



Archdiocese
of Toronto

World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly – A Time to Reflect

Posted : Jul-24-2026

The celebration of World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly on July 26 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, [writes Pope Leo XIV in his message for the sixth annual celebration](#). “May this day, therefore, be an inspiration for everyone, especially the young, to revive the beautiful custom of visiting their grandparents, the elderly members of the family and even those who have no one to visit them.”

Below, Lisa Canning, a Catholic author and mom raising 11 kids under the age of 16, reflects on the importance of the grandparent relationship to her.

1. What impact do visits with grandparents have on the lives of your 11 kids?

I think grandparents provide an insight to the past that is valuable to my children. In my family, the children get exposure to their Filipino heritage when they visit my parent’s home. There are cultural dishes my children love that my mom prepares, they get to hear Tagalog, the language my parents speak to each other, and have asked for stories about what it was like growing up in the Philippines.

They also get insight into who their mother was before she became “mom.” It’s been interesting to watch my teenagers ask my parents questions about what I was like as a teen. This link to the past I think provides a valuable context for where my children come from.

I also think there is simply a special relationship that exists with grandparents. I have heard it described as a “reward” of parenting. You get to enjoy a relationship with grandchildren without some of the weight and responsibility that comes with parenthood. It is precious to watch my parents play, spoil and delight in their grandchildren. It also gives me insight into how they maybe played with me as a child.

2. This year’s theme, “I will never forget you,” reflects a promise from God, and highlights the legacy of grandparents. What are some of the lessons and traditions are you glad to see have been passed on to you and your kids?

My parents really value hospitality. I swear they show love by how much food is spread out on the table. They are incredibly intentional about gathering people around a table, and know how to make people feel special, through hospitality.

It is a skill I am grateful to have learned, and that I am grateful my children appreciate, as it is a very human act in an increasingly less-human world.

There is also so much children learn through observation. So I am always keenly aware that they learn what familial love looks like by watching my interactions with my parents.

Creating a warm, loving environment is necessary for human flourishing. My parents created that, and continue to create that, in spades. I will be forever grateful for their love!

3. What is the importance of the grandparent-grandchild relationship – in sharing the Catholic faith?

Becoming a mother has really changed the way I view my parents, and the enormous sacrifices they have made to give me and my sister a wonderful life. And that began, undoubtedly, with giving us the foundation of faith in our home.

I live about an hour and a half away from my parents, and some of my happiest memories from the last few years have been bringing my children to my childhood parish and sitting with my parents at Mass. These visits, while they require some work when traveling a far distance, are worth it.

Additionally, as I am now in a stage of launching children into young adults and sending them off to college, it's made me ponder what my relationship with my children will look like when they leave the house. And it has given me a new vigor to call my parents more often.

Lastly, I think grandparents can play a unique role in emphasizing the value and beauty of a life rooted in Christ. In some cases, what is heard from a parent is received differently when it is lovingly echoed by another trusted voice. When a relationship of trust has been built, a grandparent's words can carry tremendous weight. Sometimes their quiet witness: a well-worn rosary, a commitment to Sunday mass, grace before meals, stories of God's faithfulness through the years... can speak louder than advice.