

**There is a toxic valuation of the elderly: productivity = value**

Christianity reverses the paradigm: everyone has equal dignity and worth as everyone is made in image and likeness of God.

Our identity: children of God, we are valued before we *do* anything

Everyone is on mission to the world in the power of the Holy Spirit regardless of age.

There is no age limit for the Fruits of the Holy Spirit (**Galatians 5:22**)

**Psalm 31:9-12** (Jerusalem Bible): *“Take pity on me, Yahweh, I am in trouble now. Grief wastes away my eye, my throat, my inmost parts. For my **life is worn out with sorrow, my years with sighs; my strength yields under misery, my bones are wasting away.** To every one of my oppressors I am contemptible, loathsome to my neighbors, to my friends a thing of fear. Those who see me in the street hurry past me; **I am forgotten, as good as dead in their hearts, something discarded.**”*

The elderly become *“victims of a society which identifies their **humanity with their productivity,** and prisoners of others who made them believe their self-worth was determined by their friends”* (Henri Nouwen, Aging)

**Psalm 92:14:** *“They are planted in the house of the Lord; they flourish in the courts of our God. In **old age they still produce fruit; they are always green and full of sap,**”*

**Psalm 71:17-18:** *“O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds. So **even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me,** until I proclaim your might to all the generations to come. Your power and your righteousness, O God, reach the high heavens.”*

**Psalm 90:9-12:** *“For all our days pass away under your wrath; our years come to an end like a sigh. The days of our life are **seventy years, or perhaps eighty,** if we are strong; even then their span is only toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away...So teach us to count our days that we may gain a wise heart.”*

**Sirach 1:12-14:** *“The fear of the Lord delights the heart, and gives gladness and **joy and long life.** Those who fear the **Lord will have a happy end; on the day of their death they will be blessed.** To fear the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; she is created with the faithful in the womb.”*

**Sirach 25:3-5:** *“If you gathered **nothing in your youth, how can you find anything in your old age?** How attractive is sound judgment in the gray-haired, and for the **aged to possess good counsel!** How attractive is wisdom in the aged, and understanding and counsel in the venerable!”*

**Deuteronomy 32:7:** “Remember the days of old, consider the years long past; **ask your father, and he will inform you; your elders, and they will tell you.**”

**Romans 5:2:** “We have been admitted into God’s favor ... and **look forward exultantly to God’s glory**”

“My thoughts turn in a special way to you, **widows and widowers**, who find yourselves alone in the final part of your lives; to you, elderly men and women **Religious**, who for long years have faithfully served the cause of the Kingdom of Heaven; and to you, dear **brother Priests and Bishops**, who, for reasons of age, no longer have direct responsibility for pastoral ministry. **The Church still needs you.** She appreciates the services which you may wish to provide in many areas of the apostolate; she counts on the support of your longer periods of prayer; she counts on your advice born of experience, and she is enriched by your daily witness to the Gospel.” (John Paul II, Letter to the Elderly)

**2 Corinthians 4:16-18:** “So we do not lose heart. Even though **our outer nature is wasting away**, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this **slight momentary affliction** is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal”.

**Philippians 4:4-9:** “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the **peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts** and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, beloved whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, **think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you**”

**Matthew 11:28-30:** “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and **I will give you rest.** Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

### **Hope of immortality: begin with the end in mind**

“But if the life of each of us is limited and fragile, we are consoled by the thought that, by virtue of our spiritual souls, we will **survive beyond death itself.** Moreover, faith opens us to a “hope that does not disappoint” (cf. Rom 5:5), placing us before the perspective of the **final resurrection...Human experience, although subject to time, is set by Christ against the horizon of immortality.** He “became a man among men, in order to join the beginning to the end, man to God”. **We should stop to meditate on how quickly time flies, not in order to resign ourselves to an inexorable fate, but rather to make full use of the years we still have before us** (John Paul II, Letter to the elderly)

**Philippians 1:6:** “I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you **will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ**”.