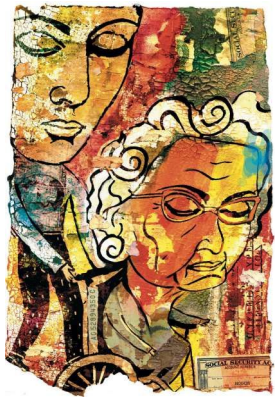
## Senior Citizen's Sunday

September 29, 2019,

## Caring and Accepting the Elderly

Gen. 46:28-34: 47:1-10. Psalms 21. 1 Tim 5:1-10

St. Luke 2:25-35



The Indian scenario of the elderly is very different in nature, as its complexity is deeply rooted in joint families. According to a report by the ministry for statistics, there are nearly 104 million elderly people (aged 60 years or above). In 2050, it will shoot up to 325 million. Many study reports collude to confirm that the elderly persons living in the family are facing physical abuse, mental strain, sociological seclusion, and spiritual abandonment. In this grim context, God who cares for all people, calls the believers, Christian families, and the Church to address this problem.



***1. Compassionate Care:*** The Old Testament passage describes vividly how Joseph took care of his elderly father (Gen. 43:27), who did not know his age at all. He fondly hastened his brothers to bring him from Canaan to join him in Egypt (Gen. 45:13). Joseph sent carts to bring his elderly father with utmost care providing food contingency along with. Emboldened by the royal suggestion, Joseph settled down his father and siblings in the most fertile land.

These days, young people tend to forget the well-being of their parents in their infirmity. They sometimes find fault with their efforts of bringing up to the level maximum possible. Most of the married sons and daughters seek their future and tend to neglect their parents. Some of them even chase them out or dump them in an Old Age Home. Compassionate care in line with the 5th Commandment will bring blessings upon the sons and daughters. Nowadays, the younger generation is running for time. The elderly are yearning for a single word like: 'Did you have your food?" "Have you taken your medicine?" "Shall I clip your nails?" They are waiting for a pair of listening ears to share their pain, agony, and need! They are helpless in their 'second childhood'. They need Compassionate Care.




***2. Empathetic Engagement:*** The Epistle reading is loaded with recommendations from Saint Paul to Timothy not to rebuke older men harshly; to treat elderly

men as fathers and elderly women as mothers. Let the minimum age to be included in the list-not less than 60 years eligible for the Elderly Care Program run by the church. Jesus was critical about this practice in the form of Corban, Mark 7:11-12. The failure of the family passes the buck to the church or society.

In the Indian context, the daughter-in-law treats her mother-in-law very different in comparison with her biological mother. This age-old rift between them continues for several reasons. Perhaps, the elders could be responsible for this. Yet, the relationship with them should be receptive and comfortable for the remaining eve of the elderly. This is possible with an Empathetic Engagement. What the younger generation pays to the Elderly now will be paid back when they become old.

A Mumbai Court passed a judgment to safeguard the abandoned or ill-treated parents to get back their property and source of income. This enforcement was due to the lack of Empathetic Engagement with the elderly.




***3. Heartful honor:*** The Babe Jesus was brought to the Jerusalem temple for fulfilling the religious rites of thanksgiving for the firstborn. The New Testament highlights the honor given to two people, namely Simeon and Anna. The meaning of the Hebrew name Simeon is ‘obedient, listening’. He was righteous and devout according to his name. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him. He declared, "My eyes have seen your salvation." Luke 2:30. There was also prophetess Anna of 84 years age. The Latin name Anna means ‘full of grace, favor’. She gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were waiting for the Messiah. The two elderly persons are related to neither Joseph nor Mary. God chose Simeon and Anna to be honored without gender bias for their piety. These two were waiting for the coming of the Messiah. Every elder in the family is eagerly waiting for a child to be the ‘Centre of Joy’ and ‘Star of Hope’. They are fasting and praying for this to happen. Their inputs and investments in their life have shaped the younger generation. Every child becomes a ‘mini messiah’. Now, it is the turn of the younger generation to honor them with their sign of joy, hope, and more than appreciation of their life-long sacrifice.

***Conclusion:*** As we celebrate Senior Citizen’s Sunday, let us remind ourselves of the Biblical guidance to have Compassionate Care, and to enter into Empathetic Engagement to recognize their life achievements for a Heartful Honor.

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