

## Sts. Joachim & Anne

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.

### Fact File

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. Anne promised to dedicate this child to God. Whatever their names or 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."

(adapted from [www.catholic.org/saints](http://www.catholic.org/saints))

*Each Grandparent is unique and irreplaceable. As society changes, the role of grandparents changes. But some things about grandparents are constant. Lets take some time to reflect on...*

# The Gift of Grandparents

### Grandparents provide memories

Memories help us to understand who we are. For most families, grandparents are the 'Central Bank of Memories'. Grandchildren never tire of hearing stories about their own parents when they were children. *"My brother died young, leaving a large family. When we come together at family gatherings the hunger for memories of their father is obvious"*

### Grandparents see the inner beauty of the grandchild

To a grandparent, each grandchild is a wonderful mystery. Other people may look and see a pimply little child but the grandparent sees someone unique, special and loveable.

### Grandparents benefit too. It's a two-way street!

To young children, their grandparents are simply beautiful and they tell them so; they don't seem to notice the wrinkles and sagging skin. As one grandfather said, "They even laugh at my jokes!" So both generations are helped to see themselves as God sees us – loveable, good and made in his image.

### Grandparenting can also involve deep suffering and heavy sacrifices

The deepest hurts can come when we love most deeply. Grandparenting can involve hurtful separation, unfulfilled dreams. The inability to pass on the values we hold dearest can be a source of deep distress and a sense of helplessness when it seems that all one can do is to stand, like Mary and John at the foot of the Cross.



*"May you see your children and your childrens' children ..."*  
That blessing from the Rite of Christian Marriage continues to be fulfilled in countless marriages around the world. For some couples, it is not fulfilled. For some it involves difficult challenges, even heartache. For many it is the greatest joy. And for everyone it is different.



### Grandparents help wellbeing

British research from Oxford University showed that grandparents who are involved in the upbringing of their grandchildren contribute to the child's wellbeing.

Professor Ann Buchanan said: "Grandparents who got stuck in and did things with their grandchildren had this positive impact on their grandchildren." (from National Seniors Australia 'Connect' newsletter).

*"The educational task of grandparents is always very important, and it becomes even more so when, for different reasons, the parents are not able to ensure an adequate presence to their children. May the Virgin Mary, who, ..., learned to read sacred Scriptures at the knee of her mother, Anne, help grandparents to always nourish their faith and hope at the font of the Word of God."* (Pope Benedict XVI on the Feast Day of Joachim and Anne, grandparents of Jesus).

### Grandparents are 'significant other adults' in the lives of grandchildren

Their support starts at the most elementary level of presence – babysitting, shopping, helping with homework and sporting activities. In Australia, nearly one fifth of grandparents are engaged in caring for grandchildren for an average of about 12 hours per week - a high percentage considering the common limitations of geographical distance or poor health.

### Grandparents are often strong witnesses to the faith

Nowhere is their presence more important than in passing on the faith. This is most obvious at special faith events such as First Communion. More often, this witness is expressed through small family rituals such as grace before meals, the reading of bible stories, celebrating patron saint feast days and offering to pray for their special concerns. There are many resources, including websites, that offer ideas for family rituals and many of these are ideally suited to grandparents.

*"I remember when I used to stay with my grandparents when I was 12. They used to always say the rosary in bed before they went to sleep. It seemed to me they would say it extra loud so that I would hear! But it had a big impression on me."* (James, aged 19)

"Grandchildren are God's reward for being a parent."



### In the words of children

*"When they take us for walks, they slow down past things like pretty leaves and caterpillars."*

*"They show us and talk to us about the colours of the flowers and why we shouldn't walk on cracks."*

*"They have to answer questions like 'Why isn't God married?' and 'How come dogs chase cats?'"*

*"They don't say 'Hurry up'"*.

