



### **Justice and Peace**

# **National Week of the Older person**



### **Domestic Church**

This national week came into being to help remind our country of the honoured place older persons should have in our communities and for the contribution that older persons have made to our country. It should never be forgotten that our democratic state was built, in part, through the huge sacrifice made by older persons drawn from historically disadvantaged communities, who refused to be defeated by the tyranny of apartheid.

For the Catholic Church there are other important dimensions to acknowledging older persons within its midst. Firstly, there are the retired priests who during their active ministry have worked so hard that their parishes could be living examples of prayer and sacramental devotion. Secondly, there is the role that religious communities have made to building up the common life of the parishes and communities in previous generations. How many countless parishioners were well educated in church schools by dedicated teachers of religious orders? Or what of those who were born and/or cared for at well run hospitals run by religious? Thirdly, there is the contribution of the now retired parishioners who through loyal service to their parishes ensured that the 'flame of Christian witness' was never extinguished and ready to be handed over to the next generation.

It is with this background in mind that parishioners and families are encouraged to reflect and pray for our older persons in our parishes, homes and communities.

**Enclosed please find daily reflections for the National Week of the Older Person:  
29 September – 5 October 2014.**

**Please distribute these reflections at your parishes, via email or other social media networks.**



**DAY 1.**  
**29<sup>th</sup> September 2014**

**Reflection:**

The angels, especially remind us to give special importance to the spiritual realm, even while we are busy, and at times fully occupied in the life of this material world. Their existence is a pointer to the fact that there is a visible and invisible world or a material and a spiritual realm. They are always seen to be at the service of God and of Christ. They fight the evil forces, guide and assist persons to be in the way of salvation. Over and over the psalmist turns his attention to the blessings of God`s creation, to the power and majesty of the Almighty, praising God again and again for his love and his guidance.( Ps 138 :1-5) We give thanks to God in the presence of the angels, and we sing your praise.

**Call to action:**

Think of a time when you had an experience when your parent, grandparent or an elderly person “was your angel” how did it make you feel.

Perhaps if they are still with you or you are able to contact them, do so and share and thank them for that special time.

**Prayer:**

Heavenly Father, Your infinite love for us has chosen a blessed angel in heaven and appointed him our guide during this earthly pilgrimage. Accept our thanks for so great a blessing. Grant that we may experience the assistance of our holy protector in all our necessities. Keep us always on the way that leads to heaven, and cease not to pray for us until we have attained our final destiny, eternal salvation. We shall praise and glorify you unceasingly for all the good you have done for us while here on earth. Especially be a faithful and watchful protector of our aged parents and older persons. Take our place, and supply what may be wanting to us through human frailty, short-sightedness, or sinful neglect. Guide us that we may become like unto Jesus, may imitate Him faithfully, and persevere till we attain eternal life. Amen.

**Day 2.**  
**30<sup>th</sup>September 2014**

**Reflection:**

It is surprising to see two of Jesus' disciples praying for the destruction of a Samaritan village. The Jews and Samaritans had been divided for centuries. Jewish pilgrims who passed through Samaritan territory were often assaulted. Jesus did the unthinkable for a Jew. He not only decided to travel through Samaritan territory at personal risk, but he also asked for hospitality in one of their villages! Jesus' offer of friendship was rejected. No wonder that the disciples were indignant and felt justified in wanting to see vengeance done to this village. We too would have responded the same way. Jesus, however, rebukes his disciples for their lack of toleration. Jesus had "*set his face toward Jerusalem*" to die on a cross that Jew, Samaritan and Gentile might be reconciled with God and be united as one people in Christ. Tolerance is a much needed virtue today especially when we deal with the old parents or grandparents. However, we often are tolerant for the wrong thing or for the wrong motive, but not towards our own. Christian love seeks the highest good of both one's neighbour and one's enemy.

**Call to Action:**

To treat the older folks with tolerance

To sit with them and to make them feel important.

