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## Francis urges support for elderly sisters, priests

by NCR Staff

The Francis Chronicles

At his morning Mass Friday, Pope Francis reflected on the later life challenges of three biblical figures: Moses, St. John the Baptist and St. Paul. He said none of the three was spared anguish at the end of their lives, though the Lord never abandoned them. The pope also urged the faithful to remember and visit the many elderly priests and sisters living in their nursing homes because they are true shrines of holiness.

In his homily, the pope looked at the vigor and enthusiasm displayed by the young Moses, St. John the Baptist and St. Paul at the beginning of their apostolate and compared it with the solitude and anguish they endured at the end of their lives, Vatican Radio reported.

The pope said St. Paul "has a joyful and enthusiastic beginning" but is not spared a decline in his later years, and he said it was a similar situation with Moses and St. John the Baptist.

When he was young, Moses was "the courageous leader of the People of God who fought against his enemies" to save his people, Pope Francis said. But at the end of his life, "he is alone on Mount Nebo, looking at the promised land" but unable to enter it.

Turning to the later life of St. John the Baptist, the pope noted that the apostle had to struggle with an anguish that tormented him and "finished under the power of a weak, corrupt and drunken ruler who in turn was under the power of an adulteress' jealousy and the capricious wishes of a dancer."

St. Paul, the pope said, also faced similar trials at the end of his life and in his letters spoke of all those who abandoned him and who denounced his preaching. But as he went on to stress, Paul wrote that "the Lord was close to him and gave him the strength to complete his mission of announcing the Gospel."

Francis said these later life challenges of these three figures reminded him of "the shrines of holiness

which are the nursing homes of elderly priests and religious sisters."

"Bearing the burden of solitude, these priests and sisters are waiting for the Lord to knock at the door of their hearts," Francis said. He urged the faithful not to forget them and to visit them.

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