

Word of Life Resources

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Workbook for Word of Life Meetings



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Dear Word of Life group leaders:

On Sunday, July 23, the third World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly is celebrated with the theme: "**His mercy is from age to age**" (Lk. 1:50). This booklet begins with a few brief fragments of the Pope in which he speaks of grandparents and the elderly as "a gift for the future of humanity". As an experience, we will talk at the end about the second anniversary of the "Chiara Lubich Home for the Elderly" whose current president, Jenny López Arévalo, has been recognized by the regional government as one of the "Amazonian Women Leaders".

This month's Word of Life reminds us that "Whoever gives a drink, even a cup of cold water, to a little one, will be rewarded" (Mt. 10:42). The little one, of course, can be any of us when he needs it; but within the framework of this month of grandparents and the elderly, what better way than to direct our way of living this Word of Life to them, in particular!

In **News**, we highlight what the ecclesial movements are for the Church insofar as, through dialogue, they renew the Church if they put themselves at the service of evangelization while remaining in harmony with it. At the end we are invited to pray so that each movement rediscovers its mission and knows how to put it at the service of those in need.

Our way of living, par excellence, is the Word of Life and, therefore, our way of evangelizing is by making this Word come to life. From now on, we begin to live it with you with the certainty of obtaining the reward that the Lord offers us.

A very cordial greeting to all,

The Team of the Word of Life Workbook

World Day for Grandparents and Elderly: Restoring dignity to those who are cast aside.

His mercy is from age to age” is the theme of the third edition of the worldwide event, desired by Pope Francis, which will be celebrated on July 23 with a Mass by the Pope in St. Peter's Square. The Secretary of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life points out that “The theme is connected to the WYD in Lisbon to



emphasize dialogue with young people. The Day is a time to reflect with and for the elderly, not only as a Church: grandparents also need political support.”

By Salvatore Cernuzio

Of the ten years of his pontificate, the 2014 meeting with the elderly in St. Peter's Square was "one of the most beautiful moments”, said Pope Francis recently. It was he, who wanted to establish a World Day dedicated to all grandparents, to draw attention to a category all too often placed on the margins, remembering instead their value and encouraging actions in their favor. It is a goal maintained throughout the various editions of the Day, which now returns with its third edition on July 23, featuring a Mass celebrated by the Pope in St. Peter's Square.

“His mercy is from age to age” (Lk 1:50) is the theme chosen for this year. This choice was intended to connect the Rome event to the great celebration of the World Youth Day in Lisbon (Aug. 1-6), and in other words to ideally put young and old 'in dialogue', as the Pope has always desired. This was pointed out to Vatican media by Gleison De

Paula Souza, appointed Secretary of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life last November.

What does this theme mean?

The theme was chosen to be in tune with that of World Youth Day in Lisbon: Mary arose and went with haste, taken from Luke's Gospel. Even the short passage "His mercy is from age to age" is taken from Luke's Gospel and is the end of the first part of the Magnificat, when Mary immediately goes to meet her elderly cousin Elizabeth after the Angel's annunciation. Thus, it is a theme that highlights the importance of dialogue between generations, which is fundamental for perceiving and contemplating God's merciful action on behalf of human beings. Indeed, dialogue between the elderly and the young helps to obtain a more complete vision of the way in which a more humane and fraternal society can be built.

You mentioned the WYD in Lisbon. How does Grandparents' Day relate to the event that will bring together young people from five continents in Portugal?

First of all, these events occur close to one another: the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly will be celebrated on July 23 and World Youth Day on August 1.

However, there is more than just the timeline connection... I looked into it and was told that Pope Francis spoke publicly for the first time about the elderly at the 2013 WYD in Rio, pointing out the need for a relationship between the elderly and the young, where the former pass on wisdom and life experience; the latter strength and hope for the future. The link between the two events, therefore, stems from this awareness: young and old need one another.

Let's go back to Grandparents' Day, the Pope wanted to establish it to promote a category that is often cast aside, marginalized, and further undermined. How has this initiative fostered action and attention towards the elderly?