To seek the good of the seniors in our homes and the church

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, you are gracious, merciful, and kind. Set us free from my prejudice and intolerance towards the older people especially when we find ourselves disagreeing with them, and widen our hearts to love and to do good even to those who wish me harm or evil,

**Amen.**

**Day 3.**  
**1<sup>st</sup> October 2014**

**Reflection:**

The Hebrews understood suffering of humans as a result of their sin. Job knows in his heart that he is just; but finds it difficult to reconcile it with his trials and sufferings. It is this thought that torments him the most. Finally he convinces himself that the right attitude is to entrust oneself totally to God, even when things appear to be strange and irrational. How can we humans be reasonable against the just God? How can we fathom the mind and ways of God?

Are you fit and ready to follow the Lord wherever he leads you? With the call, the Lord gives the grace to respond and to follow to the end. Why does Jesus issue a challenge with the call? Jesus was utterly honest in telling people what it would cost to follow him. When a would be disciple approached Jesus and said he was ready to follow, Jesus told him it would require sacrifice -- the sacrifice of certain creaturely comforts. Jesus appealed to this man's heart and told him to detach himself from whatever might hold him back. Spiritual detachment is a necessary step for following the Lord. It frees us to give ourselves without reserve to the Lord and his service. While many of us may not need to give up the comfort of our own home and bed to follow Jesus, we, nonetheless, must be willing to part with anything that might stand in the way of doing God's will.

**Call to Action**

Sometimes within our own families we battle to give up our comfort, time and of ourselves to be of service to our aged parents and grandparents. They cannot walk too far any longer, they get distressed and forget things and even the names of people they knew well, and so sad even their loved ones. They feel useless. Their body gets weaker, their mind less active, but they still grow in spirit. Many of them still see the good things in unexpected places and people.

Are we willing to see and recognised the wealth of knowledge and experience the elderly can teach us. Are we willing to step out of our comfort zones and deny ourselves and not feel embarrassed by our frail and sometimes neglected parent, grandparent or neighbour.

**Prayer**

God of all loving, for each of us you wish a gospel of joy. And when we experience trials, difficulties, sadness, hurt ...a way forward remains open, that of abandoning ourselves in you. You love every human person and when we surrender ourselves to you, we come to understand that even what pains our heart is made bright by your Holy Spirit.     **Amen.**

**Day 4.**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> October 2014**

**Reflection:**

Jesus warns his disciples to "not despise the little ones" because he knows God dwells with the lowly and regards them with compassion. His angels watch over them as guardians. God has not left us alone in our struggle *"to refuse evil and to choose good"* (Isaiah 7:15). The angels are his *"ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation"* (Hebrews 1:14). Scripture is full of examples of how the angels serve as messengers and protectors. When Daniel was thrown into a den of hungry lions, an angel protected him from harm (Daniel 6:22). Basil the Great (329-379 AD) says, "Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd leading him to life." The angels show us that this universe which God created is not just materialistic. Today Jesus also requests us not to despise our old people. They have been through a life and have experienced life in their own capacities. Most importantly God was with them on their journey. They like the angels can guide and protect us from harm through their prayers. Christian love calls us to respect their aged and their guidance that we receive from them for God seeks our well-being through them. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, we along with old people, join with the angelic choirs of heaven in singing the praises of God.

**Call to Action**

- 1) Make a special effort to thank the old people who you know well for their guidance and for the prayers of protection.
- 2) Pray the prayer to the Guardian Angel together with the family
- 3) Visit the old parents and Grandparents and be at their service just like the angels

**Prayer:**

Lord Jesus, you are our refuge and strength. May we always know your guiding hand and the help of your angels in protecting us from all that is evil. Give strength of will to the senior citizens and to us, the courage to refuse what is evil and to choose what is good.

**Amen**

**Day 5.**  
**3<sup>rd</sup> October 2014**

**Reflection:**

Job admits to his “littleness” and acknowledges that it is not for him to answer God, rather to be silent before his creator and Lord. For it is God alone who knows all things:

*Ps 139:1-3 You have searched me, Lord, and you know me.*

*You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.*

*You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.*

It sometimes seems trivial and woefully inadequate to offer God’s providence as a response to the inevitable human question “why.” This requires a deep level of trust that God will indeed, someday, make his ways clear to us even when those ways seem unbearably harsh.

