to "create a new story here below." For this reason, those who believe are committed to ensuring that a greater justice will take the place of inequality, and that the industry of war will be replaced by the craft of peace. MH 240*

ACT AND PRAY. Consider what the elderly can do towards justice for creation. Pray for guidance and pray the Prayer of St Francis for grandparents and the elderly. *We pray for God's blessing on the grandparents and elderly of our families and community, bless them 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.*

July 11. SEE. Doris shared, "I have been in the sodality for many years and held different position and learned a lot about running it. Then I was happy when my daughter joined. After a while she started getting bossy and tried to push me out, I was very hurt by what she did and it really messed up the family too as I thought she was too ambitious. But, in fact, later I realized I had to accept that for the instead of the "good old ways" that we've been operating in the sodality, new blood is necessary.

JUDGE. Reflect and share. Scripture. *A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. Matthew 10:24-33. Pope Francis:* *"Most families have great respect for the elderly, surrounding them with affection and considering them a blessing. However, in highly industrialised societies where the number of elderly persons is growing even as the birth rate declines they can be regarded as a burden. From AL 48. Pope Leo: The Social Doctrine of the Church refers to subsidiarity as the principle according to which the role of individuals, families, local communities and intermediary organizations should not be supplanted by higher-level authorities. Moreover, higher-level institutions must recognize, protect and promote the freedom and creativity of lower-level entities, coordinating their contributions so that they can cooperate effectively for the common good. MH 68*

ACT AND PRAY. Study the principle of subsidiarity to see how it can apply in your life situation. Pray for openness and pray the Prayer of St Francis for grandparents and the elderly. *We pray for God's blessing on the grandparents and elderly of our families and community, bless them 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.*

July 12. SEE. Sunday 15A. Fr Vusi had grown up on a farm in a rural area so he shared how he loved the parable of the sower. “One year, it may have been our confirmation year, we boys actually did what the parable said, we threw some seed along the road, some next to the road on rocky ground, some amongst the thorns and some in the ploughed field where it was meant to grow. For many months we used to go and check what was happening. It was quite sad to see how some of the little plants just shriveled and died and we couldn’t even give them any water, because that would have been spoiling the story. You see in this story no plants were given any human help from us, the seed was left to do its own thing. Have you ever thought of that?”

JUDGE. Reflect, share, act. Scripture: Read Matthew 13:1-23. Jesus told the parable, “A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed some seeds fell along the path. **Pope Francis.** The gospel of the family also nourishes seeds that are still waiting to grow and serves as the basis for caring for those plants that are wilting and must not be neglected. Anyone who wants to bring into this world a family which teaches children to be excited by every gesture aimed at overcoming evil – a family which shows that the Spirit is alive and well, will encounter our gratitude and our appreciation, whatever the people, religion or region to which they belong. AL 77 **Pope Leo:** “Among the numerous implications of the common good, immediate significance is taken on by the principle of the universal destination of goods, First of all, this principle reminds us that the earth’s goods — soil, water, air and natural resources— are given by God to the entire human family to sustain the lives of all, and that every person has an inherent right to the use of such goods, both now and in the future. MH 65

ACT AND PRAY. How serious are we about the rights of the earth? Pray for guidance and pray the Prayer of St Francis for grandparents and the elderly. *We pray for God’s blessing on the grandparents and elderly of our families and community, bless them 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.*

July 13. SEE. Joan said, “Last week we talked about your daughter and how her bossy behaviour messed up your family. I think there is another side too, where conflict happens when you try to put right what is wrong. That happened to my son. My daughter and daughter-in-law were not getting on at all. It was about my grandchildren and what they could and couldn’t do or should and shouldn’t be allowed to do. I spoke to my son and he did try to talk to the two warring women, his wife and his sister, about what he thought was right. But they weren’t prepared to listen and so it all went wrong and the two families ended up not speaking to each other. I wish I had known about synodal listening and sharing, I reckon that would have helped.”

