Vatican
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This is the logo for the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly 2024, which will be celebrated July 28. (CNS/courtesy of Dicastery for Laity, the Family and Life)

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Vatican City — July 19, 2024
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Any Catholic who participates in the celebration July 28 of the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly can receive a plenary indulgence, the Vatican announced.

"Grandparents, the elderly and all the faithful who, motivated by a true spirit of penance and charity," attend Mass or other prayer services as part of the day's celebration can receive the indulgence, which "may also be applied as a suffrage to the souls in purgatory," said the announcement published July 18 by the Apostolic Penitentiary, the Vatican court charged with granting indulgences.

The Vatican said the indulgence also can apply to those who "devote adequate time to actually or virtually visiting their elderly brothers and sisters in need or in difficulty," such as those who are sick, lonely or disabled.

Pope Francis celebrated the first World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly in 2021 and decreed that it be observed each year on the Sunday closest to the feast of Sts. Joachim and Anne, Jesus' grandparents.

In his message for this year's celebration, Francis focused on the problem of intergenerational conflict, calling it "a fallacy and the poisoned fruit of conflict."

Dedicated to the theme "Do not cast me off in my old age" from the Book of Psalms, the pope's message said the elderly must not be accused of saddling younger generations with their medical expenses and pensions — a notion which foments intergenerational conflict and drives older people into isolation.



Teta Elham ("Grandma" Elham) receives a food package July 21, 2023, from Teta w Jeddo ("Grandma and Grandpa") at her apartment in Beirut. The Beirut-based organization, founded by Father Guillaume Bruté de Rémur, rector of the Redemptoris Mater Seminary in Beirut, provides hot meals, food packages, medicine, and human support to needy elderly suffering under Lebanon's economic collapse. (OSV News/Doreen Abi Raad)

The indulgence also is available to "the elderly sick and all those who, unable to leave their homes for a serious reason," spiritually join the celebrations, which will be broadcast through various media, and offer "to the merciful God their prayers,

pains or sufferings," the Vatican said.

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"The loneliness and abandonment of the elderly is not by chance or inevitable, but the fruit of decisions — political, economic, social and personal decisions — that fail to acknowledge the infinite dignity of each person," the pope had written.

The pope encouraged all people to express gratitude to those who, often at great sacrifice, "care for an older person or simply demonstrate daily closeness to relatives or acquaintances who no longer have anyone else."