

The Elderly

Pray for people who are growing old, and the families and Christian communities who care for them.

Elderly people have lived long lives; may they share their wisdom and faith with young people.

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I know a boy named Arnav. He lives in a happy home with his brother and two sisters, his mom and dad, and his grandpa.

Arnav's grandpa is elderly—he's over 80 years old. Arnav calls his grandpa *Dadaji*.

Every morning, Arnav wakes up and greets his grandpa: "Good morning, Dadaji!"

And every morning, Dadaji replies, "Who are you?"

With a gentle smile, Arnav reminds his grandpa: "I'm Arnav, Dadaji. And I love you!"

Dadaji used to know the names of everyone in the family, but his mind has trouble remembering these days. Sometimes people who are elderly have that trouble.

Arnav doesn't mind. Every once in a while he feels sad that Dadaji can't remember things like he used to, but he loves to hear Dadaji's stories from long ago, about the days when he was a little boy. Dadaji tells some stories over and over again. Arnav knows them by heart!

"I am lucky to have so much time with Dadaji," he says. "He teaches me how to be brave. When his mind or his body feels weak, Dadaji asks for help. That's brave. I love him."

Arnav wants to take good care of his grandpa. He knows Dadaji will grow very old and die some day, so Arnav thanks God for every day they have together. Some days are happy; some are sad. Some days are easy; others are very difficult.

We can pray for Arnav's family. We can pray for all people who are growing old, and the families and communities who care for them. We can pray with the Pope.

Let's pray together: Dear Jesus, you always respected your parents, Mary and Joseph. Help us to love our parents and grandparents with all our hearts.

May we listen carefully to their wise words and carry on the faith they teach us.

Think About it!

- Who is the oldest person you know?
- What was happening in the world when that person was the age you are now?
- Why is it important to listen to people who are elderly?

Volunteer Activity:

Spending time with the elderly

As you pray for the elderly, you might discover a desire to visit some older folks. Your family or school can organize a trip to a grandparent or a senior care home. You might enjoy your visit so much you'll want to go back again and again!

Here are some things to keep in mind as you prepare to visit older adults:

† **Plan!** Prepare your visit ahead of time.

- Ask if certain times of day are best for visits.
- Decide if you look forward mostly to casual chats or if you would prefer to present a skit or some poems or songs.
- Consider drawing a picture or bringing some fresh flowers to decorate rooms you have visited.

† **Read!** Make a cozy start to your trip by reading a book about the elderly before you go.

- *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge*, by Mem Fox (picture book)
- *Nana Upstairs & Nana Downstairs*, by Tomie dePaola (picture book)
- *Old People, Frogs and Albert*, by Nancy Hope Wilson (chapter book)

† **Talk!** Discuss what to expect during a visit to a nursing home, using all five senses:

- **What you might see:** Some folks might be up and about, but others will have walkers or wheelchairs. Some may have to stay in bed.
- **What you might smell:** A few new odors might float your way! Medicines, creams, and special foods can help the elderly feel better, but sometimes these things smell a little strange.
- **What you might hear:** Some older people can no longer speak clearly, so be patient and listen with all your heart. Others will have lots of lovely stories to tell.
- **What you might taste:** Check with the caregivers before you go to see if you can bring a special treat to share.
- **What you might touch:** The people you visit might be so happy to see you they'll want to give you a kiss or hug. Decide before you go if you're OK with that, or if you would prefer to say, "Wonderful to meet you! May I shake your hand?"

† **Pray!** Remember that Apostles of Prayer all around the world are praying with you for the elderly. Jesus honors our prayers and rejoices in your care for older adults.



Stand up in the presence of the aged,
show respect for the old, and fear your
God. I am the LORD. (Leviticus 19:32)