JUDGE. Reflect and share. Scripture. Jesus said to his apostles as he was instructing them: “Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace but a sword. Matthew 10:34- 11.1. **Pope Francis:** Responses given to the Family pre-synodal consultations spoke of challenges. Many pointed to the problems families face in raising children. Some responses pointed to the effect of severe stress on families who often seem more caught up with securing their own future than with enjoying the present. AL50. **Pope Leo:** In order to build the civilization of love, we must engage in dialogue, for this is the primary means of coexistence between people and nations, and it is the alternative to open conflict. Dialogue is an ordinary part of human life and does not only concern relations between States. It involves acquiring an attitude that seeks to forge bonds of fraternity built on listening, an open demeanour, making time for each other and even wasting time together. For if we experience authentic encounters with others, with those who are different, strangers and migrants, it becomes much more difficult even to imagine war. MH 219-220,

ACT AND PRAY. Choose family dialogue with listening and sharing to resolve family issues. Pray for peace in the homes with the Prayer of St Francis for grandparents and the elderly. *We pray for God’s blessing on the grandparents and elderly of our families and community, bless them 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.*

July 14. SEE. As they sat together the elderly women were discussing Confession. “After the long lock-down when churches were closed, we then being encouraged to go back to communion and to confession. Even Mass attendance declined but I admit that I find it quite hard to go to confession. What sins do we oldies really have to repent about, as we keep on hearing in the Old and the New Testament readings in 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 one’s thoughts was wrong, bad or even at times distinctly evil.” “For me, neglecting the degradation of the environment can be a sin.”

JUDGE. Reflect and 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. Matthew 11:20-24. **Pope Francis:** I would like to offer Christians a few suggestions for an ecological spirituality. Admittedly Christians have not always appropriated and developed the spiritual treasures bestowed by God upon the Church where the life of the Spirit is not dissociated from the body or from nature or from worldly realities, but lived in and within them, in communion with all that surrounds us. LS 216 **Pope Leo:** One of the objectives of building a civilization of love is authentic realism. This realism does not give up on changing the world; indeed, it starts by clearly identifying interests, fears, constraints and power dynamics, precisely in order to determine what can be achieved, and the measures needed to achieve it. MH 218

ACT AND PRAY. Reflect on what is realism and what is an ideal or ideology. Where do you stand? Pray the Prayer of St Francis for grandparents and the elderly. *We pray for God's blessing on the grandparents and elderly of our families and community, bless them 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.*

July 15. SEE. Fr George joined the group and listened. "What you shared yesterday about confession is really very deep. I'm afraid I can't see it quite like that. Maybe my faith is simple like that of the little children Jesus spoke about." "That's OK for you, but I worry about social sin as they call it, not just my own personal wrongdoing." "Each of us has to answer to God from their own insights and conscience and often it is really quite clear but at other times confusing too," Fr George added, "But thank you ladies for sharing and listening to one another."

JUDGE. Reflect and 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 must examine our lives and acknowledge the ways in which we have harmed God's creation through our actions and our failure to act. We need to experience a conversion or change of heart. LS 218. **Pope Leo:** Today, the concept of integral human development is a benchmark for the evaluation of integral ecology, which has become an indispensable dimension of the Church's Social Doctrine. The quality of development is measured by the ability to integrate justice toward people and the care of our common home, and to promote dignified living conditions, access to necessary goods, just social relations, care of creation and consideration for future generations. It follows that true progress is not what increases the wellbeing of some by degrading ecosystems. MH 84,

ACT AND PRAY. Learn to understand the deeper way of examining one's conscience. Pray for guidance and pray the Prayer of St Francis for grandparents and the elderly. *We pray for God's blessing on the grandparents and elderly of our families and community, bless them 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.*

July 16. SEE. The old ladies continued their sharing. "What makes you most tired?" Pat asked. "Is it the grandchildren, or the children and their hassles?" "No, not really. For me just being old makes me tired. My bones ache, my eyes run, I'm shaky on my feet, and I'm considered normal! I see many older people in frail care situations, quite honestly, just waiting to die. But I like to share where I can, how much a relationship with Jesus can give one peace. Sharing with him our pains, physical and mental, does genuinely 'give me rest.'" "I decided to volunteer to visit the sick once a week, and that has taught me a lot too. I have had to learn to listen and sometimes not even say much to solve their problems."