The Gospel reminds us that not trusting God and not listening to God is a form of rebellion and challenges us to reform our lives to conform to God’s will. In a way, both Job and Luke recommend a path that is articulated less harshly by the psalmist: there is, really, no place empty of God. God’s presence surrounds us and penetrates into our innermost self. If we recognize that God is the reality that grounds us and sustains us, how can we not submit, as Job did, to God’s providential care.

**Call to Action**

Today we pray and ask God to lead and guide us to an elderly person, whether it may be in the workplace, a neighbour or just someone we’ve had on our mind or someone in a public place and share God’s love with them.

**Prayer**

Jesus of compassionate mercy, you enable us to transmit to those around us a flame of hope by the trust of our hearts.

We pray for all those we come into contact today. Help us to be trusting enough to give ourselves to you in every situation.

**Amen.**

**Day 6.**  
**4<sup>th</sup> October 2014**

**Reflection:**

The Scriptures invite us to know and experience in our personal life the *joy of the Lord*. It says, "*The joy of the Lord is our strength*" (Nehemiah 8:10). Jesus tells his disciples to not take joy in their own successes, even spiritual ones. Jesus makes clear that the true source of our joy is God himself and God alone. Jesus' prayer also contains a warning that pride can keep us from the love and knowledge of God. Sinful pride springs from exaggerated self-centeredness. It closes the mind to God's truth and wisdom for our lives. The virtue of humility leads us to a true recognition of who we are in God and of our dependence on God.

The essence of Christianity, and what makes it distinct from other religions, is the knowledge of God as our Father. Jesus makes it possible for each of us to personally know God as our Father. Saint Augustine of Hippo wrote: "God loves each of us as if there were only one of us to love."

To see Jesus is to see what God is like. Jesus is the revelation of God – a God who loves us completely, unconditionally and perfectly. God reveals to us also through the old people. We need to recognize God working through them in our lives and especially cultivate true humility and seek the joy of God.

**Call to Action:**

To make the older people happy and joyful with your presence

Make their day special.

Teach the children that all Fatherhood and motherhood comes from God.

Pray to your Father in heaven with joy and confidence in his love and care for you

**Prayer**

Most High and glorious God, enlighten the darkness of our hearts and give us a true faith, a certain hope and a perfect love. Give us a sense of responsibility to take care of our dear old parents and grandparents and in return to get a glimpse of you. May we all work toward the fulfilment of your holy will; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

**Day 7.**  
**5<sup>th</sup> October 2014**

**Reflection:** Philippians 4:6-9, Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

The good news of this gospel is that the kingdom will survive no matter how the “tenants act because the cornerstone is Christ. This provides a metaphor for our own living. No matter what shape the vineyard of our own lives is in--whether we need pruning or we seem to be in a dry desert--if we keep our eyes on Christ as the cornerstone of our own lives we will be fruitful. God cares for the vineyard of our lives: we are nurtured by God, fed at God’s table, helped by the commandment of love. All we need to do is let God tend us and bring us to produce good fruit. All we need do is be faithful and count our blessings, especially the blessing of our Christian vocation. God will take care of the rest.

**Call to Action**

Sundays more so than other days we tend to spend time together with our families.

If we are not living with our parents or grandparents then invite them for a meal or go and have a meal with them. Make them feel extra special today and celebrate the gift of life and family life.

**Prayer**

Lord, our God, you have given these your faithful especially the elderly the grace to maintain their hope in you through all life's changes and to taste and see your goodness. We bless you for the gifts you have showered on them for so many years. We ask that they may find joy in a renewed strength of spirit, that they may have good health, and that they may inspire us by the example of their serene way of life. Heavenly Father, as Jesus came not to be served but to serve, we ask you to bless all who, following in his steps, give themselves to the service of others, especially those within our own families and communities, that with wisdom, patience and courage they may minister to the needy, outcast, stranger, and enemy, for the love of him who laid down his life for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**