



# GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

*from an International Adult Faith Formation Best Practices Study*

#65 - May 2016

## Best Practices: Support for Grandparents (Part II)

Last month we began a look at ways that parishes and (arch)dioceses are supporting today's grandparents. In this issue we will specifically look at:

- Grandparents raising grandchildren
- Grandparents passing on the faith to their grandchildren

As we continue this exploration, it's interesting to note some thoughts from an article by Joanna Moorhead in the June 18, 2015 issue of *The Tablet* (a Catholic international weekly review published in London):

“For a long time scientists puzzled over why grandmothers are actually here. The usual rule of natural selection is to write off females once they've passed child-rearing age. ... It's only in two species, human beings and whales, that creatures live beyond that point. ... So what, the scientists all wondered, is this all about? It took them a while to figure it out, though I suspect any grandmother or grandchild could have quite hurriedly hazarded a guess in the right direction. Grandmothers are here, it seems, because they are clever and wise and they steer humanity in a direction that tends to favour a better future.”

“Old age in particular is a time of grace...in which the Lord calls us to preserve and transmit the faith. Grandparents, especially have a capacity to understand the most difficult of situations and when they pray for these situations, their prayer is strong and powerful.

To grandparents, who have been blessed to see their children's children, to them are entrusted an even greater task ... to share with simplicity their wisdom and the same faith is a most precious legacy. Blessed are those families who have grandparents nearby!

The grandfather is twice a father and the grandmother is twice a mother.”

- Pope Francis, September 28, 2014



## Grandparents Passing on the Faith

In talking with many people – in preparation for these issues on support for grandparents – several echoed the experience of Maryann Walkuski, Parish Catechetical Leader, St. Anselm Parish, Dearborn, MI: “It seems that more and more grandparents are bringing their grandchildren to faith formation sessions and to weekly liturgy.”

One international group has as their mission: “to help grandparents pass on the faith and to keep prayer at the heart of family life.”

The Catholic Grandparents Association has its roots in the Walsingham Annual Grandparents Pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady, Walsingham, Norfolk, England, inspired by an idea to honor and thank St. Joachim and St. Anne, parents of Mary, grandparents of Jesus and all grandparents for all they have done for us throughout the ages particularly in the passing on of the faith.

The association was officially launched at the third National Grandparents Pilgrimage in Knock, Ireland in 2009. It came to the United States the same year: the Inaugural Grandparents Pilgrimage in Palm Beach, Florida on September 26<sup>th</sup> and is now throughout the world.

Catherine Wiley, grandmother and founder of the Catholic Grandparents Association says, “Grandparents have no agenda; they simply want the best for their grandchildren. ... Grandparents' vital contribution to the family, the Church and society was never as important as now. ... This is probably the most important job we will ever have and, for many of us, it may be our last. It is one from which we can never retire, so let us do our best. We owe it to our grandchildren.”

The international website is:

<http://www.catholicgrandparentsassociation.org/>

The following site, <http://www.catholicgrandparentsassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Grand-News-Autumn-2014.pdf>, especially pages 3 through 5, give an overview of some of the events and activities of groups in various parts of the world.

## Prayer for Grandparents

Lord Jesus,  
you were born of the Virgin Mary,  
the daughter of Saints Joachim and Anne.  
Look with love on grandparents the world over.

Protect them! They are a source of enrichment  
for families, for the church, and for all society.

Support them! As they grow older,  
may they continue to be for their families  
strong pillars of Gospel faith,  
guardian of noble domestic ideals,  
living treasures of sound religious traditions.

Make them teachers of wisdom and courage,  
that they that may pass on to future generations the fruits  
of their mature human and spiritual experience.

Lord Jesus,  
help families and society  
to value the presence and roles of grandparents.  
May they never be ignored or excluded,  
but always encounter respect and love.  
Help them to live serenely and to feel welcomed  
in all the years of life which you give them.

Mary, Mother of all the living,  
Keep grandparents constantly in your care,  
accompany them on their earthly pilgrimage,  
and by your prayers, grant that all families  
may one day be reunited in our heavenly homeland,  
where you await all humanity  
for the great embrace of life without end. Amen!

