



“We never give up. Our bodies are gradually dying, but we ourselves are being made stronger each day.”

—2 Corinthians 4:16

Do you remember the first time you thought of your parents or other people in your life as being old? I’m the youngest of eight children, born on my Dad’s 48th birthday (what a gift!). So I grew up with people wondering if Mum and Dad were my grandparents.

I didn’t really think about them being old until Mum got sick... and then Dad. Within a couple of years, my perception of them, and life, had changed. Life was more fragile, but infinitely more precious.

Attitudes to age have changed since the ’70s. When my youngest was born just after my 41st birthday, the only person who thought that was old was, well me (and possibly my other children)!

The start of October is a time to remember and celebrate International Day of Older Persons. Over the last 50 years the proportion of people aged 65 and over has doubled to more than 10% of the population, or around 830 million people. This number is expected to double by 2050.

With fewer children being born, and life expectancy increasing, many countries are needing to address the challenges and embrace the opportunities that an aging population brings.

These challenges include addressing human rights, discrimination, and creating more inclusive communities. There is need for greater access to health care and social support. But there is also opportunity to explore new interests through education, employment and hobbies.

One person experiencing this is Antonio.



When you meet Antonio, you notice his quiet smile first. It’s the smile of a man who has been through pain, uncertainty, and loss—but also a man who has seen God’s faithfulness in the middle of it all.

Antonio and his wife live in a rural village in Timor-Leste. They raised four children, all now married. He once worked as a teacher, and later as a farmer, growing cassava, potatoes, and vegetables to feed his family and send his children to school.

But in 2002, Antonio began noticing strange patches on his skin—white and red marks that burned in the sun. Soon, his hands and feet grew weak and numb. Farming became painful. Antonio sought out local traditional remedies, but this didn’t stop the disease from slowly taking his strength.

For years, he struggled on, losing confidence in doctors and living with worsening symptoms. Yet,

through it all, Antonio kept urging his children to stay in school. He knew education would give them a future, even when he could no longer provide as he once had.

Then, in 2021, during a mass leprosy screening, Antonio finally got the right diagnosis—Multibacillary Leprosy—and began the proper treatment. It wasn't easy. The Multi-Drug Therapy worked, but there were painful leprosy reactions and months of care. Antonio is so grateful for the



Antonio (centre) having bandages changed during a check-up with local health workers.

clear explanations and ongoing care from The Leprosy Mission and local health workers. They visit regularly, tending his wounds and teaching his family how to help.

Today, Antonio is free from the disease. He still lives with disability, but he runs a small business raising chickens and pigs, helping to support his household, and living in contentment with his wife. He says he has never been rejected by his family or neighbours—but admits that sometimes, shame and fear of passing on the disease made him pull away from others.

His message to others is simple: “Never lose hope, especially in medicine and doctors. Sometimes finding the right treatment takes time or visiting different doctors. The prescribed medicines helped cure me. Also, believe in God.”

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—Antonio

Antonio's life is a living echo of Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 4:16—reminding us that even when our bodies are weakened, our hearts can grow stronger in faith, renewed each day by the One who never leaves us.

Yours in prayer,



Glen Coleman
Community Engagement Coordinator
Leprosy Mission Australia



Will you pray with us?

Your prayers for people like Antonio remind me of Jesus' prayer in Matthew 6 that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven. One day, Jesus will return and make all things new. Meanwhile, your prayers bring hope and dignity. Strengthen bodies weakened by disease. Give hope for a brighter future. Remind us that we are made stronger in Him.

Add your prayers for people like Antonio by emailing engage@leprosymission.org.au or use the enclosed form.

Would you like to do more?

Consider supporting the E-LETRA (Ending Leprosy Transmission in Oecusse-Ambeno) project in Timor-Leste. You can bring hope to older people like Antonio looking to live full lives. You can help end leprosy in Timor-Leste.



<https://leprosymission.org.au/projects/e-letra/ppd04>

Because when you say yes, you become part of the answer to that ancient promise:

The Lord will watch over your life—both now and forevermore.