

JULY 27 2025 DEACON MIKE WALSH

****Grandparents, Elders, and the Gift of Faith****

Now, there were only a few advantages of the pandemic, the Covid pandemic, but one of them, at least in our family, was the discovery of British TV. So we've been watching that almost constantly since then. And one of our shows that we liked early on was a show called "Mount Pleasant." You've probably never heard of it; it's a British comedy. In this show, it focuses on the everyday lives of this working-class couple you can really identify with, and their extended family, especially their elderly parents.

It was about halfway through watching this that I looked at my wife and I said, "You know what? We are not this couple in the show, we're the elderly parents! How in the world did that happen?"

As we heard at the beginning of Mass, Pope Francis designated today as the World Day of Prayer for Grandparents and the Elderly. And I have a bit of a bone to pick with the late Pope. It's not a major one, but if I could, I might need to change the name of today to the World Day of Prayer for Grandparents and the Elders. Because, you see, as you get to be a certain age, you might have some wisdom that you can pass on.

The best definition of wisdom I ever heard was that wisdom equals knowledge and experience. You may know something, but until you really try it, do you know it? But what a great gift it is, actually, in a family or in any circumstance, to have those grandparents with you, or elders, those who might mentor you.

This really hits me when I do funeral services. When I am in a funeral home doing the service, an elderly person has died. Usually the children are right in the front. And when I say "children," they are 30, 40, or 50 years old. Beside them are the person's grandchildren. In some cases,

those grandchildren have children, depending on how old the person is. And you can see in them, sometimes, not all the time, but sometimes how deeply they love their grandparents.

I often say at that point, you know the reason that grandparents and their grandchildren get along really so well is because they share a common enemy. And that always gets a little chuckle. But you can see this great gift — what I call the "gift of the grieving grandchild." If a grandchild is grieving the loss of their grandparent, it means they had this beautiful relationship with them. And remember, blessed are those who mourn.

One of the reasons why I think grandparents or elders can become so close to those — not their kids, perhaps, but the next generation — is because they have the gift of time now. And perhaps they have gotten very good at one thing, and that is listening. Not explaining, but listening. And they have time to listen to these grandchildren, and they can make a very deep spiritual connection.

Now, one of the things that you can bring to your grandchildren or the younger people that you come in contact with is this idea that you are a person, as you might be facing your own death or the end of your own life, that you're not one that's afraid of that. Why? Because in our first reading, you know who you are if you are watching and you're joining us today on the Daily TV Mass as part of our community. You are one who has been buried in Christ in baptism. So you are a believer in life everlasting.

There is this great line in the Baptismal Celebration that says this: "May you be the best teachers of faith by what you say and do in Christ Jesus, our Lord." And one of the ways you can be the best teachers of faith to young people is by doing what? Teaching them about the importance of prayer and how to pray.

That's what we see in our Gospel today. The disciples, these new people with Christ, come to him and say, "Teach us how to pray." And what does Jesus say? First of all, pray. He shows them by example. And he says, "Do this. Father — say this, Father, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come."

If you could teach young people one thing and one thing only, it would be that they are the beloved children of a loving God. And then tell them, "Give us this day our daily bread." Teach them how much you trust in God even though things don't always go the way you think.

And then the second thing, once they know that they are the beloved child of a loving God, teach them this: "And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us." Teach them the importance of asking for and granting forgiveness. This will be the most important thing they can do through their lives to not get stuck in bitterness and hatred and resentment, and be able to move forward.

And finally, say: "And lead us not into temptation." Tell them that it is Jesus that is the truth, the way, and the life.

We see that in the lives of Saint Joachim and Saint Anne when we celebrate them, that they were very faithful people who taught Mary so well that she was able to say "yes" when the angel came and approached Mary about giving her life to God.

So, you see, as the grandparents or the elders, we are called to be the best teachers of faith. Not just by what we say, but by what we do. As best teachers of faith to our young, we can then tell them what it means to truly go out into the world in peace and how to glorify the Lord by the way they choose to live their lives.

God bless.