JUDGE. Reflect and share. Scripture. Jesus declared, "Come to me all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Learn from me for I am gentle and lowly in heart." From Matt 11:28-30. **Pope Francis:** We are constantly reminded that each of those who live with us merits our complete attention, since he or she possesses infinite dignity as an object of the Father's immense love. This gives rise to a tenderness which can stir in the other the joy of being loved. AL 323. **Pope Leo:** We must lovingly safeguard the grandeur of humanity bestowed upon us and revealed in its fullness in Christ, the splendor of which no machine can ever replace. True progress always stems from a heart open to others, an intelligence willing to listen and a will that seeks what unites rather than what separates. MH 15

ACT AND PRAY. Consider how to growing more deeply in love with Jesus and the older persons in one's life. Pray the Prayer of St Francis for grandparents and the elderly. *We pray for God's blessing on the grandparents and elderly of our families and community, bless them 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.*

July 17. SEE. The discussion was quite enlightening. "Do you think our faith is stronger than that of our children? I'm sure that for many of us that is true. But faith also isn't just blind acceptance of what we like to call God's will. We can negotiate and argue with God too. I know a few biblical characters who did that, Abraham did about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and king Hezekiah who negotiated with God when he was about to die. I think as we age we can have more mature faith to actually dialogue meaningfully with God in our prayer about everything and everyone."

JUDGE. Reflect and share. Scripture. Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord and said, "Remember now, O Lord, how I have walked before you in faithfulness and with a whole heart and have done what is good in your sight. Isaiah 38:1-6. **Pope Francis:** The ideal is not only to pass from the exterior to the interior to discover the action of God in the soul, but also to discover God in all things. Contemplation deepens the more we feel the working of God's grace within our hearts and the better we learn to encounter God in creatures outside ourselves. LS233. **Pope Leo:** In building the civilization of love avenues for exercising responsibility are sustained by prayer, and in turn nourish prayer. Indeed, for each of us, peace primarily comes "from God, God who loves us all, unconditionally It is a gift given by Jesus to his disciples on the day of Easter. A peace that is unarmed and disarming, humble and persevering. With these words, I greeted the Church and the world on the day of my election to the See of Peter. MH228.

ACT AND PRAY. For an increase in finding God in all things. Pray the Prayer of St Francis for grandparents and the elderly. *We pray for God's blessing on the grandparents and elderly of our families and community, bless them 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.*

July 18. SEE. "Sometimes you have a child who seems to really want to do bad things. It could start small like hurting animals, pulling wings of insects and hanging a cat from a tree. Then they hurt other kids, bully them and so it goes. I think that those youth in the gangs that terrorise our neighbourhoods must have started being like that as little kids. And later are they society's rapists and murderers? They should be punished for evil acts, but let us also pray especially for those who are inclined to do evil, almost as if they can't help themselves any more. That is a greater problem."

JUDGE. Reflect and 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:** *Violence within families breeds new forms of social aggression since family relationships can also explain the tendency to a violent personality. AL 51. People that abandon their tradition and, from a craze to mimic others or to foment violence allow others to rob their soul, and end up by losing not only their spiritual identity but also their moral consistency. FT 14.* **Pope Leo:** *In the context of AI the biblical story of the Tower of Babel illustrates that "when a city is built on pride and the claim to self-sufficiency, communication breaks down, languages are confused and people no longer understand each other. The result is not unity, but dispersion. Babel thus reveals the limits of any effort that, however grandiose, arises from self-affirmation, sacrifices human dignity for efficiency and aspires to reach heaven without God's blessing."* MH7

ACT AND PRAY. To be open to the dangers of pride and sacrificing human dignity for efficiency. Pray the Prayer of St Francis for grandparents and the elderly. *We pray for God's blessing on the grandparents and elderly of our families and community, bless them 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.*

July 19. SEE. Sunday 16A. God's patience and our impatience. This time in his homily Fr Fidelis commented, "So many farming stories. That was the traditional way that previous generations and many families lived long ago, growing their own food, bartering for what they needed and with each one having their own task to do. Were they the "good old days", or the "bad old days" in your opinion? Then sometimes there was an enemy, maybe a jealous neighbour who would sabotage the crop. Does that still happen today I wonder?" He paused for a bit and carried on. "In this parable Jesus is telling us not to hoe and weed but let the weeds grow up together with the wheat and then separate them. He is referring to life in the world, where good and evil live side by side and it is almost impossible to weed out the evil. Does that mean we elderly having led by example now have to trust the future to the young? Do we continue to fight corruption, give up or trust that in the end God's justice will triumph and all will be resolved? What do you think?"

