



Remembering our Elderly

Ronan Barry works in post-primary education and is married with three grown children. This month, the Pope's intention emphasises the contribution that elderly people make to society.



Pope's Intention: Elderly people represent the roots and memory of a people; may their experience and wisdom help young people to look towards the future with hope and responsibility.

them as equals, was interested in what they did and told them stories of his own childhood.

It was interesting to note their total disregard of his age as a factor in their relationship with him. This

Recently, I attended my friend's ninetyeth birthday. Present at the celebration were several young people, who spoke of my friend's wonderful relationship with them. Some were his grandchildren and great-grandchildren, but not all. They all spoke of him as a friend, someone who talked to

man is a person of faith, but he also possesses a humanity that connects with people, especially young people.

For some people, that connection comes easily, for others, it is more difficult. However, when age is not a barrier to good relationships between young and old, a real sense of com-



munity is realised for all to experience.

Pope Francis established the World Day for Grandparents and Elderly on the fourth Sunday of July 2021. This year Pope Francis is dedicating the celebration to the importance of inviting older people to contribute to building a better world. July's papal intention is dedicated to this important theme.

Pope Francis, through this monthly intention, wishes to encourage elderly people to share the gift of wisdom with younger people in society. The gift of memory and what has gone before us is given to us by the older generation in society. These memories, shared through relationships within families, give the younger generation a greater sense of their identity and offer young people an opportunity to build foundations for themselves in their own communities. Sharing memories is not merely the delivery of factual, historical information, it is a personal sharing of the past and its influence on the present day. For this type of sharing to happen, time is the one ingredient necessary. Time is the 'oxygen' that is needed to allow relationships between the young and the old to grow and deepen. Without this encounter between young and old, our communities will lose the heritage and legacy that is handed from one generation to the next.

Government guidance is offered to young people today about how to prepare for ageing in your community. This advice centers on pension schemes, the development of hobbies and of course the annual health

check-up. All these recommendations are important and should be followed. Like governments, grandparents and older people also have their priorities. These priorities often include growing closer together as a couple, caring for grandchildren, deepening relationships with their own children, being good neighbours, keeping healthy and enjoying the space and time to deepen their relationship with God. Through these priorities, our elderly people feel valued as persons. Ensuring that older people are being valued must be a priority for society and for our Church.

Being valued can be visibly seen through the actions of people. Being valued is made visible through the relationships between young and old in our communities. It is expressed in an act of kindness, a caring touch, a friendly greeting as we pass on the street. These qualities and many more contribute to the experience of being valued.

At the heart of our Church is a community that is represented precisely when the old and the young gather together. This is a sign that we value life. When we have a community that values the life in both the young and the elderly then we can have hope in our present and future.

As a community of faith let us not lose the memory preserved by the elderly, for we are children of that history, and without it we lose its wisdom. Older people gave us life as we grew, and now it is up to us to alleviate their difficulties and to ensure that they are valued in daily life. ❤️