



From Deacon Mark Miller's Desk

The first World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly is fast approaching – 25 Jul. The [Deacon's Desk published 18 Jun](#) offered some general suggestions for activities. Have you made your plans yet?

If you choose to make a video history, you can help it run smoothly by:

- Keep it as quiet as possible. Kitchen sounds, TVs, and kids playing WILL all be picked up by your phone's mike.
- Position your "talent" so they aren't in front of a window. Your camera will lock on the strongest light source.
- Write out the questions ahead of time [3X5 Cards work best]
- Agree ahead of time on who will ask the questions.
- Don't go beyond an hour.

Have you decided on any of the other suggestions in that first Deacon's Desk?

Some other things you might consider:

- A walking tour around their neighborhood
- Go through the grandparent's old photos and have them tell stories about them.
- Pick out some family photos and get the names of everyone in them.

In addition to the emphasis on exchanging stories, building memories, and commemorating legacies, Pope Francis reminds our grandparents and elders that "There is no retirement age from the work of proclaiming the Gospel and handing down traditions to your grandchildren. You just need to set out and undertake something new." Our seniors are needed, he says, "to help build, in fraternity and social friendship, the world of tomorrow: the world in which we, together with our children and grandchildren, will live once the storm has subsided."

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI noted that "The prayer of the elderly can protect the world, helping it perhaps more effectively than the frenetic activity of many others."

This inaugural Grandparents and Elder's Day, take the time to build new memories built on the life-long experiences of our elders.

Throughout his pontificate, Pope Francis has urged Catholics to participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. In 2014, he asked a group of visiting Catholics to ask themselves, "When was the last time I went to confession?" It's a good question.

The truth is the response in most cases is "a long time ago." According to a survey by the Pew Research Center, 43% of Catholics go to Confession annually, and 28% never go. Those numbers stay the same when the question is asked of men and women, younger and older Catholics, whites and Hispanics, and those with a college degree and those with a high school diploma.

Going to Confession frequently has a long history. Pope Paul VI, in 1968, encouraged frequent Confession – frequent being at least monthly. The Catechism teaches that "By receiving more frequently through this sacrament the gift of the Father's mercy, we are spurred to be merciful as he is merciful."

Pope Paul VI, who presided over Vatican II, taught, "Frequent and reverent recourse to this sacrament, even when only venial sin is in question, is of great value. Frequent Confession is not mere ritual repetition, nor is it merely a psychological exercise. Rather it is a constant effort to bring to perfection the grace of our Baptism ...".

St. John Paul II, who went to confession weekly, stressed the impact of Confession, "It would be an illusion to seek after holiness, according to the vocation one has received from God, without frequently partaking of this sacrament of conversion and reconciliation. Those who go to Confession frequently, and do so with the desire to make progress, will notice the strides that they make in their spiritual lives."

There is no doubt about the significance the Church places on the sacrament; it's also true that many Catholics don't share that value. Almost 20 million Catholics never go. Ask Father, and he can tell you some people who approach the sacrament are doing so for the first time in 15, 20, thirty years, or more.

No matter how long it's been, you are always welcome. If you haven't been for a while, it's normal to be nervous. One way to make approaching the sacrament is to prepare well. Fathers Josh Johnson and Mike Schmitz have published just the book for you. It's titled "Pocket Guide to the Sacrament of Reconciliation [published by Ascension Press]. Regardless of how long it's been since your last Confession – last month or last decade – you'll find the book has what you need to prepare yourself.

God calls each of us to approach him ["Come to me, all of you ..."]; He asks us to give Him another chance to show His love.