JUDGE. Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Jesus put another parable before the crowd. "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men were sleeping his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. Matthew 13: 24- 43.* **Pope Francis.** *The Church does not restrict her mission to the private sphere. She cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the building of a better world or fail to reawaken the spiritual energy that can contribute to the betterment of society. We want to be a Church that serves, that leaves home and goes forth from its places of worship 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.* **Pope Leo:** *In the past, it was largely up to the State to guide and direct innovation. Today, however, the main drivers of development are private, often transnational, parties that are endowed with resources and the capacity to intervene that surpass those of many Governments. Technological power thus takes on an unprecedented, predominantly "private" aspect, which makes it even more challenging to discern, govern and direct such power toward the common good. For this reason it is necessary to begin a shared discernment process for identifying the spiritual and cultural roots of ongoing transformations. MH5-6*

ACT AND PRAY. For wisdom and clarity in this time of transformation. Pray the Prayer of St Francis for grandparents and the elderly. *We pray for God's blessing on the grandparents and elderly of our families and community, bless them 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.*

July 20. SEE. A Christian social worker had been invited to address the elderly luncheon club. After her presentation she asked, "What words of advice would you want to give to your grandchildren, or any young people for that matter? Everyone has a chance to share. Speak to your neighbor." "Be honest." "Keep promises." "Be kind." "Don't be selfish." "Be generous" "Never forget your granny." Mama Maisie shared her favourite words from the book of Micah 6:8. She said, "I have them written not just on my facebook wall but also on my heart. 'These 3 things I ask from you, act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with your God.'"

JUDGE. Reflect and share. Scripture. He has showed you, O man what is good, and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?" **Pope Francis:** It is one thing to feel forced to live together, but something entirely different to value the richness and beauty of those seeds of common life that need to be sought out and cultivated. How wonderful it would be, even as we discover faraway planets, to rediscover the needs of the brothers and sisters who orbit around us. FT 31. **Pope Leo.** Saint Augustine wrote: "There is no one who shuns the desire for peace, yet not everyone is willing to practice justice... But perform the works of justice, keeping in mind that justice and peace have embraced; they are not at odds with one another. Why do you set yourself against justice? Here, for example, is justice telling you not to steal, but you pay no heed; not to commit adultery, and you turn a deaf ear; not to do to others what you would not want done to yourself; not to say about your neighbor the things you would not want said about yourself... Do you therefore wish to attain peace? Then practice justice. Let us never grow weary of seeking justice! MH215.

ACT AND PRAY. To make the message of Micah one's own. Pray the Prayer of St Francis for grandparents and the elderly. We pray for God's blessing on the grandparents and elderly of our families and community, bless them 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.

July 21. SEE. Teresa 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 while and eventually he shared, " Yet, maybe the loving thing sometimes is for a couple to separate if things just don't work."

JUDGE. Reflect and 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. You will show faithfulness to Jacob and mercy to Abraham from the days of old. Micah 7:14-20. **Pope Francis:** Mercy is the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to a hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness. FM2. **Pope Leo:** Through the Lord's closeness, the gift of peace enters into the world in a paradoxical way. It does so through the power to become children of God, and is awakened when we allow ourselves to be moved by the tears of the little ones, the fragility of the elderly, the silence of victims and the struggle of those who fight against the evil they do not wish to commit. In this wounded yet beloved flesh, the Father shows us the true humanity of a life fulfilled through openness and communion, which leads us to desire that his will be done on earth as it is in heaven. MH231

ACT AND PRAY. To be able to apply faithfulness and mercy in our lives. Pray the Prayer of St Francis for grandparents and the elderly. We pray for God's blessing on the grandparents and elderly of our families and community, bless them 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.

July 22. SEE. St Mary Magdalen. Hazel said, "My granddaughter chose Mary Magdalen for her confirmation patron. It seemed a bit odd, but I did ask her why. You know what she said? 'There are so many people out there, good and bad ones. We don't really know much about her but Mary Magdalen may have been a prostitute. We don't know why, but she, more than the others, was open to hearing Jesus' message and became one of his closest friends. I always want to be open to hearing Jesus' message, no matter what happens to me in future. I always want to love Jesus and his Sacred Heart,' she said."

