

Dear Parishioners,

This Sunday, 25 July 2021, has been designated by Pope Francis, as the First World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly (Ord Time 17). It coincides with the Feast of Saints Joachim and Anne, grandparents of Jesus, on July 26.

Occurring in the Year of Amoris Laetitia Family 2021-22 with the theme, 'I am with you always', the day draws attention to the vital role grandparents and the elderly play in our communities and in the mission of the Church.

Grandparents are of unique importance in family life generally and particularly in the transmission of faith through the generations. They provide children with a stability and sense of identity and continuity. Many grandparents are also significant caregivers in the lives of their grandchildren, sometimes even the primary caregivers.

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 is a two-way street! To young children, their grandparents are simply beautiful, and they tell them so; they do not 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.

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.

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. May we always honor and respect our grandparents and always keep them in our prayers.

God Bless,

Fr. Scott

*From the
Pastor's
Desk*