- Pope Benedict XVI, written in 2008  
specifically for the Catholic Grandparents Association



## Grandparents Passing on the Faith – another chapter of the Catholic Grandparents Association

Celine Latorry, a grandmother from St. Margaret of Scotland Parish, St. Clair Shores, MI, has always had a devotion to Saints Anne and Joachim. A couple years ago, Celine read about the Catholic Grandparents Association and began a chapter at her parish, the first chapter in Michigan.

The group of grandparents from St. Margaret's – and surrounding areas – meet once a month, the fourth Wednesday after the morning liturgy. During these gatherings, the schedule includes:

- Praying the *Prayer for Grandparents* composed by Pope Benedict XVI
- Having a speaker or group discussion centered around a theme of spirituality, grandparenting, family and faith, etc.
- A sharing among the group around a specific question, such as:
  - How did your grandparents affect your life?
  - What does prayer mean to you? Does it influence your daily life?

These presentations and conversations often spark ideas of things to share with their children and grandchildren.

In addition to the monthly gathering:

- Each grandparent has received a Prayer Journal. They are encouraged to keep a section for each grandchild – placing photos, listing their desires and needs as well as their favorite things and prayer request.
- They have created a Grandparent-Grandchild Garden at the parish, a place where they can work in nature together, a quiet place for them to come to together.

Some of the plans for the future include:

- Cultural Sunday: an opportunity to share their – and other - cultures with their grandchildren
- A day of reflection focusing on Saints Anne and Joachim, followed by a family picnic
- A pilgrimage to St. Anne de Beaupre' in Quebec



## Some Resources

- *The Power of a Godly Grandparent: Leaving a Spiritual Legacy* by Stephen and Janet Bly
- *101 Ways to Love Your Grandkids: Sharing Your Life and God's Love* by Bob Barnes and Emilie Barnes
- *Please Pass the Faith: The Art of Spiritual Grandparenting* by Elsie Rempel

“...do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and their children after them.”

- Deuteronomy 4:9



## Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

There is a growing realization – among those in catechetics and pastoral ministry – of the needs of grandparents who are raising grandchildren. Susan Dazey, from St. Patrick Parish, Dubuque, Iowa, comments: “More and more grandparents are raising or help raise their grandchildren. Even if there is no official programming, parishes need to be aware of this and at least offer some support.”

Terry Humenik, pastoral associate at the Catholic Community of St. Jude, DeWitt, MI, responded to my request for ideas of what is being done: “I wish I had something to contribute but am certainly looking forward to what others share. We do have a few grandparents in the parish who have custody of their grandchildren for various reasons and we support them as we do other parents bringing children to religious education and sacramental preparation programs but we really don't have anything that celebrates or honors grandparent as a whole group who add so much to their grandchildren's lives. Many scriptures direct us to care for our elders and honor their wisdom. In these days when people live longer and can be a part of their grandchildren's lives it is important to recognize their contributions and gifts.”

Because of this realization, here's a few (of the many) things that are being offered:

- Mary George, director of evangelization at St. Rita of Cascia Parish, Chicago, IL, shares about a group that formed as they identified the need in the parish: “Many grandparents are supporting unmarried adult children who are pregnant or have a child. Perhaps they are parenting the grandchild themselves. We provide a support group for the grandparents called G.R.A.P.E.S. (Grandparents Receiving and Providing Encouragement and Support).

The group meets monthly to share struggle and stories. We also provide information about educational opportunities for their single parent child, bring in speakers to talk about how to file income tax, local services available for the child and the grandchild, etc.”

- Transfiguration Parish in Marietta, GA, offers a support group for GRANDparents raising GRANDchildren which meets twice a month.

“Young people need something stable to hang on to –  
a culture connection,  
a sense of their own past,  
a hope for their own future.  
Most of all, they need what grandparents  
can give them.”

