

## **Pope Says Grandparents More Important Than Ever**

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(April 8, 2008) The emergence of “new models of the family” and “widespread relativism” makes the role of grandparents in the family more important than ever, says Pope Benedict XVI. They are “a treasure that we cannot take away from new generations.”

The Pope made these comments during a plenary assembly of the Pontifical Council of the Family meeting in Rome from April 3-5 to discuss the theme “Grandparents: Their Witness and Presence in the Family.”

The aim of the conference was to highlight the role grandparents play in fostering family unity, and in serving as mediators in the relationship between married couples and between parents and their children.

"In the past, grandparents played an important role in the life and growth of the family," the Pope said during his address. "Even as they got older, they continued to be present for their children, grandchildren and perhaps even great-grandchildren, providing a living witness of kindness, sacrifice and a daily and unreserved giving of self."

The witness of grandparents provides the families with a vital point of reference. "It is not possible to plan the future without relating to a past rich with significant experiences and spiritual and moral points of reference."

He went on to ask, "Who does not recall his grandparents? Who can forget their presence and their testimony in the home? How many among us will bear their name as a sign of continuity and gratitude!"

Unfortunately, he added, "Today's economic and social evolution has caused profound transformations in the life of families. The elderly, among whom there are many grandparents, find themselves in a kind of 'parking lot': Some feel themselves as a burden on the family and prefer to live alone or in nursing homes, with all the consequences that these choices have."

This makes them vulnerable to the ever-widening reach of the culture of death which presents euthanasia as "a solution for resolving certain difficult situations," the Pope said.

"We must join together to defeat together every marginalization, because not only are grandfathers, grandmothers, and the elderly in general overwhelmed by the individualistic mentality but everyone. If grandparents constitute a precious resource, as is often said and from many quarters, then consistent choices must be made that permit this resource to be properly valued."

The Church has always had a great regard for the elderly, he said, and quoted his predecessor, John Paul II, who once spoke of the great beauty of being able to live until the very end "for the

sake of the Kingdom of Heaven.”

After calling on parish and diocesan communities to meet the modern needs of the elderly, he said that everyone “. . . Must always respond vigorously to that which dehumanizes society.”

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