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Pope Leo XIV greets residents of a home for the elderly run by the Little Sisters of the Poor in

Pope Leo XIV greets residents of a home for the elderly run by the Little Sisters of the Poor in Istanbul during his visit Nov. 28, 2025. (OSV News/Vatican Media/Catholic Press Photo)

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The theme of this year's World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly draws on a powerful promise from Scripture: "I will never forget you" (Isaiah 49:15). In his [message](#) for the sixth celebration of the day, Pope Leo XIV reminded Catholics that this promise should shape how all treat the older adults in their lives.

"The painful feeling of being forgotten is, unfortunately, shared by many people, and among them are quite a few elderly people," Leo wrote, echoing his predecessor's reasons for establishing the day in 2021.

While the celebration normally falls on the fourth Sunday of July near the July 26 feast day of Jesus' grandparents Sts. Joachim and Anne, in the United States it is transferred to the first weekend after Labor Day (Sept. 12-13 in 2026), coinciding

with a pre-existing national holiday that celebrates grandparents.

Here are a few practical takeaways from Leo's message for the day.

1) Take time to see the unique person, and remember your worth as a child of God.

Leo warns that the elderly can become invisible as they age, becoming isolated in their homes or becoming just a bed number or an illness in a care home. Observing the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly is "an opportunity to rediscover that the Church is called to be a mother to all and that at any age it is always possible to recognize ourselves as sons and daughters of God."

2) Make a real human connection, not just a digital one.

"The digital culture multiplies connections and offers new opportunities for interaction; yet, the human heart retains an irrevocable need for genuine closeness," Leo wrote, quoting from his encyclical on humanity in an age of technology, [Magnifica Humanitas](#).

Leo encouraged young people to "revive the beautiful custom of visiting their grandparents," elderly family members and "even those who have no one to visit them."

3) It's never too late to turn to God.

"For many, the discovery of God's tenderness takes place over the course of their lives, sometimes even in its final stages," Leo wrote. "Old age — beginning with the questions that arise with greater urgency during this season of life — can become the right time to begin or resume a spiritual life."

He added: "To God, who draws near to us and whom we learn to recognize in his tenderness, we can now turn with filial trust in prayer. It is never too late to begin turning to him."

4) Don't be afraid of human frailty.

"It is precisely this weakness that holds within itself a new potential that also illuminates the other stages of life," wrote Leo.

All people are in need of one another, the pope said, and embracing this need is a strength that can "become an invitation not to resort to the ways of arrogance and

power to ensure human coexistence, but to the ways of reconciliation and true peace."

5) Pray and work for peace across generations.

"In this time, so harshly marked by the violence of war and social unrest, many wonder what the world in which their grandchildren will grow up will be like," the pope wrote. "I urge you, dear friends, to join me in praying earnestly that peace may soon come to the whole world."

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