*"When they read to us, they don't skip. They don't mind if we ask for the same story over again."*

*"My grandparents really, really spoil us – but they get cranky when we don't go to sleep".*

*"A grandmother we know makes a point of having a special outing with a different grandchild at regular intervals. Each outing is planned according to the special interests of just that child so that he or she is made to feel really loved and special. It strengthens the sense of self-worth of each child."* (Mary)

### Grandparents often have the gift of time

They are usually not as rushed as modern young parents. Many grandparents have the gift of time – to listen, to affirm and to explore the world together.

### Grandchildren provide grandparents with a sense of meaning to life

As their health fails and not all their hopes are fulfilled, grandchildren remain as the living expression of their relationship. They give a sense that their life together had a purpose and that it was worthwhile.

*"I will never forget this cosmic shift as I watched our first born walk from the birthing room with his first born in his arms. What a blessing it is to live this long! Being a grandparent allows me to swim in an ocean of questions that only more reveal the wonder of our creator who calls to us for even greater intimacy and union."* (Vic)



### Grandparents as primary carers

These are only 1% of Australian grandparents but they are growing in number and provide an incredible witness of love and generosity. Most often their care results from a sudden crisis in the families of their children. Not only is there personal grief about their own children and grandchildren but they often face new challenges such as loss of income or loss of plans for a quiet retirement together with increased stress on their own marriage. Suddenly they face the reality that they may die before they retire from the heavy burdens of child-rearing.

It is worth stressing that the law does not require grandparents to undertake the primary care of their grandchildren. However, the extent to which they will take on this new role is quite inspirational. Primarily they are acting out of love.

The

*Gift*  
of  
*Grandparents*



**The Gift of Grandparents**

A Resource for parishes and schools from  
the Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life

## In a Nutshell

- To encourage families, parishes and schools to affirm the value of grandparents.
- To provide practical suggestions for parishes and schools to celebrate the gift of grandparents.

### This kit contains:

1. A reproducible leaflet to be distributed to students, grandparents and parishioners.
2. Notes for a liturgy celebrating grandparents.
3. Newsletter inserts.
4. Craft activities for children.
5. Slide show honouring grandparents.

## How to use this Resource

1. Reproduce the handouts to distribute to families at Mass or via the school. Alternatively, some of the content of the handout could be included in the parish/school newsletter.
2. Use the liturgy notes for a prayer assembly or dedicated Mass in honour of grandparents.
3. Use the newsletter clipboard for simple ways of affirming grandparents and their role in their grandchildren's lives.
4. Invite grandparents to visit the school for a morning and treat them to a class tour.
5. Take the children to visit the residents of your local aged care home – a source of wonderful grandparent figures especially for those children whose grandparents are deceased or live remotely from them.
6. A time to use this resource is a special occasion such as the feast of St Joachim and Anne (July 26), school Grandparents Day, or on Family Week.
7. Grandparents could use it with their grandchild(ren) to spark discussion.
8. The Parish School could organise, with the Parish Priest, a "Grandparents Sunday Mass", or perhaps a series of these each month on a class-by-class basis – a sure way of boosting Mass attendance over the year.

# The

# Gift of Grandparents

Dear Friends,

Grandparents are a valuable and vital resource in our communities. They provide children with a stability and sense of generational continuity. Many grandparents are also significant carers in the lives of their grandchildren and a number of them are the primary carer.

Many schools host a 'grandparents day' – a practice that is enjoyed and appreciated by both students and their grandparents. It is a simple and powerful way to affirm and encourage family life and the transmission of faith through the generations.

We are delighted to offer you this resource to assist you in supporting the grandparent figures in your wider school community. It comes with the desire of the Bishops of Australia to see every family flourish as effective communities of Christ's love.

With every blessing,

Bishop Terry Brady

Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life

## News Flash: Pope Blesses Grandparents

Vatican City, Jul 26, 2009

Following the Angelus, Pope Benedict spoke about today's feast of Sts. Joachim and Anne, parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary and grandparents of Jesus.