- Jay Kesler



## A Resource for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

As I was gathering resources and practices for these three issues on support for grandparents, Gail Godfrey from Brisbane, Australia (whose program you will read about in next month's issue) sent me a remarkable and supportive booklet: *Grandma, You Make Me Want to Touch the Sky! Help for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren* by Paul Harnett, Sally Frye and Andrew Wood. The chapters include:

- Raising a Grandchild
- Two Ways of Coping

- Caring for Yourself
- Soothing the Pains from the Past: Helping Grandchildren Heal
- The Challenges of Adolescents
- Working with the School

The booklet is available from:

Time for Grandparents  
PO Box 2376  
Chermside Central Q. 4032  
Brisbane, Australia



## Several Online Sites which Provide Help and Ideas for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren:

- Grandparents raising grandchildren  
<http://www.usa.gov/Topics/Grandparents.shtml>
- Grandparents raising grandchildren  
<http://www.raisingyourgrandchildren.com/>
- When you're a parent ... again  
<http://www.grandparents.com/family-and-relationships/caring-for-children/whenyoureparentagain>
- Grandparents as Parents  
<http://www.helpguide.org/articles/grandparenting/grandparents-as-parents.htm>
- Grandparents Raising Grandchildren  
<http://www.aarp.org/relationships/friends-family/info-08-2011/grandfamilies-guide-getting-started.html>
- Creating a Family Childcare Agreement  
<http://www.a-better-child.org/page/888950>

“Grandparents are a delightful blend of laughter,  
caring deeds,  
wonderful stories,  
and love.

- *Author unknown*



## The Role of a Grandparent

As we close this issue, some thoughts from Patricia H. Holmes, Ohio State University Extension, Preble County:

“The experience of being a grandparent is unique for everyone. Grandparents often speak of the joy of being with their grandchildren. At the same time, grandchildren appreciate the fact their grandparents love them no matter what. For some grandparents, seeing grandchildren may be difficult due to divorce, remarriage, or geographic distance.

Whether you are a grandparent, step-grandparent, or a grandparent raising a grandchild, you are an important person in your grandchild's life.

## Grandparenting Styles

Although grandparents may express similar feelings about their experiences, the styles in which they grandparent can be different. Each person brings their unique self to the experience of grandparenting. Factors which may influence grandparenting styles include: culture, ethnicity, gender, race, family traditions, family structure, and personal history. Researchers who study grandparenting have identified various styles. These styles include family historian/living ancestor, the nurturer, the mentor, the role model, the playmate, the wizard, and the hero.

- ***Family Historian/Living Ancestor***

As the family historian/living ancestor, grandparents share the stories of the past. These stories may be about relatives, important events, family traditions, the grandparent's own childhood or the grandchild's parent growing up. As the stories of the family are passed on, the grandchild gains a positive image of aging and their place within the family. Grandparents and their

stories can be the "glue" which keeps the family together and contributes to family identity.

- ***Nurturer, Mentor, and Role Model***

Grandparents who serve as nurturers provide encouragement and support to the family in times of crisis. Whether serving as the babysitter, the chauffeur, the confidante, or the caregiver, the challenge is to find a delicate balance between encouragement and control. Grandparents mentor by teaching, sharing skills and talents, providing advice and listening to their grandchildren. As a role model grandparents provide grandchildren with examples of hard work and family loyalty. You may not realize the influence you have on your grandchildren until you hear them repeat something you said or imitate something you have done.

- ***Playmate, Wizard, and Hero***

The next three styles invoke the tender emotions of grandparents. Many grandparents thrill at the opportunity to be a crony or playmate with their grandchild. They speak with enthusiasm of time spent reading books, playing games, and sharing mutual interests with their grandchildren. Grandparents also play the magical role of wizard. At young ages, grandchildren are mesmerized by tricks and will stare wide-eyed asking "how did you do that?" truly believing grandpa pulled a coin out of their ear. What a fun time to be a grandparent!

Finally, grandparents also fill the role of hero. Although you may think of the word "hero" in a different way, grandparents who always listen and who are consistently available to provide support are heroes. Grandparents may be the one a child turns to when they carry a burden too big to share with anyone else or they may serve as an emotional safety net to an older child when making an important decision.

