

Grandparents



Jul 2013

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As a child is born - so are grandparents

Jul 2013

This Month...



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| Mo 3 | St Thomas |
| Sa 6 | St Maria Goretti |
| Su 7 | Ordinary Time 14 On the Road |
| Th 11 | St Benedict |
| Su 14 | Ordinary Time 15 A Good Neighbour |
| Tu 16 | Our Lady of Mt Carmel |
| Su 21 | Ordinary Time 16 Welcome God |
| Mo 22 | St Mary Magdalene |
| Th 25 | St James Major |
| Fr 26 | Sts Joachim & Anne |
| Su 28 | Ordinary Time 17 Persistence |
| Mo 29 | St Martha |
| We 31 | St Ignatius of Loyola |

The Rise of Grandparenthood

There was a time when grey hair was relatively rare. Many people simply died before they were old enough to be called 'Grandfather' or 'Grandmother'; sometimes in childbirth, sometimes from disease or accident, sometimes in war. Currently, life expectancy in developed nations is in the mid 70s making grandparents a more common occurrence. Whereas once, children may have known only one or two of their surviving grandparents, it is not uncommon for our children to know all four of theirs and to even know a great-grandparent.



Print version

The birth of a Grandfather

I can still vividly recall the moment I saw our first born walk from the birthing room with his first born in his arms. It was as though my wife Liz and I had been transported to another plane of being. Things would forever be different. Besides now embracing a whole new generation, we had to get our head around the fact we had someone special in common with another couple who we were just getting to know, the parents of the mother of the new babe. This relationship was not prompted by friendship, business or common interest (though these factors would grow), it was genetic, relational and highly valued. We were now co-grandparents to a mysterious new human being.

In many ways the experience can be bewildering. I had always considered grandparents to be 'old people', people who seemed slightly eccentric and a trifle out of touch with what was really going on in the world. In spite of this, I began to sense how I was fitting in to my new role and how crucial I was becoming to this new human being.

Vic O'Callaghan



Sts Joachim & Anne Grandparents of Jesus

Joachim and Anne were greatly honoured by God who gave them a daughter conceived without sin who was to become known as the Mother of God! It would seem that they performed their parenting responsibilities with great grace. Their feast day on July 26 is a day to honour them and all grandparents for their contribution to our lives.

We know very few facts about Sts. Joachim and Anne. The only recorded stories of them are from an apocryphal gospel dating from the 4th Century AD called the Protoevangelium of James. The legend told in this document says that after years of childlessness, an angel appeared to tell Anne and Joachim that they would have a child.

Whatever the facts of their lives, we can assume that Mary was raised in a Jewish family home faithful to God and to the religious traditions of her day such that she was led to respond wholeheartedly to God's request with faith, "Let it be done to me as you will."



Feast Day: July 26



Faith of our (Grand) Fathers

Increasingly, the task of passing on the faith to children is falling to grandparents as the generation in between loses interest or capacity. For many grandparents their role in sharing the traditions and understanding of the faith is a major undertaking. They delicately walk the line between honoring their sense of urgency and respecting the parents' role. These faithful teachers provide an important anchor in the child's faith life.

Grandparents in the scriptures

One of the most powerful grandparent encounters in the scriptures is the reunion of Jacob with Joseph and his sons after his exile in Egypt (Gen 48). Though his eyes were dim with age, Jacob kissed his grandsons and blessed them, laying his hand on their heads. His blessing became the basis for the Jewish tradition of blessing on the Sabbath which Jewish families still practice today, thousands of years later.



The tradition of familial blessings is a wonderful way for grandparents to connect with their grandchildren in their faith. When given regularly, blessings can powerfully form in children a deep conviction of God's unbounded love for them as communicated through the tender longing of a beloved parent, grandparent or great-grandparent.

As the matriarchs and patriarchs of the family, grandparents not only **are** a blessing to their families, they can also **give** blessings with a unique authority; having lived their faith deeply, the blessing of their offspring is a spiritually turbo-charged gesture! It is more than simply wishing for a child to be happy; it is an intimate and humble plea for God to act powerfully in the life of blest one.