The Pope has always cherished this theme. Since the beginning of his pontificate, he has insisted on overcoming the "throwaway culture" and embarking on a culture of

relationships. Today we all know that we live in a society where the elderly are not at the center. The Holy Father's reflection prompts us to ask some soul-searching questions, "What do we do for the elderly? How do we take care of them? Do our elderly feel lonely? Do they truly have dignity?" Here, we have to put the elderly person at the center and learn from them and have the desire to think about them and the desire to know how they are doing. These, in my opinion, are some of the fruits that the Pope's reflection has encouraged in each of us. The Day also serves to introduce into our hearts the desire to think and look for solutions for giving greater dignity to our grandparents.

How can one concretely restore dignity? Headlines tell of cases of elderly people abandoned before and even after death, cases of loneliness... Just this morning the Pope also condemned their being excluded from medical care. So how can the Pope's call to put the elderly at the center be concretely implemented, even at the pastoral and diocesan levels?

Unfortunately, not all people, not all institutions, pay close attention to the situation of "grandparents." Unfortunately... This is why Pope Francis emphasized the unpleasant scourge of the "throwaway culture." Therefore, at this time the Church has the duty to pastorally assist, be close to and give the necessary support to so many elderly people. The Holy Father insists and invites all dioceses to concretely organize the pastoral care of the elderly, where they are the protagonists. A starting point is that every diocese, every parish and church community can celebrate Grandparents' Day by rejoicing, thus making it the right time to thank grandparents for all they have done and still do for the Church and society. Then it is also an excellent opportunity to initiate pastoral reflection about them, for them and with them. That of the elderly is not just an issue that concerns the Church; the elderly also need political support.

What do you as a Dicastery propose and request from institutions even in order to achieve something concrete? Perhaps together...

Yes, we do speak as a Dicastery, but it is the Holy Father himself who has said many times in his speeches that it is necessary to create public policies in favor of the elderly.

In-depth

The demands are pension plans, which can be improved, access to free or lower-priced medication, physical support, and time to spend together. In short, there are many resources that can be created to give the elderly some dignity. The task of our Dicastery is to ask all churches and institutions to have this care for the elderly, to be close to them and to defend them as well.

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**“I promise you that whoever gives a cup of cold water to one of these lowly ones because he is a disciple will not want for his reward.”
(Mt 10:42)**

The evangelist Matthew is a highly educated Christian scribe; he is thoroughly familiar with the promises of the God of Israel and for him Jesus' words and actions are their fulfilment. Therefore, in his Gospel he presents Jesus' teaching in the form of five great discourses, as if he is a new Moses. This Word of Life concludes the 'missionary discourse' which begins with the choosing of the twelve apostles and explains what their preaching will involve. Jesus also speaks of the misunderstandings and persecutions they will encounter, which will require of them both credible witness and radical choices.

But there is more: Jesus reveals that the sending of the disciples has its roots in the mission he himself received from the Father. This is a belief that was found in the Old Testament: God himself is present and engaged in his messenger. Therefore, through the witness of Jesus and those he sends, the very love of God reaches every person.

**“I promise you that whoever gives a cup of cold water to one of these lowly ones because he is a disciple will not want for his reward.”
(Mt 10:42)**

In addition to the specific mission of the apostles, the pastors and the prophets, Jesus announces that every Christian can be his disciple, as well as being a recipient and bearer of the same mission. As disciples, all of us can witness that God is near. It is the entire Christian community is sent to all of humanity because he is the Father of all.

We have received attention, care, forgiveness, and trust from God through the actions of our brothers and sisters. We can give something to others so that they can experience the Father's tenderness, as Jesus did during his mission. This is the root of the belief that, in the Father, there is the guarantee that so-called 'little things' can change the world. Even if this is

only a glass of cold water.