The Pope then asked the faithful to pray for grandparents, "who in families are often the witnesses of the fundamental values of life."

"The educational role of grandparents is always very important and becomes even more so when, for various reasons, parents are unable to dedicate an adequate amount of time to their children. I entrust to the protection of St. Anne and St. Joachim all grandparents of the world, imparting a special blessing."

# Liturgy Outline

## Introduction

Today we celebrate the gift of grandparents. These ancestors have given us the gift of life. They continue to give us the gift of love.

## Opening Prayer

Father in heaven, you have blessed the generations with your steadfast love. Keep us faithful to your covenant.

## Readings

Note: these readings have been adapted for children

First Reading: Gen 48:8-11,14-16, 20

**In this passage, the elderly Jacob (also called 'Israel') blesses his grandchildren.**

When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he said, "Who are these?" Joseph said to his father, "They are my sons, whom God has given me". And he said, "Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them". Now the eyes of Israel were dim with age and he could not see well. So Joseph brought them near him; and he kissed them and embraced them. Israel said to Joseph, "I did not expect to see your face and here God has let me see your children also". Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on the head of Manasseh. He blessed Joseph, and said, "The God before whom my ancestors Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day, the angel who has redeemed me from all harm, bless the boys; and in them let my name be perpetuated, and the name of my ancestors Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude on the earth".

So he blessed them that day, saying, "By you Israel will invoke blessings, saying, 'God make you like Ephraim and like Manasseh'."

## The Word of the Lord.

Psalm 103

**Response: Bless the LORD, O My Soul**

Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! **R**

He forgives all our sins, heals our sickness, and crowns us with steadfast love and mercy. **R**

The LORD is merciful and kind, slow to anger and abounding in love. **R**

As high as the heavens are above the

earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who love him. **R**

As for us, our days are like grass; for the wind passes over it and it is gone. But the love of the LORD is everlasting. **R**

His righteousness will be given to our children's children, of those who keep his covenant. **R**

Gospel: Mark 10:13-16

People kept bringing young children to Jesus that he might touch them. The disciples tried to stop them. But when Jesus saw it, he was annoyed. He said to them, "Let the children to come to me and do not stop them. For it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not accept and welcome the kingdom of God like a little child shall not enter it".

And Jesus took the children in his arms and blessed them, placing his hands upon them.

## The Gospel of the Lord.

## Prayers of the Faithful

Leader: God has made a covenant of everlasting love. Let us pray with trust in his love.

1. For all grandparents: that their presence be a sign of God's love for their grandchildren and that their memories help younger generations to connect with their origins. We pray to the Lord.
2. For grandparents: may they continue to pass on to future generations their faith and their mature human and spiritual experience. We pray to the Lord.
3. For grandparents raising children: that their selfless love and commitment be recognised and supported by those around them. We pray to the Lord.
4. For grandparents: that they may be blessed in the affection and gratitude of their grandchildren. May they always encounter respect and love. We pray to the Lord.
5. For children who have no grandparents: that they may find encouragement in the friendship and support of faith-filled seniors. We pray to the Lord.
6. For grandparents who have died: that

their families will be consoled in their loss of one so precious to them. We pray to the Lord

## Blessing of Grandparents

Invite the children to read the following prayer for their grandparents.

## A Prayer for Grandparents

**Dear God,**

**Please bless our grandparents.**

**Thank you for the life they gave my parents and for the life they give to me.**

**For the ways they helped me and made me strong, I give thanks.**

**For the ways they love me no matter what, I rejoice.**

**For the ways they have paved the road that leads me here, I am grateful.**

**Let them grow in wisdom and joy in life.**

**Let them find peace and rest from their work.**

**Let them be healed of every sickness and pain.**

**And let them see with their own eyes the glory of your Son, Jesus, in the love of their children and grandchildren.**

**Bless them always until they come to rest in you.**

**We ask this through Christ our Lord.**

**Amen.**

*Prayer by Diana Macalintal Copyright © 2005  
<http://dsjliturgy.org/2006/08/27/a-prayer-for-grandparents/>*



