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July 23, 2025

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

"In the family, faith is handed on together with life, generation after generation. It is shared like food at the family table and like the love in our hearts. In this way, families become privileged places in which to encounter Jesus, who loves us and desires our good, always."[1] Our Holy Father, Pope Leo, spoke these words during Mass for the Jubilee of Families, Children, Grandparents, and the Elderly. When reflecting on his message, I am drawn to the often-overlooked treasure within our families and society: our grandparents and the elderly.

Today, we celebrate World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly. To celebrate this day in 2024, our late Pope Francis reflected on the Biblical story of Ruth, who, after the death of her husband and breaking with customs, chose to stay with her elderly mother-in-law, Naomi. Ruth was "then blessed with a happy marriage, a family, a new home. This is always the case: by remaining close to the elderly and acknowledging their unique role in the family, in society and in the Church, we will ourselves receive many gifts, many graces, many blessings!"[2]

I was fortunate to spend extended amounts of time growing up with my paternal grandmother, Florence Griffith Senior, whom we called "Meme." Her strong faith and deep devotion to Our Blessed Mother inspired my own devotion to Mary, and especially to the Rosary. Meme's resilience in facing the challenges of her youth growing up in the Manayunk section of Philadelphia, and after marrying my grandfather, in Germantown, through the years of the Great Depression and World War II, was the fruit of her fervent Catholic faith. She also inspired my lifelong interest and appreciation for our family history long before Ancestry.com became fashionable!

As we give thanks for the gift of the elderly, we also acknowledge the challenges they often still face. Many of our elderly are isolated, face serious health issues, and sadly feel undervalued. While these challenges also impact families and caregivers, it remains our duty to ensure that our elderly are not ever cast aside. We are called then to embrace them as integral members of our communities.

As we celebrate the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, remember that hope is a gift that transcends age. Our grandparents are not just the past; they are the bridge to our future. By honoring them, we pay tribute to their lives and nurture the hope that sustains us all. Together, may we commit ourselves to continue creating a world where every grandparent and elderly individual feels valued, cherished, and full of hope.

May Saints Joachim and Anne, the grandparents of Jesus, pray for us.

Sincerely in Christ,

+ Timothy C. Senior

Most Reverend Timothy C. Senior
Bishop of Harrisburg

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[1] Leo, "Jubilee of Families, Children, Grandparents and the Elderly Homily of the Holy Father Leo XIV," *Vatican*, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/homilies/2025/documents/20250601-omelia-giubileo-famiglie.html (accessed June 11, 2025).
[2] Francis, "Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the IV World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly," *Vatican*, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/nonni/documents/20240425-messaggio-nonni-anziani.html (accessed June 11, 2025).