



# CATHOLIC GRANDPARENTS ASSOCIATION

## GRANDPARENTS NEWS

*Regional Update for Ireland*



**Catherine Wiley & her Grandson**  
testify to Pope Francis on the vocation  
of Grandparents worldwide.

**The Blessings of Long Life –  
Encounter with Grandparents and  
Elderly – Rome**

December  
2014

*Helping Grandparents to pass on the faith & to keep prayer at the heart of family life*

# A Message from the Founder

Dear Members & Grandparents

At this most special time of our year we bring you heartfelt wishes of faith, hope and love. The work CGA has continued to grow across the world and we thank you for your continued and steadfast support. It means so much to me personally to know that you are supporting the Mission and Purpose of CGA through your prayers, your valuable time and your resources.



We are ever grateful for the help and encouragement of our Members, Priests, Bishops, Cardinals and, in particular, the Pontifical Council for the Family. The Vocation of grandparents is a noble vocation and we do all we can to support them to 'Keep Prayer at the Heart of Family and to Pass on the Faith'.



The future of the CGA is reliant upon the voluntary donations we receive and for this we are ever thankful. The CGA exists to support the vocation of Grandparents. The work grows, please continue to help in any way you can.

May I take this opportunity to wish you and all your families the Peace and Joy of Christmas.

*May St Joachim and St Anne bless you, your children and your Grandchildren.*

*There is a candle lighting for your intentions  
at the Shrines of our Lady of Walsingham, and  
Knock in Ireland*

*Catherine Wiley*

Catherine Wiley

Grandmother and founder  
of the Catholic Grandparents Association

**"As I remember your tears, I  
long to see you, that I may be  
filled with joy. I am reminded  
of your sincere faith, a faith  
that dwelt first in your  
grandmother Lois and your  
mother Eunice and now, I am  
sure, dwells in you as well."**

**- Second Timothy 2:4-5**

## Spread The Word!

Do you realise the **POWER**  
of being a Grandparent?

Are you aware of how  
you **INFLUENCE**  
younger people?

Simple things like blessing  
yourself in public, saying  
the Angelus, Grace before  
Meals and using the Holy  
Water Font are minor Faith  
gestures that could have  
major results.



@  
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## Catholic Grandparents Association testify to Pope Francis on the vocation of Grandparents worldwide.

### The Blessings of Long Life – Encounter with Grandparents and Elderly – Rome

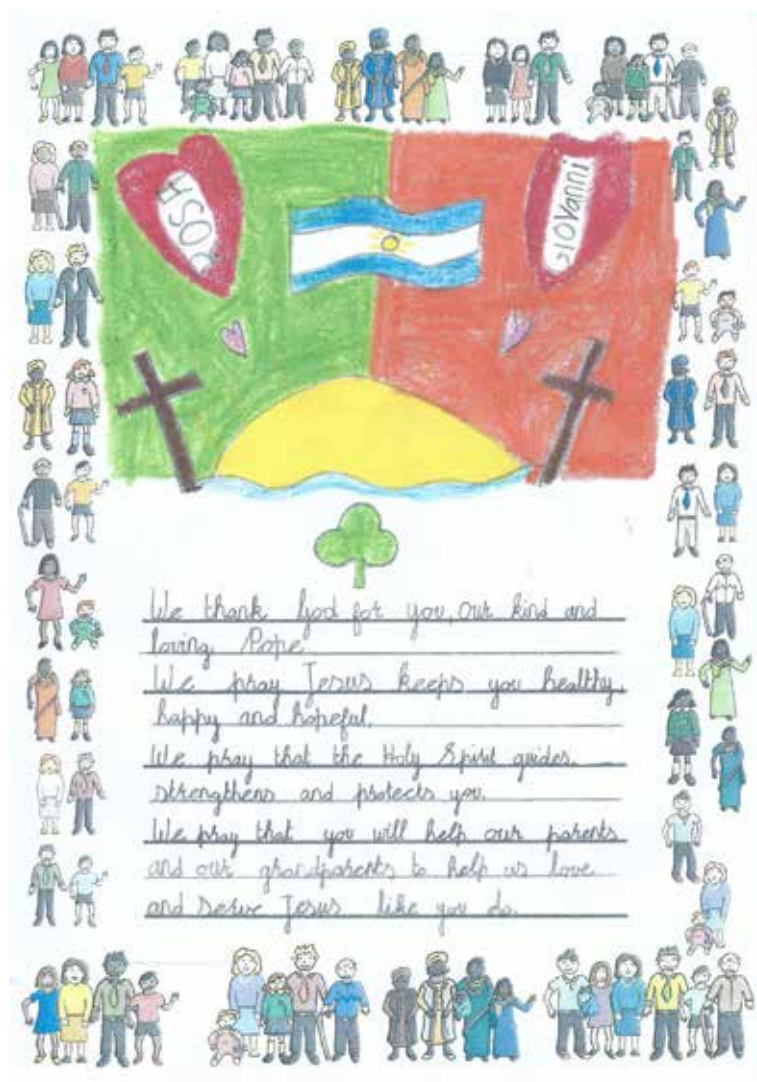
## 12 year old, English School Boy gives testimony to Holy Father Pope Francis