# Liturgy Outline

## Homily Notes

### Blessings of a Grandfather

The tender reunion of Jacob (also called Israel) in the first reading, with his son Joseph and grandsons, is a powerful scene. How wonderful for the two grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh, to be embraced so affectionately by their grandfather and then blessed so earnestly with Jacob's yearning, even foretelling that the two boys will become role models for the Jewish people into the future. By his blessing, Jacob ('Israel') is reminding them of the special relationship they share with God. Even though his grandsons are living in exile in Egypt, outside the land which God promised to their great, great grandfather Abraham, they must never forget their true homeland. Even though his grandsons are growing up in a foreign culture that worships many gods, they must never forget that they belong to a people that lives by the ways of the one, living God. What a powerful blessing.

Blessings are common in the scriptures and in our Jewish and Christian traditions. In the Jewish scriptures we read often of a father's blessing of his sons as he approaches death. In Jewish homes to this day, it is customary as part of Sabbath rituals for parents to place their hands upon each of their children and say a blessing. The blessing of boys refers back to this blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh, while the blessing of girls refers to the matriarchs Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah; all fine role models of faith-filled men and women. This is then followed by 'the priestly blessing' prescribed by the Lord to Moses (Numbers 6:22-26): The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.

Similarly, blessings are an important part of our Christian tradition. For example, we have the blessing of food ('grace before meals'), of water ('holy water'), of objects (like rosary beads) and special blessings for people (such as the nuptial blessing at a wedding) and at the end of the Mass.



## Sts. Joachim and Anne

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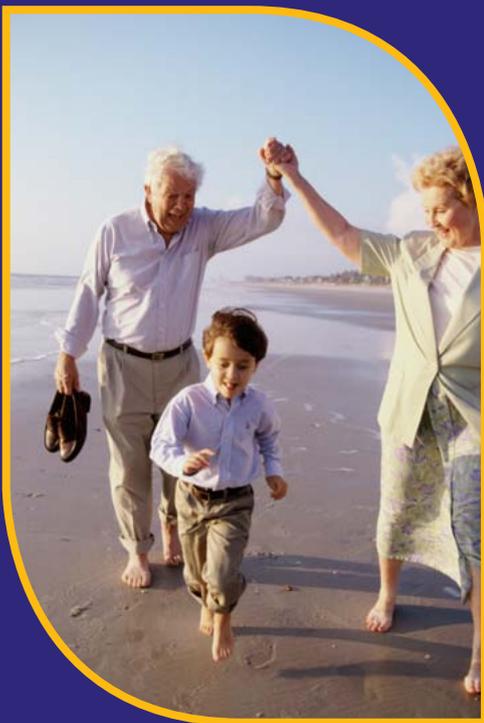
# Newsletter Clipboard

This Sunday we celebrate the feast of Sts Joachim and Anne, Grandparents of Jesus. (July 26)  
To all our grandparents, thanks for all the gifts of life and faith they have given us.

Sts Joachim and Anne (Feast July 26) are role models for grandparents. Happy Feast Day to all our grandparents!

## The Feast of Sts Joachim and Anne (July 26)

Pick up your copy of 'The Gift of Grandparents' in the Church Foyer today!



## Invitation to Grandparents

Each Grandparent is unique and irreplaceable. As society changes, the role of grandparents changes. But some things about grandparents are constant. Join us in celebrating the gift they are in our lives!

[Date]

[Time]

[Location]

# Craft Activities

## Bookmark

1. Using the templates, have children write a prayer for their grandparents on one side and draw a picture of themselves with their grandparent(s) on the other.
2. Laminate, punch a hole and thread a ribbon, tassel or beaded string through a hole at the end.