JUDGE. Reflect and share. Scripture. I will rise now and go about the city, in the streets and in the squares, I will seek him whom my soul loves. Song of Solomon 3:1-4. **Pope Francis.** Christ has taken unto himself this material world and now is intimately present to each being, surrounding it with his affection and penetrating it with his light. May the power and the light of the grace we have received be evident in our relationship to other creatures and the world around us. LS 221. **Pope Leo:** In Dillexit Nos, on the human and divine love of the heart of Christ we see how Jesus identified with the lowest ranks of society; with his love poured out to the end he confirms the dignity of every human being, especially when they are weak, scorned, or suffering. As we contemplate this love we too are inspired to be more attentive to the suffering and needs of others and confirmed in our efforts to share in his work of liberation as instruments for the spread of his love DT 2.

ACT AND PRAY. Reflect on and renew devotion to the human and divine love of Jesus depicted in the Sacred Heart. Pray the Prayer of St Francis for grandparents and the elderly. We pray for God's blessing on the grandparents and elderly of our families and community, bless them 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.

July 23. SEE. Bruce, a member of the youth choir, commented, "When one looks around different parishes or parish groups there seem to be a lot more older people than younger ones actively involved in parish life. Even some of our priests are rather long in the tooth. Do we really have the energy and enthusiasm to try the new things that young ones are so good at? But it does seem to me that some of us are doing good things, but often operate outside of the church?"

JUDGE. Reflect and share. Scripture. Jesus spoke in parables. "You shall have eyes but not see. This people's heart has grown dull and their ears heavy of hearing. Matt 13:10-17. **Pope Francis:** The pain, uncertainty and fear, and the realization of our own

limitations, brought on by the Covid pandemic, made it all the more urgent that we rethink our styles of life, our relationships, the organization of our societies and above all, the meaning of our existence. FT 33. **Pope Leo:** The celebration of the World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly on 26 July is an opportunity to rediscover that the Church is called to be a mother to all. May this day be an inspiration for everyone, especially the young, to revive the beautiful custom of visiting their grandparents, the elderly members of the family and even those who have no one to visit them. Bring them, through this message and your presence, the closeness and affection of the Pope. Message for World Day for Grandparents and Elderly 2026.

ACT AND PRAY. Explore the possibilities of greater youth involvement. Pray the Prayer of St Francis for grandparents and the elderly. *We pray for God's blessing on the grandparents and elderly of our families and community, bless them 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.*

July 24. SEE. Between the old and the young there is often an affinity about nature, plants and animals. Grandparents may have more time to share stories about their love of nature with the children and encourage them to grow things. Little ones will bring a little plant that has grown from a bean seed, or can be encouraged to look out for bees and butterflies. This relationship is also a special way to share about Jesus and his love of nature.

JUDGE. Reflect and share. Scripture. Jesus said to his disciples, "Hear then in the parable of the sower, when anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, it does not take root, and the Evil One comes and snatches away what is sown in his heart. Matthew 13:18-23. **Pope Francis:** the Lord was able to invite others to be attentive to the beauty that there is in the world because he himself was in constant touch with nature, lending it an attention full of fondness and wonder. He stopped to contemplate the beautify sown by his Father and invited his disciples to perceive a divine message in things. LS 97. **Pope Leo:** As a believer among believers, I invite everyone to contemplate, in the face of the Son of God, the grandeur of humanity that shines a light also on the era of AI. In Christ, we are called to cooperate in the work of creation, rather than be disinterested observers of technological processes that limit our freedom and responsibility. The dignity inscribed in each of us by the Holy Spirit can also be seen in our capacity to reflect critically, choose and love freely, and form authentic relationships. MH233

ACT AND PRAY. Promote strong relationships between grandparents and their grandchildren. Pray the Prayer of St Francis for grandparents and the elderly. *We pray for God's blessing on the grandparents and elderly of our families and community, bless them 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.*

July 25. SEE. Mr Mosemane had been a school principal in his day. He was known to be strict but fair but still quite an intimidating person to most of his family. Even his wife, sons and grandsons held him in awe. It was Portia, the youngest daughter who had grown close to him and cared for him after his beloved wife, Bernadette died. One day he explained. "I had a policy that in my school no child would be expelled except as an absolute last resort. Troublesome boys and girls were left in their classes but had to be disciplined appropriately whenever necessary. I spoke to them, to parents, to other teachers and the school board about all that. I probably also left that message with all of you too."