Catholic Grandparents Association Founder Catherine Wiley gave testimony to Pope Francis as part of the weekend celebrations in St Peter's Square Rome on Sunday 28th September.

In front of an estimated 80,000 people who had come to the Rome as part of this special event organised by the Pontifical Council for the Family, she spoke of the important vocation of grandparents and their courage and conviction in passing on the faith. She also had the opportunity to personally thank Pope Emeritus Benedict, who was making a rare personal appearance at the event, for the Universal Prayer for Grandparents which he had written specially for the Association in 2008.

Catherine was accompanied by her grandson Tom Slater who is 12 years old and a student at Ardingly College in the South of England. Speaking in Italian, Tom said of the important lessons in prayer that he had learnt from his grandparents and how these had helped him in his life. He also posed a question to Pope Francis asking him, 'You are like a grandfather to us, help us to understand how important the role of grandparents is today'.

Both Catherine and Tom received a blessing from Pope Francis.



Prayer presented by Catherine Wiley,  
Founder of the CGA on  
Sunday September 28th 2014 to His  
Holiness Pope Francis.  
From Rang 5/5th Class,  
Miss Galwey, Ballyroan Boy's School,  
Dublin, Ireland

*We thank God for you, our kind  
and loving pope,  
We pray Jesus keeps you healthy,  
happy and hopeful,  
We pray that the Holy Spirit guides,  
strengthens and protects you,  
We pray that you will help our  
parents and our grandparents to  
help us love and serve Jesus  
like you do.*



## CATHOLIC GRANDPARENTS ADDRESS TO POPE FRANCIS 28TH SEPTEMBER 2014 - "The Blessing of Long Life" ROME

Dearest Holy Father my name is Catherine Wiley, I come from Ireland.  
My husband Stewart and I founded the Catholic Grandparents Association.  
The Association for Catholic Grandparents grew, thanks to the Special Prayer for Grandparents which was written for us by Pope Benedict 16th, Thank you Dear Pope Benedict. Graci, Graci, Graci

This is my grandson Tom, from England.  
We bring you love and prayers from grandparents all over the world.  
For us the family is the first place in which we pass on faith. Today, our children are married and we have ten beautiful grandchildren who we love very much. Our parental vocation is not over, but has grown by embracing the wonderful call to be grandparents.

Like Jesus grandparents, Joachim and Anne, we too want to be examples of faith for our families, teaching them to put God in the first place, to love our neighbour, to forgive and not to be ashamed to ask for forgiveness. We have realised that to transmit faith we need courage and determination.

As grandparents, we have a unique opportunity: to sow faith which with time will bring fruit in abundance.  
Let us teach our Grandchildren to pray.



Pictured: Pope Francis with Archbishop Paglia with Catherine Wiley - Founder of CGA with her Grandson 12 year old Tom.

**Tom:**  
Hello Pope Francis,  
Dear Pope, my grandparents have taught and encouraged me to pray, always, but once, when I was truly frightened whilst on the plane, their example of prayer to God has really inspired me. Pope Francis, you too were a boy who has listened to the grandparents' wisdom. Today you are for us, the children, like a granddad and we love you very much. Help us to make people understand how important the grandparents are in the family.