### ***The Joys of Grandparenting***

Grandchildren bring love, energy, optimism, laughter, activity, youthfulness, and purpose to the lives of grandparents. At the same time, grandparents provide maturity, knowledge, stability, and unconditional love to the lives of their grandchildren. Think for a moment about your own grandparents. Which of these roles did they fulfill in your family? Whether your experiences with grandparents were positive or negative, even if you never had the opportunity to know your grandparents, you can make a difference in the lives of your grandchildren. Take the time to develop a

grandparenting style that best fits you. Then build a relationship with your grandchildren that you both can enjoy!"

“Grandparents are the living memory of the family.  
They pass on the faith; they transmitted the faith to us.”

- Pope Francis, September 26, 2015 in Philadelphia

### **Some GEMS Wonderings**

- We just explored some of the roles of grandparents. Are there other people – in the lives of families, in the lives of our parishes – who take on some of the grandparenting roles for today’s children? Single people; other family members; older members of the parish?

What might we, in our parishes, do to acknowledge them? to support “the grandparent hearts” of our many people?

- As parish leaders, can we encourage children to “interview” their grandparents, recording the stories? For instance:
  - At First Eucharist time, ask grandparents about their First Communion.
  - At Thanksgiving time, ask grandparents what they remember about Thanksgiving over the years.
  - After a session on God’s presence in difficult times, ask grandparents what got them through the hard times.

Check: [www.storycorps.org](http://www.storycorps.org).



### **More to come**

More ideas – for the support of and the involvement of grandparents with their grandchildren - will continue in our next issue. Thanks, everyone, for sharing so many things that work – opportunities and resources that respond to the life needs of today’s adults.





## Adding New Luster to an Old Gem

In [GEMS #11](#), we explored Scripture study through an online opportunity.

Some continuing thoughts on using Facebook for adult faith formation:

- There are three types of Facebook Groups:
  - Public (Open): everyone can see the Group, find it in a search and make posts
  - Closed: everyone can see the Group, but only members can see (and make) posts
  - Secret: only members can see the Group, see and make posts. To learn more about this type of group, read the [How to Use Secret Facebook Groups](#). As you read this post, allow your imagination to consider how a Facebook group could be used in your adult faith formation setting.
- Some tips:
  - Create a Facebook group, describing the group and choose and image/photo that will represent the group.
  - Two weeks before the opportunity, send an email inviting the adults who have previously responded and/or indicated on your parish survey that they are interested in adult formation opportunities.
  - One day after the email is sent, send a "tweet" and "text message" to invite your parishioners to read the email message from you.
  - Post the scripture readings or a link to the content (articles, videos, etc.) that you are going to use.
  - Once the conversation begins, check the posts at least once daily and comment back. This is a place for a simple online conversation and sharing.



## Golden Nuggets from You

“What a wonderful GEM ([GEMS #38](#))! While I always find these monthly newsletters interesting and helpful, I was very interested to see the variety of movies and formats, and the possibility of these as evangelization tools, for parishioners, as well as those not of our faith. I really appreciate all the resources you share with us.”

- Catherine Cornue, Diocesan Director of Faith Formation, Syracuse, NY



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Past issues of **GEMS** are archived at [www.janetschaeffler.com](http://www.janetschaeffler.com)

Additional ideas for Adult Faith Formation Planning and Best Practices can be found at:

- *The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation*  
[http://www.lifelongfaith.com/store/p25/The\\_Seasons\\_of\\_Adult\\_Faith\\_Formation.html](http://www.lifelongfaith.com/store/p25/The_Seasons_of_Adult_Faith_Formation.html)
- *The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation website*  
<http://www.lifelongfaith.com/2015-adult-faith-formation-symposium.html>
- *40 Tips: Getting Started in Adult Faith Formation*  
<http://www.ecatechist.com/ebooks/> (scroll down)
- *Parish Leadership for Improved Adult Catechesis*  
<http://store.pastoralplanning.com/iboplbeprfor.html>