A blessing is simply a special form of prayer, where one person prays 'over' another, asking God to enrich them with his grace. Blessings may be prayed silently, though they are usually prayed aloud allowing the child to hear the words of encouragement and longing for his prosperity. Often a blessing is accompanied by a physical gesture such as laying one or both hands on the head or shoulders of the child. Christian blessings conclude with a Sign of the Cross marked with the thumb on the child's forehead.

Blessing of a Child

Grandparents as Carers

It is not uncommon in developing countries for grandparents to be the primary carer while parents work for the sustenance of the extended family. Even in developed countries, grandparents increasingly provide an alternative to day care and after-school care, making a substantial contribution of the welfare of the children and saving the government childcare subsidies.

Yet for most grandparents, their time with a grandchild is primarily 'play time'. Here are some tips to help make this time mutually enjoyable for the grandparents, the grandchildren and their parents.



Tips for grandparents

- 1. Don't take over.** It's tempting to blurt it out when your wisdom makes it so clear what needs to be done, but truly wise grandparents will hold their parenting advice unless asked. The same applies to your grandchildren – your primary role is to support and encourage them; don't sour your relationship by being overly critical or corrective. Leave discipline to the parents.
- 2. Support the parents' rules.** You may not agree with them, but if you consistently undermine the rules and values of the parents, you'll see less of your grandkids. That's not a threat – it's just the practical reality. If parents have to undo the 'damage' after every granny visit, they'll make other arrangements for the child's care.
- 3. Don't take sides between mum and dad.** Remember, your child and their spouse are trying to work out how they can blend and craft their parenting values and practices – they really don't need you taking sides.





- 4. Spoil without ruining.** Grandparents have special license to spoil their grandchildren, but be careful to keep it reasonable; many grandparents ruinously indulge their grandchildren with candy, treats and presents making it difficult for the parents to enforce good habits.
- 5. Don't take favorites.** Every grandchild is precious and unique. You can have a special relationship with each one without neglecting any of them.
- 6. Set boundaries.** Some parents will take advantage of the grandparents' offers to help to the point where it is stressful and resented. Protect yourself and your relationship with the parents and your grandchildren by being clear about your limits.

Tips for Parents

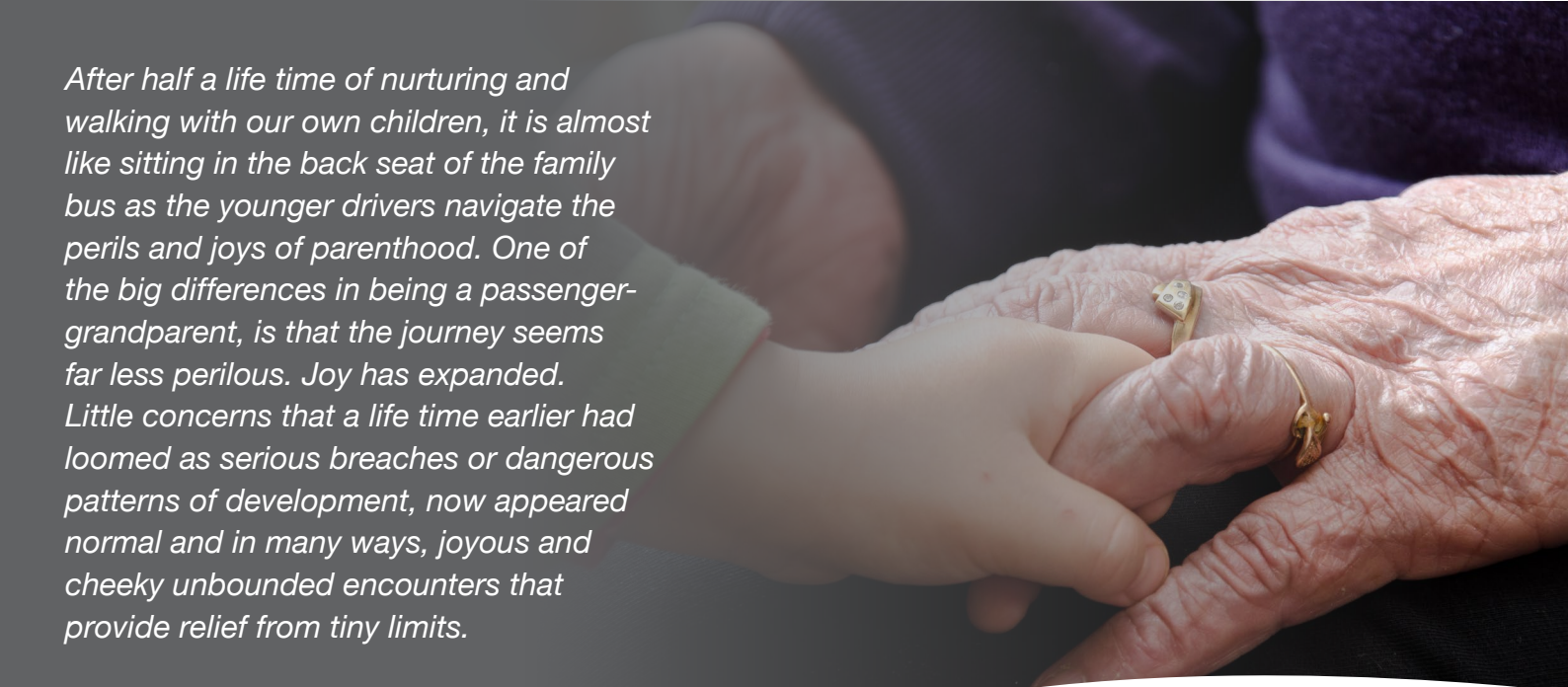
A grandparent is a great gift in the life of a child, but what can you do when they are difficult to get along with?

