

*“More than kisses, letters mingle souls.”
- John Donne*

CCE Grade 2: Fall Snack Treats and Greeting Cards for the Elderly

Project Overview: Students create hand made greeting cards for the elderly, letting them know how much Jesus loves them. They will also decorate fall snack treats with fun wrappers to be distributed to our elderly friends.

Understandings:

Spiritual: God wants us to care for our elderly and lonely.

Social: Reaching out to our elderly reminds them that they are not alone. The cards & treats will bring them a happy reminder that others have concern and care for them.

Intellectual: With small acts of kindness, you can make a big difference in someone’s life. We will look at what the affects of reaching out to others has on us.

**PROGRAM START DATE:
SEPTEMBER 24
PROGRAM FINISH DATE:
OCTOBER 9**

Students should complete the cards and fall snack treats at home on or before the collection due date of October 9th. See the card and treat wrapper templates attached. Wrap your favorite snacks - granola bars, peanut butter crackers, etc.– to share with our friends.

PROJECT BENEFITS:

**Fort Bend Seniors Meals on Wheels and the Mamie George Community Center
Richmond/Rosenberg, TX**



SERVICE PROJECT QUESTIONS:

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PHOTO ILLUSTRATION DESIGN/PCS

How Should We Honor Our Elderly Parents?

Anthony S. Layne * January 16, AD2016



In response to Dr. Denise Hunnell's December 29, 2015 Catholic Stand post, "Family Life as 'Domestic Pilgrimage'", a loyal reader brought up a question in regards to the Fourth Commandment, "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you" (Exodus 20:12; cf. Deuteronomy 5:16):

I have yet to hear, never mind expounded upon, what would constitute a mortal sin in a family context setting. In today's mobile society where siblings leave for far-away places seldom to return, is talking to one's parents (or siblings) less than a week a year the kind of DIS-honor God envisioned when He placed that omission on the top ten? Would continuing to live one's own life thousands of miles away while an aging parent or sibling slips the bonds of life in a medical setting or at home constitute a mortal or grievous sin, and should such a family member be denied Communion for acting this way? After all, it is very similar to divorce when you think about it.

This is a topic that touches me personally. Since 1994, I've devoted a good chunk of my life and time to taking care of physically disabled family members — first my younger brother (who passed away in 2011), and now my mother. Both my other siblings pitch in as well, to the extent they're able. Between the three of us, we're doing what we can to make sure our mother's final years are lived in comfort and company.

But before we can attempt to answer our loyal reader's question, we should first ask ourselves, "How does the Catholic Church understand the Fourth Commandment?" Before we can ask whether the situations the reader describe constitute dishonor, we need to know what's meant by *honor*.

Parents as Models of Social Relationships

First, it's worth noting that God stated our duty to our parents immediately after establishing our duties to Himself, showing us the "order of charity" ([Catechism of the Catholic Church 2197](#)). Moreover, through this duty to our parents, we can deduce obligations to other kinship ties and social roles; we can see through it an obligation to honor elders and ancestors, as well as those put in some authority over us, such as teachers, employers, and even our various governments ([Catechism 2199](#)). (In fact, contrary to what Sigmund Freud thought, the correlation between our

relationships with our fathers and belief in God seems to be *positive* rather than negative; see Paul C. Vitz, *Faith of the Fatherless: The Psychology of Atheism.*)

It's precisely because so many of our secondary and even tertiary social relationships are modeled on, and influenced by, our relationship with our parents that the Church "*considers the family as the first natural society, with underived rights that are proper to it, and places it at the centre of social life ... a divine institution that stands at the foundation of life of the human person as the prototype of every social order*" (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* [211](#); italics in original). The importance of the family for the life and well-being of society entails a particular responsibility for society to support and strengthen marriage and the family. Civil authority should consider it a grave duty "to acknowledge the true nature of marriage and the family, to protect and foster them, to safeguard public morality, and promote domestic prosperity." (*Catechism* [2210](#); cf. *Gaudium et Spes* [47, 52](#))

What Are Our Specific Duties?

