



The joy of being Grandparents

By Carmel and Tony Smith

“I am with you always” is the theme announced by Pope Francis earlier this year for the inaugural World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly. This special day will be held annually on the fourth Sunday of July around the feast of Saints Anne and Joachim, the grandparents of Jesus.

What comforting words they are, “I am with you always!”

Our faith has always been an important part of our journey, both of us growing up in faith-filled Catholic homes and as a couple we have continued to try and pass on this faith to our children and now to our grandchildren.

We don’t know much about St Anne and St Joachim but legend tells us that after years of childlessness an angel appeared to tell Anne and Joachim that they would have a child.

Anne promised to dedicate the child to God. Mary was raised in a Jewish family, faithful to God and religious traditions, so when asked, she was willing to say yes to God’s request to be the mother of Jesus. Anne and Joachim would really have had to rely on their deep faith in God when Mary told them she was expecting a baby!

As proud grandparents our love is unconditional, and we are filled with hope and trust that God will guide our grandchildren to make the right decisions in life. We will never know what effect our actions, good or bad, have in their future lives but we leave it in God’s hands.

The pressures of life on families today and the disillusionment of so many with the Church, has reduced Mass attendance drastically, including our children. We try not to stress about this as they are good people who are very much in tune with Social Justice issues. We strive to “let go and let God”. Only He can see the future.

Covid has certainly put restrictions on our interaction with our grandchildren but in this world of technology we can keep in touch. Gathering in small groups means better communication for us oldies with hearing difficulties!

We thank God with gratitude for the joy-filled gift of being a grandparent, for our good health and giving us the time to be available for school pick up, walks, listening, reading books, helping with homework, playing games and cards, going on holidays, camping, enjoying musical recitals, sharing family stories, sometimes taking to Mass, encouraging grace before meals and the list goes on. We love to share in their special milestones and celebrations.

We wonder if Anne and Joachim were able to enjoy their grandson, Jesus, as much as we enjoy ours.

Covid restrictions have given us the opportunity to stop and to be still. “Come away and rest awhile”. We can reflect on our “renewed vocation” as grandparents as we grow older. We ask the Holy Spirit to be with us as we share with our grandchildren our dreams of a better world full of justice, peace and respect. We pray our ongoing commitment of giving and sharing and reaching out to others through the St Vincent de Paul Society and Parish activities will bear fruit.

May Saints Joachim and Anne, as faith filled grandparents of Jesus, be an inspiration to us all.

Carmel and Tony Smith have lived in the same home in Belrose for their 55 years of marriage. They are members of Frenchs Forest Parish, St Martin de Porres community in Davidson. They have four children plus a son who died aged 7 hours and 11 grandchildren. Apart from their many Parish ministries, Tony and Carmel are involved in the St Vincent de Paul Society. They are Poppy and Apple (Granny Smith) to their grandchildren.