JUDGE. Reflect and share. Scripture. Jesus explained a parable. "Let the weeds and the wheat grow together until the harvest and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, gather the weeds first and burn them but gather the wheat into my barn." Matthew 13:24-30. **Pope Francis:** It is essential to help children and adolescents to realise that misbehaviour has consequence. They need to be encouraged to put themselves in other people's shoes and to acknowledge the hurt they have caused. Some punishments for aggressive and antisocial conduct can partially serve this purpose. AL 268. **Pope Leo:** The Holy Spirit challenges us today regarding our relationship with technology and the ongoing digital revolution. Scientific discoveries are talents entrusted to humanity so that they may bear fruit (cf. Mt 25:14-30). Technology has the power to heal, connect, educate and protect our common home; but it can also divide, exclude and generate new forms of injustice. In the abstract, technology in and of itself is not a solution to humanity's problems, just as it is not inherently evil. In practice, however, technology is never neutral, because it takes on the characteristics of those who devise, finance, regulate and use it. MH 9

ACT AND PRAY. For responsible use of AI and all technology. Pray the Prayer of St Francis for grandparents and the elderly. *We pray for God's blessing on the grandparents and elderly of our families and community, bless them 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.*

July 26. SEE. Sunday 17A. St Joachim and St Ann. The president of the St Anne's sodality explained to congregation "Very little is known about this couple but tradition honours them as the parents of Mary and so the grandparents of Jesus. They therefore played a role in God's plan of salvation. Everyone agrees that grandparents are often quietly in the background offering their support and especially praying for their grandchildren. For others grandparents are much more actively involved

and may even have the greatest role in bringing up the grandchildren. We as a sodality have expressed our love and concern and have decided to pray a special prayer for grandchildren whenever we meet." Fr Fidelis echoed these sentiments and invited not only all sodalities at their meetings but families at home, on a regular basis to remember the blessings that grandparents bring and the treasure they are for everyone in their families. *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!*

JUDGE. Reflect and share. Scripture. Jesus said to the crowds, "the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field which a man found and covered up, then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Matthew 13:44-52. **Pope Francis.** The family must always be a place where when something good happens to one of its members they know that others will be there to celebrate with them. AL 110. Now is the time for us to carry on our own knees – with practical assistance or with prayer alone – not only our own grandchildren but also the many frightened grandchildren whom we have not yet met and who may be fleeing from war, or suffering its effects. Let us hold in our hearts – like St Joseph, who was a loving and attentive father – the little ones of Ukraine, of Afghanistan, of South Sudan, Gaza and many more countries. **Pope Leo: "I will never forget you (Is 49:15). Extracts from 2026 Message for Grandparents and the Elderly.** Through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord promises that he will never forget any of us, he has engraved our faces on the palms of his hands, his love is greater than a mother's love for her child. Each of us, and everyone can hear that "I will never forget you" spoken directly to them. The celebration is an opportunity to rediscover that the Church is called to be a mother to all. May this day be an inspiration for everyone, especially the young, to revive the beautiful custom of visiting their grandparents, the elderly members of the family and even those who have no one to visit them. Bring them, through this message and your presence, the closeness and affection of the Pope. Do not be afraid of fragility! It is precisely this weakness that holds within itself a new potential, that also illuminates the other stages of life. When we acknowledge our fragility, our hearts become open to supporting one another and to invoking the One who can grant what no human power can ensure: the profound reconciliation of hearts and, with it, true peace" (Algerian community April 2026). Dear elderly brothers and sisters, I thank you for supporting me every day with your prayers, especially when you recite the Holy Rosary. I return this gratitude from the bottom of my heart and leave you with this prayer: May the Lord always renew us in faith, hope and love - He who never forgets us!

ACT AND PRAY.

