

FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY 2014

Theme: Blessed be the Old

Copyright ©2014 Rev. Larry W. Dorsch, St. Paul Church, 140 Walnut Street, Weirton, WV, 26062. All Right Reserved. May not be reprinted without written permission.

My life has been immeasurably blessed by the fact that all four of my grandparents lived until was I into my twenties.

I saw them nearly every week; they were all an important part of my youth and I learned so much from each of them – at Christmastime they are especially missed.

There were also other older men and women who played an influential role in my life:

---an elderly woman Italian immigrant in Clarksburg who always wanted me to pray from her legs, not the rest of her just her legs: but she probably prayed me through my first ten years of priestly ministry.

---then Jack and Rosemarie who likewise prayed for me daily and reminded me of that fact every time they saw me.

---Many a Saturday night was spent at dinner with Evelyn and Jake who were like second parents far from home.

---several older priests who took me under their wings and became my mentors

---or Velma Jadin the elderly woman who seldom left her home but always asked me on my monthly visit for someone in the parish she could pray for that month

And I am reminded the mostly older, retired crew that comes here every morning for mass and every morning prays for all the members of St. Paul Parish, especially those who are hurting or with pain in their homes and families.

And there are those among you, especially parents and grandparents, who daily bombard heaven on behalf of your children and grandchildren: for their health and safety, for their jobs and marriages, for their peace of mind and faith.

All of these are performing the same role as did Simeon and Anna in the Gospel today.

Those two came on the scene as Joseph and Mary presented the child Jesus to the Lord at the great Temple in Jerusalem.

The two faithful elders came forward to pray for the child and to offer their words of encouragement and faith to the parents.

Their own work of raising children, marriage, career now complete, Simeon and Anna, became the ones who blessed, who prayed, who encouraged, who supported.

How wonderful that Luke highlighted the role of these two characters in his Gospel for us, especially in an age when because of social mobility our families have become separated by distance and, unfortunately too often, by busyness and forgetfulness.

Some grandparents and their grandchildren are often unable to be together as often as in the past.

And yet Skyp and Facetime and other social media can help bridge some of this distance.

Cellphones make frequent communication easier than ever.

But the role you elders play among us is critical:

You, like Simeon and Anna, are the ones who bless the young, who offer encouragement to young parents and married folk, who support them with your prayer.

You have more time on your hands now than when you were working or raising your own family so now you need to pray not only for your own children and grandchildren, but for those around you whom you see beginning marriages and raising families – and you need not be afraid to tell them you are praying for them so they are encouraged and supported.

And when old Arthur – arthritis – hits the hips or knees, offer that pain as a prayer for a grandchild or a neighbor boy.

And you children and grandchildren out there, whether your grandparents live near or far, don't get so busy your forget these old people who love you.

Pick up the phone and call them! Put a reminder on your cell if necessary to call them once a week at least just to say hi and tell them what you're doing!

That's not too much to ask for these people whose days are limited, who love you and whose DNA and prayer is holding you together.

When Christ became one of us, he blessed our human experience, including our experience of family and community.

On this Feast of the Holy Family may Christ bless our extended families, including all our Simeons and our Annas!

Grandmothers and Grandfathers, Aunts and Uncles, all the elders in faith, living and deceased, whose example and prayers have in the past and continue now to sustain and support us.

Amen.