

INTERNATIONAL OLD PERSONS DAY

2025 Theme:

Older Persons Driving Local and Global Action: Our Aspirations, Our Well-Being and Our Rights

As this year's theme reminds us, older persons are powerful agents of change. Their voices must be heard in shaping policies, ending age-discrimination, and building inclusive societies.

(UN Secretary-General António Guterres)

Older persons are not a burden but a blessing — their wisdom is the bridge between yesterday's lessons and tomorrow's hope."

To honor the elderly is to honor our own future, for the respect we give today is the respect we shall receive tomorrow."

Old age is not the closing of a book, but the writing of new chapters filled with wisdom, dignity, and grace."

A society that values its elders safeguards its roots and secures its future."



imjpic@outlook.com

Congregation of Jesus Mary Joseph

Introduction

The International Day of Older Persons observed on October 1 each year is a designated day to recognize the contributions of older persons and to draw attention to issues affecting them.

In 2025, under the theme “**Older Persons Driving Local and Global Action: Our Aspirations, Our Well-Being and Our Rights,**” the focus is on positioning older persons not merely as beneficiaries of care or supportive policies, but as active agents of change.

This theme emphasizes three core elements:

1. **Aspirations** — acknowledging that older persons have hopes, dreams, and goals continuing throughout their lifespans, and their voices should be central in defining futures.
2. **Well-Being** — ensuring that communities, governments, and social systems support the physical, mental, social, and economic health of older persons.
3. **Rights** — underscoring that older persons are rights-holders, and that discrimination, exclusion, and violations of their human rights must be addressed. The 2025 observance aims to highlight how older persons can lead local and global initiatives — in community development, policy advocacy, intergenerational projects, health equity, legal reforms, and more — drawing upon their experience, wisdom, and insight. Demographic transitions — with rapidly rising numbers and proportions of older persons in many countries — underscore the urgency of this theme. If societies are to be sustainable, equitable, and resilient, the inclusion and leadership of older persons is indispensable.

In Biblical Perspective:

“Wisdom of the Elderly: A Blessing for Generations”

Proverbs 16:31; Sirach 25:6; Psalm 92:14–15

Biblical Reflection

1. Aspirations – Hope that endures

- The Bible affirms that life has purpose and meaning at every stage.
- “They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green, proclaiming, ‘The Lord is upright’” (Psalm 92:14–15).
- Older persons are invited to dream new dreams (cf. Joel 2:28), passing on hope and guiding younger generations.

2. Well-Being – God’s care and dignity for elders

- Scripture calls families and communities to provide care, respect, and honor to elders: “Honor your father and your mother” (Exodus 20:12).
- True well-being is not just physical health, but also spiritual peace and recognition as valued members of the Body of Christ.

3. Rights – Elders as bearers of wisdom and justice

- The Bible emphasizes the wisdom that comes with age: “Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life” (Proverbs 16:31).

- Older persons are not passive recipients of charity, but active witnesses of faith, justice, and resilience, who remind society of God's faithfulness across generations.

From a **biblical lens**, the 2025 theme calls us to:

- **Listen** to the wisdom of elders,
- **Honor** their dignity and rights as children of God, and
- **Empower** them to be agents of peace, justice, and faith in today's world.

Their aspirations, well-being, and rights are not just human values but also **Gospel imperatives**, rooted in the commandment of love and respect for one another.

In Founder's Perspective :

As we commemorate the International Day of Older Persons, it is fitting to recall the witness of old Wolff. In *The Ravening Wolff* (231-235) we read that when he was in his seventies, he was struck by a serious illness. The doctors doubted he would live long. Yet Wolff did not give up. From his sickbed, he turned to Our Lady with a humble prayer: if she still desired that he serve the people and do some good, she might grant him life a little longer. His prayer was answered. Slowly, he regained his strength and continued his 'marathon for Christ.' The book describes him vividly: "The seventy-year-old giant who, up to now, had borne the burden of labour as a child his toys, was and remained a broken man." The phrase "as a child his toys" suggests that Wolff carried the heavy demands of mission with the same joy and lightness that a child has when playing with toys. But the words "a broken man" point to the reality of his old age and sickness, which weakened him physically. And yet, even in this brokenness, Wolff found renewed purpose. His golden jubilee became a spring of strength that carried him into new ministries. He gave retreats, guided seminarians and students, and sat for long hours as a confessor.