Parishes can include a brief prayer service for Grandparents and for Grandchildren, ending with a blessing for all elderly. See the introduction and overview for the month or download from www.marfam.org.za/grandparents-and-elderly2026

July 27. SEE. Granny Janet explained to 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. Even faith as small as a mustard seed can survive. He gave me a few mustard seeds. I planted one and here, right where you are sitting is one of the fruits of my faith and your granddad is the other. I hope this can be an example to you too. Maybe you can go and plant a seed somewhere and let it grow into a big tree for very many years. "

JUDGE. Reflect and share. Scripture. Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field. Mat 13:31-35. **Pope Francis:** Education in the faith has to adapt to each child. Parents desirous of nurturing the faith of their children are sensitive to their patterns of growth for they know that spiritual experience is not imposed but freely proposed. Moments of family prayer and acts of devotion can be more powerful for evangelization than any catechism class or sermon. AL288. **Pope Leo:** Finally, social ties must be supported, with networks and educational communities that accompany life choices and prevent uncertainty from giving rise to loneliness or addictions. If implemented, these technological transformations can be navigated without undermining the capacity to build the future, which is what makes a society prosperous. MH169 We do not consider the present as a predetermined fate, but an opportunity for personal and collective conversion. Moreover, we believe in the power of the Kingdom, which grows from the tiny size of a mustard seed, which, once sown, sprouts and grows, MH210

ACT AND PRAY. Share some special time with a special person. Pray the Prayer of St Francis, pray for grandparents and the elderly. *We pray for God's blessing on the grandparents and elderly of our families and community, bless them 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.*

July 28. SEE. Gloria, the confirmation catechist told her class that there is a whole catechetical lesson in the gospel of the day about the Kingdom of God and the parable of the good seed and the weeds. Jesus explained the meaning to the disciples after he had told the parable to the crowd. He said, "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man - (he himself), the field is the world, and the good seed means the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the close of the age and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are gathered and burnt with fire so will it be at the close of the age, the Son of Man will send his angels and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and throw them into the furnace of fire. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their

Father." Gloria asked the teenagers if they had been following all the court cases about corruption that have been in the news for so long. Some had taken an interest, others had talked to parents or adults but everyone agreed that the it was really shocking how much corruption in the police was being uncovered. "It is like twice as bad and those who do evil are criminals and should be punished.," Siphso declared, "Police should obey the law as well as enforce the law. They should be our protectors" "Whistleblowers are our angels." Gloria then added, "the Kingdom of God is a kingdom of love, justice, truth, peace and freedom. Let that be your manifesto for your life."

JUDGE. Reflect and share. Scripture. *The kingdom of God and the good seed..... Matthew 13:36-43. 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 setback. This is the drama of human history in which freedom, growth, salvation and love can blossom or lead to decadence and mutual destruction. LS 79. Pope Leo: 210. The construction of a world in a state of perpetual conflict is an evil and must be named for what it is. This way of portraying our current situation may seem bleak or pessimistic, yet I consider it necessary to do so. The Christian perspective, however, is not limited to denouncing evil. We view history in the light of the crucified and risen Lord, to whom the Father has given "all authority in heaven and on earth"(Mt 28:18).. MH210*

ACT AND PRAY. Support the investigations and proceedings to combat corruption. Pray for peace in our country. Pray the Prayer of St Francis, pray for grandparents and the elderly. *We pray for God's blessing on the grandparents and elderly of our families and community, bless them 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.*

July 29. SEE. Suicide is a very serious reality today and is one of the highest causes of death in teenagers, while it does occur in all ages. Why should that be so, that they are so unhappy or tired of life at this early age. Doris had been extremely worried about this when her daughter survived a suicide attempt. When years later her grandson was deeply depressed she decided to become a counsellor for Suicides Anonymous and was taught how to listen and support both youth whose lives appeared meaningless to them, and to older people who no longer seemed to have a will to live any longer.