‘It doesn't matter whether we can give much or little. What matters is how we give, how much love we put into even a small gesture that shows awareness of another person. Sometimes it is enough to offer them a glass of fresh water ... a simple gesture that is great in God's eyes if it is done in his name, that is, out of love. ... This month's Word of Life may help us to rediscover the value of everything we do: from work in the house or at the place where we work dealing with paperwork, schoolwork or with the responsibilities we have in the civil, political, and religious fields.

Everything can be transformed into attentive and caring service. Love will give us a new sense of awareness of other's needs so we can serve them with creativity and generosity. As a result of this new way of thinking there will be consequences. The gifts we give will circulate because love calls for love. Joy will multiply because there is more joy in giving than in receiving.

**“I promise you that whoever gives a cup of cold water to one of these lowly ones because he is a disciple will not want for his reward.”
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What Jesus asks of us is very demanding: he is asking us not to stop the flow of God's love. He asks us to reach out with open hearts to every man and woman and offer concrete service, overcoming our prejudices and judgments.

He wants our active, creative, and responsible cooperation for the common good, starting from the small things of every day, but at the same time he will not fail to reward us. He will always be at our side, to take care of us and accompany us in this mission.

‘... I left my job in the Philippines and went to Australia to be with my family ... I found a job as a cleaner at a construction site. I had to take care of the dining rooms, locker rooms, offices and canteen that were used by more than 500 workers. It was a completely different job from the one I had before as an engineer ... Out of love for others, I made sure that the dining rooms were always clean and tidy. However, there are people who do not care about cleanliness I have not lost patience because it is an opportunity for

me to love Jesus in each person I meet. Gradually, these people began to clean up after lunch and then over time we became friends and I began to gain trust and respect from them, ... I have seen that love is contagious and that anything that is done out of love remains.'

Edited by Letizia Magri and Word of Life Team

Points to reflect on and Points for Dialogue

- Jesus reveals that sending his disciples is rooted in the mission that he himself has received from the Father. A conviction already alive in the Old Testament: in the messenger of God, God himself makes himself present, commits himself. Thus, it is the very love of God that, through the testimony of Jesus and those whom Jesus sends, reaches each person in chains. Jesus announces that every Christian can be his disciple, recipient, and bearer of the mission at the same time. And even though we are "little" and apparently lacking in special qualities or titles, all of us, because we are disciples, are empowered to bear witness to the closeness of God.
- The important thing is how we give, how much love we put into even a small gesture of attention to the other. Sometimes it is enough to offer him a glass of water, a glass of cool water [...], a simple and great gesture in the eyes of God if we do it in his name, that is, out of love. Love will give us new eyes to sense what others need and serve them with creativity and generosity. And as a fruit, the gifts will circulate, because love calls for love. Joy will multiply, because "there is more joy in giving than in receiving".

Points for dialogue during the meeting

- What does Mt 10:42 tell us?
- What does the Evangelist Matthew know in depth and what do the words and actions of Jesus represent for him?
- What does this Word of Life conclude?
- In whom is the guarantee that the so-called "little things" can change the world?
- What can this month's Word of Life help us to do?
- What does Jesus ask of us?
- Have you experienced that love is contagious and that everything that is done out of love remains, like the experience of the engineer from the Philippines who went to live in Australia? Would you like to share about it?

Pope's Intention for May 2023

Ecclesial movements are a gift, they are the wealth of the Church! This is you!

The movements renew the Church with their capacity for dialogue at the service of the evangelizing mission.



They rediscover every day, in their charism, new ways to show the charm and novelty of the Gospel.

How do they do it? Speaking different languages – they seem different, but it is creativity that creates these differences – but always understanding each other and making yourself understood.

And working at the service of the bishops and parishes to avoid any temptation to withdraw into oneself...because this can be the danger, right?

Always remain on the move, responding to the impulse of the Holy Spirit, to the challenges and changes of today's world.

Keep yourselves in the harmony of the Church because harmony is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

Let us pray that ecclesial movements and groups rediscover their mission every day, an evangelizing mission, putting their own charisms at the service of the needs of the world. At the service.

