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Pope Francis speaks to visitors gathered in St. Peter’s Square during the recitation of the Angelus at the Vatican March 3, 2024. (CNS/Vatican Media)

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Many elderly people risk feeling an increasingly unbearable sense of loneliness, especially during summer, Pope Francis said.

"Let us say 'no' to the loneliness of the elderly! Our future depends a great deal on how grandparents and grandchildren learn to live together," he said after praying the Angelus with visitors gathered in St. Peter's Square July 28.

The day marked the Catholic Church's celebration of World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, whose theme was, "Do not cast me off in my old age."

"The day calls us to listen to the voice of the elderly who say, 'Do not abandon me!' and to answer, 'I will not abandon you!'" he said.

"The abandonment of the elderly is indeed a sad reality to which we must not grow accustomed," the pope said. "For many of them, especially in these summer days, loneliness risks becoming a difficult burden to bear."

"Let us strengthen the alliance between grandparents and grandchildren, between young people and the elderly," Francis said, leading a round of applause for all grandparents in the world.

The pope also assured those affected by major landslides in the south of Ethiopia of his prayers. "I am close to that sorely tried population, and to those who are bringing relief."

A series of landslides hit Gofa July 21-22, killing at least 250 people. As rescue crews continued to dig through the mud July 29, authorities expected the death toll to climb as high as 500 people.

After the Angelus, Francis condemned the ongoing production of weapons.

"While there are many people in the world who suffer due to disasters and hunger, we continue to produce and sell weapons and burn resources fueling wars, large and

small," he said.

"This is an outrage that the international community should not tolerate, and it contradicts the spirit of brotherhood of the Olympic Games that have just begun. Let us not forget, brothers and sisters: war is defeat!" he said.

Before praying the Angelus, the pope reflected on the day's Gospel reading (Jn 6:9) about Jesus' multiplication of a boy's small offering of loaves and fishes.

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There are three gestures that are part of this miracle, the pope said: offering, giving thanks and sharing, which are the same "three gestures that Jesus will come to repeat at the Last Supper."

The importance of offering what little one has is emphasized during the Mass, he said, "when the priest offers the bread and wine on the altar, and each person offers himself, his own life."

"It is a gesture that may seem small, when we think of the immense needs of humanity, just like the five loaves and two fish in front of a crowd of thousands; but God makes it the material for the miracle, the greatest miracle there is — that in which he himself makes himself present among us, for the salvation of the world," Francis said.

"In the Mass, it is the Communion, when together we approach the altar to receive the Body and Blood of Christ: the fruit of everyone's gift transformed by the Lord into food for all," he said.

"It is a beautiful moment, that of communion, which teaches us to live every gesture of love as a gift of grace, both for those who give it and those who receive it," he said.