JUDGE. Reflect and share. Scripture. *Woe is me my mother that you bore me, a man of strife and contention to the whole land. Jeremiah 15: 10. Pope Francis: There is a general feeling of powerlessness in the face of socio-cultural realities that oftentimes end up crushing families. The negative impact on the social order is clear, in an increase of emotional problems and outbreaks of violence. The State has the responsibility to pass laws and create work to ensure the future of young people and help them realise their plan of forming a family. AL43. Pope Leo: The Church understands the suffering of her elderly members; she knows they are all too often viewed through the lens of stereotypes and considered a burden; a profit-driven economy weakens family ties; many elderly people are left behind by children who are forced to migrate or, in some cases, to fight in wars. For each of these reasons, she joyfully proclaims the Lord's promise: "But I will never forget you!" Message for the Elderly and Grandparents 2026.*

ACT AND PRAY. Consider why some old and young people appear to be "tired of life." How can you make a contribution to help them experience love and joy and keep them in your prayers. Pray the Prayer of St Francis, pray for grandparents and the elderly. *We pray for God's blessing on the grandparents and elderly of our families and community, bless them 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.*

July 30. SEE. Blanche loved to allow her grandchildren to come to her pottery studio and create "beautiful things" as she would say. She would tell them to feel the clay in their hands and to shape all kinds of things. Gradually they did come to make some quite beautiful pots, vases and statues too. David once told her he felt a little bit like God, creating, looking, feeling, even tasting and touching his creation lovingly.

JUDGE. Reflect and share. Scripture. *The vessel he was making was spoiled in the potter's hand and he reworked it The Lord said, "Behold like the clay in the potters' hand so are you in my hand." Jere 18:1-6. Pope Francis: Rigidity can hinder the development of an individual's abilities to the point of leading him or her to think for example that it is not really masculine to cultivate art or dance or not feminine to exercise leadership. AL286. Pope Leo: invite everyone to cherish places and times where physical presence remains crucial, such as shared meals, Christian community gatherings, time spent with the lonely and serving the poor. These are signs of a humanity that continues to believe that every person's body is a dwelling place of God and a temple of the Holy Spirit. It is precisely this covenant between glory and fragility that becomes the criterion for evaluating the anthropological models offered by contemporary culture. MH239*

ACT AND PRAY. Promote and cherish creativity and thank God for the beauty of creation. Pray the Prayer of St Francis, pray for grandparents and the elderly. *We pray for God's blessing on the grandparents and elderly of our families and community, bless them 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.*

July 31. SEE. Like for Jeremiah 2500 years ago, someone will heed the call from God to end the war that has been raging for some years in Israel, Gaza and Lebanon involving Israelis, Jews, Palestinians, Christians and Lebanese people. Like all wars it is a tragedy, a sadness and a politically motivated and power-hungry evil. On all sides there are some who are radical militants and others are peace-lovers but every person and family is suffering incredible hardships. Is this current reality very different from the experience of the prophets over the centuries, especially Jeremiah who was called by God to stand in the court of the Lord and address the people. When will the people on all sides listen to the voice of God and the cry of the suffering. Let there be peace!

On a more simplistic level should grandparents be allowed to punish their grandchildren? What they and what parents think might not be the same. Traditionally the elders were often the ones to practice discipline, not only with their own, but with any children around that misbehaved. Nowadays older persons might get criticised and told to mind their own business, but they are genuinely concerned for the common good. Is that in the mind of the so-called peace negotiators in the Middle East?

JUDGE. Reflect and share. Scripture. Thus says the Lord, "If you will not listen to me, to walk in my law which I have set before you, I will make this city a curse for all the nations of the earth. Jeremiah 26:3-9. **Pope Francis:** Adults need to realize that some kind of misbehaviour has to do with the frailty and limitations typical of youth. An attitude constantly prone to punishment would be harmful and not help children to realize that some actions are more serious than others. AL269. **Pope Leo:** With the same faith as Mary, let us become "weavers of hope" in our world, sharing who we are and what we have, so that the presence of Jesus may grow among us and his Kingdom take shape. In the humble fidelity of daily life, even the era of AI can become a time in which the Holy Spirit brings about the civilization of love in our lives. Indeed, the Lord continues to make all things new and offers every era the possibility of becoming part of salvation history in the light of the Incarnation. I entrust our desire to the Mother of Christ, to the Woman of the Magnificat, that she may guide our steps through this time of change and preserve in each of us true faith in the Gospel, so that we may bear witness to the grandeur of humanity, in which God has made his dwelling. MH245

ACT AND PRAY in thanksgiving for the gift of the wisdom of old age. Pray the Prayer of St Francis, pray for grandparents and the elderly. *We pray for God's blessing on the grandparents and elderly of our families and community, bless them 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.*
