

Saints Joachim & Anne

We know very little about Sts Joachim and Anne. 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." (see www.catholic.org/saints)

Saints Joachim and Anne, pray for us, pray for our grandchildren who are so dear to us.

'LONG DISTANCE' GRANDPARENTING

- Mark the calendar for a regular contact.
- Whether using Skype, Facetime or 'phone, have some particular news item to pass on each time.
- Jot down a joke or an interesting thought as soon as you hear it – text it as soon as you get a chance.
- Handwriting is so personal – send a box of stationary and some stamped and addressed envelopes. Add a hand-drawn picture, a riddle, a joke.



A resource of the Australian Catholic Marriage and Family Council for the Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life.

CATHOLIC GRANDPARENTS ASSOCIATION (CGA)

Its mission is 'to help grandparents pass on the faith and keep prayer at the heart of family life'.

For more information on how to join, or to start a branch of the Australian Chapter of the Catholic Grandparents Association in your parish, contact the Sydney Archdiocesan Life, Marriage and Family Centre (02 9390 5283) or contact the Australian Catholic Marriage & Family Council (02 9349 1710).

Grandparents Great Vocation



EACH OF US HAS THE PRIME VOCATION TO LOVE. FOR GRANDPARENTS IT IS LIVED OUT IN A PARTICULAR WAY.

UNIQUE VOCATION

Each grandparent's relationship with each and every grandchild is different and irreplaceable. The unique vocation of each grandparent is to enrich this relationship with their love.

VOCATION OF PRESENCE

Grandparents love to give presents. But their most valuable gift is their presence – guiding but not dictating, helping but

not taking over. Of course it doesn't always work out that way but through it all is their particular love for each grandchild - a constant work in progress.

VOCATION OF BELONGING

Grandparents have grown up in a family and then as parents created their own. Now, with their memories they create a network that spans five generations, the two behind them and the two that follow.

THE REAL STORIES BEHIND YOUR FAMILY HISTORY

'How good is the encouragement that [the elderly are] able to give the youth in search of faith and the meaning of life! It is truly the mission of grandparents, the vocation of the elderly.' (Pope Francis)

There are endless opportunities to do this, eg:

Share conversationally ...

about God's presence, eg comments like, 'What a blessing!', 'Thank you, Lord', 'God bless', or praising God on seeing a sunset or a beautiful flower.

Celebrate...

with creative ways the wonderful events of the liturgical calendar, the cycle of seasons, feast days, baptism anniversaries.

Be joyful...

eg reflect daily on a paragraph of Pope Francis' 'The Joy of the Gospel'.

WHEN GRANDCHILDREN DON'T 'PRACTISE THE FAITH'

The loss of faith practice of grandchildren can be a deep source of sorrow.

Pray. Pray with trust daily for each grandchild by name.

Tell grandchildren you are praying for them, especially that they come to know the love of Jesus.

Pray for forgiveness for the times you haven't been the best grandparent.

Preach without words – be the kind of person you want your grandchildren to become: trustworthy, respectful, generous.

Share your joy in the good that others do, eg caring for the poor, respecting the dignity of each person.



THE REAL STORIES BEHIND YOUR FAMILY HISTORY

Children love stories – especially *their own unique family* stories.

These build up their awareness of their origins and who they are and where they fit into this world.

What a huge resource of family stories – all very personal memories!

In computer-speak, they are an interactive program for knowing yourself better, downloaded with something that no mobile app can give: love – endless gigabytes of it.



IN THE WORDS OF GRANDCHILDREN:

"My Grandma helped me make a cake and didn't get mad when I spilled the flour."

"Grandpa comes to all my footie games and helps me practise my passing"

"He helps me learn to tie my shoe laces and never gets angry"

"My Gran takes us to the park and never uses her mobile while we are there"

"Grandma is very beautiful – and she smells good"

"My Pop sent me bits of a photo all cut up with a note saying 'Today's puzzle: Guess who loves you!'. I put it all together and found it was a photo of him."

Old age is a vocation. It is not yet the moment "to rest on one's oars." This period of life is different from the preceding. We also must somehow "invent it for ourselves" (Pope Francis)

TIPS FOR GRANDPARENTS:

- Create opportunities for 'presence'. Conversations often flow unpredictably when you are side by side doing something together. You can't program conversations but you can create situations that may lead to them, driving them to sport, clearing up after a meal, etc.
- Enter their world. Watching movies with teenagers usually provides endless opportunities to chat about issues and how movies can manipulate attitudes.
- Be a sounding board. Don't underestimate the significance of emotional upsets in childrens' lives. Empathise and share from your own experience of life's ups and downs.
- Games. Keep a selection of card and board games. They can bridge the generations, provide fun and help everyone to learn how to handle competition while looking after each other.