<https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2023/05/02/0328/00711.html>

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kZwUcuP1BPK>

And here: <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2023-05/pope-s-may-prayer-intention-for-ecclesial-movements-and-groups.html>

Experience

Chiara Lubich Center for the elderly in the Amazon

From the commitment of a small community of the Focolare towards the most vulnerable, a Center for the elderly named after the founder of the Movement was born in a village in the Peruvian forest.



Four years ago, I, Jenny with my husband Javier and our 3 daughters, arrived from Argentina with the intention of living in deep Peru. We carried within us the Ideal of Unity. As soon as we arrived in Lámud, a town immersed in the Amazon, knowing that the Bishop of the Diocese was passing through, we ran to greet him and introduced ourselves as members of the Focolare Movement. "How nice that the focolare has arrived in the Amazon!", he told us and gave us his blessing, with the wish to go on.

<- Javier and Jenny, with two of the three daughters.

So, we made an agreement with the parish priest, who asked us to take charge of the Social Pastoral and Family Catechesis of the towns that are part of the parish. We went to the suburbs to get in touch with the social reality of the place, sometimes accompanied by our daughters as well. We discovered a hidden Lámud, full of so much suffering.

We decided to start with the last ones, and we realized that they were the elderly. Chiara Lubich's programmatic meditation: "A city is not enough". We went around the outskirts of the village looking for those who were alone and abandoned, to bring them a caress, a word of hope, food and clothes, and we asked them to pray for us, as we began our adventure in these places, completely new, for us.

Experience

After some time, we began to dream of being able to give the elderly a worthy home, a hot meal and, most importantly, that they feel accompanied and no longer alone. A dream that, if on the one hand seemed far away, on the other it seemed almost within reach, so much so that we said to ourselves: “Yes, we can! We have to do something more concrete than just a visit.”

Together we worked out a project: a few lines, but each sentence encouraged us more to move forward. We also thought about the name to give to the house. We looked into each other's eyes and decided that it would be called: “Hogar y Centro de Día para Adultos Mayores, Chiara Lubich” (“Home and Day Center for the Elderly, Chiara Lubich”).



Meanwhile, our dream was taking shape. There have been many facts and contacts with people who were enthusiastic about the project. Jenny, meanwhile, had had several volunteering experiences in Argentina. She was offered the opportunity to be hired by the Municipality of the Lámud District, to work precisely for the elderly! Finally, we felt animated by the Pope's words inviting us lay people to work in favor of the most vulnerable, even more so in this time of pandemic.

In short, there were so many beautiful coincidences that made us think that Jesus would have been happy to see the birth of a Work for the least, in the Peruvian Forest. That is, a worthy home for the elderly of this Amazonian province.

Meanwhile, we saw that everything happened in a dizzying way. Thus, trusting fully in God's Providence and in the strength of prayer, we were increasingly aware that Jesus would not leave us alone and we were certain that, together with our small community, we would never be alone.

In those days, we signed the rental contract for the house and carried out the legal procedures to form a non-profit association. A group of people from the community had already voluntarily joined the project. They had answered with a very strong "Yes", to the commitment to work for the good of the most

Experience

vulnerable people in the town of Lámud and in the Province of Luya (Department of Amazonas).

We immediately prepared the place, to be able to start offering the elderly one hot meal a day, provided by the Municipality. And so now, slowly, we are evaluating each step to take to reach the goal, which is to offer the elderly, at risk of loneliness and abandonment, not only food but also the possibility of residing permanently in the Center.

But more than titles, names and statutes, our desire is that the atmosphere of unity, harmony and family that Chiara Lubich bequeathed to us reigns in the house, and it is for this reason that the Center bears her name.

The Municipality will help us with the furniture and food. For the rent and current expenses we trust ourselves with faith to God's provident love, certain that he will not abandon us.

Jenny and Javier, with the community of Lámud (Province Amazonas, Peru)

Experience collected and translated by Gustavo E. Clariá

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