What is striking is that neither Wolff himself nor the people around him saw old age as a burden. Instead, he was honoured, celebrated, and deeply revered. When he finally left his last mission station in Hurwenen, people knelt down to receive his blessing. It was a gesture of gratitude and reverence for a life poured out in service. As we reflect on the life of Wolff today, two lessons emerge. First, for the elderly: never consider yourself incapable of contributing. Even with weakness and sickness, life has meaning until the very end. Accept the limits of age, but also continue to offer what you can, whether wisdom, presence, or prayer. Second, for the community: let us, like the people of Culemborg and Hurwenen, honour and cherish the elderly. By creating an environment of respect and inclusion, we allow them to share their wisdom and give life new vigour for all of us. The life of Wolff reminds us that old age is not an end. It is a gift, an opportunity to witness, to bless, and to inspire.

What we can do.

1. Support Their Aspirations

- **Listen to their dreams and goals** — invite older persons to share their hopes for family, community, and church.
- **Create spaces for participation** — involve them in decision-making bodies, parish councils, community associations.
- **Encourage life-long learning** — promote workshops, reading circles, or digital literacy programs for elders.

2. Promote Their Well-Being

- **Physical care:** organize medical camps, health check-ups, fitness or wellness sessions for seniors.
- **Social care:** visit homebound elders, encourage intergenerational gatherings, and combat loneliness through companionship programs.
- **Spiritual care:** provide retreats, Bible sharing, and pastoral visits to nurture their faith.

3. Protect Their Rights

- **Raise awareness** about elder rights (healthcare, pensions, legal protections, freedom from abuse).
- **Advocate** for policies that ensure affordable healthcare, safe housing, and social security.
- **Stand against discrimination** — promote respect for older persons in families, workplaces, and public spaces.

4. Foster Intergenerational Solidarity

- Organize storytelling sessions where elders share wisdom and life experiences with youth.
- Encourage mentorship programs — older persons guiding young professionals, students, or church members.
- Celebrate family togetherness — honoring grandparents and older relatives with special days or events.

5. Practical Everyday Actions

- Call or visit an older relative or neighbour regularly.
- Offer help with technology, online services, or transport.
- Recognize their contributions publicly — in church announcements, newsletters, or community events.
- Simply **show patience and respect** — small gestures make elders feel valued.

Pledge :

We, as members of the human family, affirm the dignity, wisdom, and rights of all older persons.

We pledge to:

- Respect and honor them as pillars of wisdom and faith.
- Support their well-being — physical, emotional, and spiritual.
- Protect their rights and stand against every form of neglect, abuse, or discrimination.

- Include them in decisions that shape our families, communities, and nations.
- Learn from their experience and walk with them in solidarity.

Together, we will build a just and compassionate society where older persons are cherished, empowered, and enabled to continue inspiring present and future generations.

This is our pledge — today and always.

Prayer

Heavenly Father,

We thank You for the gift of life and the blessing of our elders,
who carry the wisdom of years and the richness of faith,

Bless all older persons with good health, peace, and dignity.
May their aspirations continue to inspire us,
their well-being be cared for by loving families and communities,
and their rights be honored in society and Church.

Lord Jesus, You walked with the elderly and listened to their wisdom.
Help us to value their presence,
to learn from their stories,
and to stand against every form of neglect or exclusion.

Holy Spirit, guide us to build communities of love,
where young and old walk together in respect and solidarity,
working for justice, peace, and care for all generations.

May our elders, like Simeon and Anna,
bear witness to Your faithfulness,
and continue to bear fruit in old age,
proclaiming that You are ever faithful and just.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Conclusion

The International Day of Older Persons 2025, with the theme “Older Persons Driving Local and Global Action: Our Aspirations, Our Well-Being and Our Rights,” reminds us that older persons are not just receivers of care but active contributors to society. Their wisdom, resilience, and faith are treasures for families, communities, and the world.

As we mark this day, let us honor their dignity, safeguard their rights, and ensure their well-being. Let us walk hand in hand across generations, learning from their experience and empowering them to continue shaping the future.

Older persons are a living testimony of God’s faithfulness, true witnesses that life remains fruitful at every stage. By valuing and supporting them, we build a just, compassionate, and inclusive society for all.