- 1. Communicate your rules clearly.** You really can't expect the grandparents to follow your rules if you haven't been explicit. So speak up and write them down if necessary.
- 2. Don't sweat the small stuff.** So the grandparents gave the kids chocolate 30 minutes before dinner. Yes, it's annoying. But keep it in perspective. If this is the only fault, why spoil a lovely day or a lovely relationship?
- 3. Thank them.** Too often grandparents are taken for granted. Thank them regularly and tell them specifically what you appreciate... it's a positive way to give feedback and help direct the kind of help that you really need.





- 4. One on one time.** It's tempting to hand over all the kids for some precious alone time, but take care to give your children some one on one time with their grandparents too.
- 5. Boundaries.** You're the parent and ultimately you're responsible for your child. If grandparents are getting too involved or intrusive, politely and firmly establish some limits.



After half a life time of nurturing and walking with our own children, it is almost like sitting in the back seat of the family bus as the younger drivers navigate the perils and joys of parenthood. One of the big differences in being a passenger-grandparent, is that the journey seems far less perilous. Joy has expanded. Little concerns that a life time earlier had loomed as serious breaches or dangerous patterns of development, now appeared normal and in many ways, joyous and cheeky unbounded encounters that provide relief from tiny limits.

Vic O'Callaghan

A Place For Grandparents

Brand New Grandparents

Francine & Byron Pirola

As a grandparent, or expectant one, your relationship with your grandchild comes bundled with your relationship with the parents. It can be helpful to reflect upon your own grandparent encounters in order to better understand your expectations and hopes for your grandchildren.



Reflect on your grandparent memories.

1. What is your fondest memory?
2. Revisit your experience of a grandparent's death and funeral – what stands out as particularly painful, awe-inspiring?
3. Perhaps you never knew your grandparents, or knew them only briefly – how did that impact you?

Reflect on your parents as grandparents to your children.

1. What did you most appreciate?
2. What did you find difficult or frustrating?

Reflect on your future grandchildren.

1. What kind of relationship do you hope to have with your grandchildren?
2. What are you doing now to help make that a reality?



Grandparents Day

The Feast of Sts Joachim and Anne, the grandparents of Jesus, is commonly used to celebrate grandparents. Check out the Australian Catholic Marriage and Family Council's *Gift of Grandparents* for more.

Grandparent Fun

Help your children (and grandchildren) connect with their ancestors with CathFamily's Ancestor Tree. This could be a simple colour-in or a photo collage. It makes a lovely gift for grandparents to add to their art collection.



