

ENCOURAGEMENT ENCOURAGEMENT

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Young and Old: Attention please!!!

We live in a society where abortion is considered a right and in some situations an obligation to end life without real concern and even when the 'little life' is already on its way to full maturity. Similarly we are increasingly under the illusion that old age is somehow burdensome for others.

Dependent on our interests, state of life and personality we all realise that childhood and old age require special attention and accordingly we give our care. A child needs to be nurtured, loved, protected and similarly age brings with it another kind of requirement of us to encourage and support. Some find working and living with either difficult; some preferring one group to the other. Yet both groups today require of us even more attention than perhaps in previous decades because sadly both groups are seen as dependent on us and not productive, therefore of lesser importance. True charities abound for both groups and much money is raised to support special causes for both. People work tirelessly to enable these groups to achieve certain goals or improvement in life style, health, sport, security. All this is graced work and an essential call of the Gospel. But what contradictions we live with concerning both groups, that 'age' is not to be valued and where it impinges on others' rights and costs it should not be allowed to be protected. This is also extended where health is concerned costs determining care. Sadly now this also applies when lack of support encourages us to think in terms of terminating life voluntarily. We have only to look at the way that either group is treated to realise the extent of this deep sickness in our midst that does not permit us to value, respect and truly love all those that the Lord has put on this earth. *All* life is precious and every moment of our earthly existence is a special moment of grace for both us, and those who are charged with our care and respect. The premature and induced termination of life at any stage surely is an abomination and contrary to Gods law and the call to be the servants of each other. This is most certainly true in all aspects of our relationship with each other and in both

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Spiritual and temporal terms. Let us first consider those who have reached the 'three score and ten' years of life or maybe even a little less. Many such of our citizens spend many hours alone and lonely. This has been highlighted recently that this is the gravest of all the diseases of our time leading very often to self-neglect, illness and depression. Yet the sheer experience of life of many elderly citizens point to the valuable contribution that they can make. On the one hand we admire those who continue working beyond required years and on the other hand make it difficult for others to survive. We only have to look at the past and recent Popes to see how fruitful those last years can be, or even to our priests, grandparents and elderly relations. We say that many will live to more than the allotted biblical time yet we make fulfilment difficult for many. Where would we be now, without, in some cultures, the support of elderly relatives who effectively bring up many children? Or how empty would some of our churches be if it were not the regular attendance of our more senior members? The slowing down of life often leads to wisdom and a gift for others.

This surely is a great asset to us and should be used. There are organisation that especially emphasis this such as the 'Grandparents group' that pray especially for the 'children' of our time (Catholic Grandparents Association) or those who are housebound and encouraged to pray for all others (Apostles of Mercy). Surely this is a great and valuable service to us all. But we are bound by our Gospel call to protect all life and how very kind the Lord is to many who appear in the Gospels who are elderly, many indeed widows. Yet in our hospitals today our elderly lie neglected and made to feel that they are a burden and unrequired, their beds being thought more useful for younger members or potential survivors. Worse, their life is often in danger from those who would not give adequate support and care at crucial moments. Of course we live in a divided society and there are also those who ministry to such is beautiful and grace filled.

**The greatest deception, and the deepest source of unhappiness, is the illusion of finding life without God
St. John –Paul II**

But we are called to protect those who are vulnerable and speak out where their lives are at risk or impoverished.

We are duty bound to speak when laws threaten those who cannot defend themselves. War, too brings strife and hardship to those who find themselves ignored or dispossessed often without any support.

October 1st is an International day of Older Persons. Can you not spare a few minutes to pray for someone old and lonely or better still pay them a long awaited visits?

Now let us look at the impoverishment of our care for the youngest members of our world. We now live in a time where the needs of our youngest members worldwide, while maybe reducing us to tears, still does not galvanise us into action. We have more refugees than ever before. Somehow killing children, once at least, seen as a terrible affront, hit our television screens and immunise us. War scenes affront us, we look painfully, or try not to, but do we take some of the responsibility to change things especially through prayer for peace and end to violence. We live in a society that values possession and cares less for the emotional and spiritual development of our children. Children in many cultures now are not introduced to the reality of God or an afterlife. On the other hand, where those who have charge for these help, it is either denied or resources are scarce to aid them. We spent vast amounts of money, on 'toys', however good they are while other children have not enough to drink or eat... Moreover children have a very special contribution to make in their own right. How many saintly children we have got? Both as canonised saints or who act as carers for relatives or make sacrifices for brothers sisters or in raising money for good causes, yet we do not enrich them with resources of prayer and fundamental principles of morality, leaving them to find their own way in life in a society which is at least confusing and often mis-leading. Children often have tremendous insight and cut out the less important thing and see things as they are. It is very worrying that many children in our Catholic schools do not to know the basic prayers or even how to make the Sign of the Cross even by the age of seven or eight. This makes for difficulties in instruction but begs questions as to what role the parents play with the instruction of their young. Surely it is 'abusive' of children's' spiritual development, no matter how good the temporal one is, if this is abandoned and not seen as important. The role models that we present to our children 'sign' what we feel is important. How often are children given choices



about things that are actually beyond them to make in the name of kindness and not wanting to upset or dominate them. Children crave for guidance and paths; not 'if and maybes' and 'well you do not have to's'.

We speak of many forms of abuse yet spiritual indifference and lack of moral guidance is crucial to development of the whole person. How many adults today say 'thank God I have my prayer life or my faith as it gets me through'..? How many of our children will be able to say the same. Children often desire more that we give them let us not neglect this desire. Found under a pillow of one such child were words for us to ponder..

Dear God I am doing the best I can.....

Dare we not help?

H.H.

October 10th is the International day of prayer for children.

The Society of Missionary Children was founded in Nancy , France in 1943. Since then it has spread to countries all over the world and it is known to be the oldest and largest children's charity in the world. It encourages children to pray for each other: to pray for children in fear and poverty and to help share whatever they can and to help children in need. Over five million children have been helped (and of different faiths) There are thousands of projects supported by The Society of Missionary Children. It is the official Children's Society of the Catholic Church.

Maybe your child, grandchild or pupil might be interested. A good way to introduce prayer? Let us all pray for children especially on that day.

Pope Francis says that all life has inestimable value 'even the weakest and most vulnerable, the sick, the old, the unborn and the poor, are masterpieces of God's creation, made in his own image, destined to live for ever, and deserving of the utmost reverence and respect'. "All of us must care for life, cherish life, with tenderness, warmth...to give life is to open (our) heart, and to care for life is to (give oneself) in tenderness and warmth for others, to have concern in my heart for others. Caring for life from the beginning to the end. What a simple thing, what a beautiful thing. So, go forth and don't be discouraged. Care for life. It's worth it."

Peace. That the Lord may grant peace to those parts of the world most battered by war and violence.

World Mission Day. That World Mission Day (19th) may rekindle in every believer zeal for carrying the Gospel into all the world. ***Papal intentions for Prayer in October***

Feast days in October : 1st St. Therese of Lisieux, 4th St Francis of Assisi, 7th Our Lady of the Rosary, 9th Bl John Henry Newman, 15th St Teresa of Avila, 28th St Simon and Jude Apostles.