All this is well enough; however, it doesn't give us any specifics as to our duties. Of course, minors are expected to obey their parents, to "anticipate their wishes, willingly seek their advice, and accept their just admonitions. Obedience toward parents ceases with the emancipation of the children; not so respect, which is always owed to them." "As much as they can," adult children must give their parents "material and moral support in old age and in times of illness, loneliness, or distress" (*Catechism* [2217-8](#)). O son, help your father in his old age, and do not grieve him as long as he lives; even if he is lacking in understanding, show forbearance; in all your strength do not despise him. ... Whoever forsakes his father is like a blasphemer, and whoever angers his mother is cursed by the Lord (Sirach 3:12-13, 16).

However, that's where the specifics stop.

The Judaism of the Pharisees was largely concerned with exterior conformance to a written Law; even the oral traditions of which Jesus was so critical were rabbinic attempts to apply the written law to different cases. Christianity, by contrast, concerns itself primarily with an interior Law written on our hearts (cf. Romans 2:14-16), with doing as we would be done by (cf. Matthew 7:12). We're still obliged to observe the Ten Commandments, and we can still learn from the moral teachings of the Law of Moses. Nevertheless, we're free of the Law of Moses in a way that grants us both more flexibility and more individual responsibility ... at the cost of less certainty.

Ultimately, there can be no single formula, no one-size-fits-all response. In each relationship there are two people involved, either of whom can throw up walls against the other. Some parents prefer to retain some kind of independence from their children, even if that means living in a hovel of an apartment or in a sub-standard nursing home. Some parents can barely hold up their end of a five-minute semi-annual phone call, while some demand so much attention that they detract from their children's other obligations. Sometimes "honoring" means respecting your parents' wishes; sometimes it means making choices against their wishes for the sake of their well-being. Sometimes, with physically or emotionally abusive parents, honoring them is best done from a distance.

No "Daisyworld" Parishes

In a "Daisyworld" parish, the pastor and his associates would know their parishioners' business in some detail, and would know each relationship from both sides. And perhaps such intimate knowledge between pastor and parishioner still exists in small towns here and there.

But as our faithful reader points out, today families are far-flung. Parents rarely live in the same parish as their adult children. Many parishes in the US are the size of small towns, and are served by one priest, who

may have as little as two or three years and no more than twelve to get to know his flock. In rural areas, as many as three or four parishes may be served by a single priest, due to the priest shortage. And the oils of ordination don't as a rule confer upon the priest the ability to read souls.

For these reasons, the pastor won't ordinarily know that a parishioner is dishonoring his parents unless: a) the parishioner confesses it; or, b) the parishioner appears in the local news accused of senior abuse. After all, parent-neglecters rarely appear *en masse* at their local parish proudly wearing sashes that boldly symbolize their willing dissent from Catholic teaching. On what basis, then, could the priest withhold Communion?

A Call for Attention

Nevertheless, **respect and support for our parents, and by extension for our elders, is as much a pro-life issue as is respect and protection of the unborn.** In fact, the two issues are interconnected, both as life issues and as foundations for our world's future.

Charles Moore pointed out in *The Telegraph* just over a year ago that ageing populations produce less and consume more; they require more public services even as the tax base needed to pay for them diminishes. As birth rates decline, life spans increase, and First World economies become more shaky, seniors' lives will come under increasing threat from the euthanasia movement as a "cost-effective solution" to global ageing. One can easily envision a not-too-distant utilitarian future, in which those who can afford age-reversal treatments, such as those promised by telomerase and metformin, are permitted a second and even a third century of life, while those who suffer from untreatable or incurable conditions are socially frog-marched into "voluntary" death.

Our children learn from us. Therefore, if we wish future generations to value their parents and the elderly, we must set the pattern: again, we must "do as we would be done by". Protecting seniors from abuse, and providing for their physical and emotional well-being, must receive greater attention from the Church and the pro-life movement. We the human family, no less than the nuclear family, should be as zealous in protecting our family members' lives in their twilight as at their dawning.

For, God permitting, we too shall grow old in our turn. And we can expect no more to be done to us than we do to our elders.

www.catholicstand.com/how-should-we-honor-our-elderly-parents/