Speaking after the event, Catherine Wiley said: *'It was honestly one of the most wonderful moments of my life for me and for my family, and the most important moment for the life and development of the Catholic Grandparents Association throughout the world. We feel very, very blessed and privileged for this opportunity to create awareness for the vocation of Grandparents to pass on the faith to their Grandchildren.'*





# Pope Francis' Meeting with Grandparents and Elderly

**Peter and Mary Tiernan, Navan Branch Report for Rome Sept 28th, 2014**

Truly it was a rare, unexpected and privileged experience to find ourselves in the presence of two living Popes - Pope Francis and Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. This significant event occurred when we attended, together with 30 to 40,000 other pilgrims, the meeting of Grandparents and elderly with Pope Francis in St. Peter's Square on Sunday September 28th, 2014. An added bonus was that we did not have to endure long queues to gain entry as we had reserved seats right up beside the altar.

The whole occasion took six hours with the first two hours taken up with various preparations being made for the ceremonies, such as dressing the altar, the Papal Guards taking up their positions, the Cardinals, Archbishops, Bishops and Priests from around the world taking their seats to concelebrate Mass with Pope Francis and Seminarians rehearsing their duties as they relate to the ceremonies. All this took place on the right of the altar while with other invited guests we took up our seats on the left between the Papal Throne and the altar. During this busy bustling time the sun shone down on St. Peter's Square which was packed with pilgrims. Throughout this period of preparation we were entertained by Andrea Bocelli, other singers and a choir. The excitement of expectancy was palpable. The ushers had their hands full too keeping us from seeking out vantage points for photographs. Before Mass began we were greatly surprised to see Pope Benedict pass quietly by to take his seat a short distance away. His frailty only allowed him to remain until after the addresses were made to Pope Francis.



The ceremonies began with a number of elderly people giving witness. For example an Iraqi couple spoke of the religious persecution in their country, while others spoke of their involvement in charitable or social activities either as beneficiaries or as contributors. Then came Catherine and her 12 year old Grandson, Tom. Introducing herself in English as co-founder, with her husband Stewart, of the Catholic Grandparents Association, she identified herself as being from Ireland. Continuing in Italian she emphasised the role of Grandparents in passing on the faith to families, citing Jesus' Grandparents Joachim and Anne as examples. Significantly, Pope Francis returned to this theme in his homily when he stressed the importance of the witness of faith of the elderly.. And Tom, in his address in Italian also, likened the Pope to a granddad who is loved very much. He made his words so personal and credible by reminding Pope Francis that he too was a boy who would have listened to his Grandparents. Finally he asked Pope Francis to help people to understand how important Grandparents are in the family. Their addresses were warmly received. Catherine got acknowledgement from Pope Emeritus Benedict when she referred to his composing the Grandparent's prayer.

As we exited St Peter's, a bit exhausted but jubilant, we happened to meet a group of Grandparents from Malta who were celebrating their foundation's first anniversary. No doubt there will be further contact.

We deliberately chose a hotel within a few minutes walking distance of St. Peter's which facilitated our attending Mass each day in the Basilica as well as savouring the atmosphere of St. Peter's Two Masses in particular made a special impression on us. In the case of one, attended by special needs people, the similarity between those attending (carers and the cared) and those we know at home are identical, despite differences in language and culture. In contrast, the second was a Mass for 41 students from the North American Pontifical College who were being ordained deacons. That was an enormous positive experience because we were witnessing an advanced step in the continuation of Priesthood.

So what were our thoughts as we headed home? Certainly very glad we were there was one. To be part of a group of 30 to 40,000 like minded people, in spite of difference in language and culture, was enormously affirming and highlighted the universality of the Church to which we belong. And yes we left more firmly committed as Grandparents to pass on our faith.





# *In Loving Memory*



Father Philip Graystone

**Fr. Philip Graystone** died peacefully in Dorrington House Care Home at 11.30pm on Monday 15th September, the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows.

On Monday 29th September, the body was received into the Slipper Chapel at Walsingham. The funeral followed on the 30th September. Concelebrated Requiem Mass in the Chapel of reconciliation, followed by burial in the grounds of St Mary's Church, Little Walsingham.

The funeral was beautiful in its simplicity and a true celebration of the life of a very special priest. Fr Philip always said he could 'do more for us in heaven than he could on Earth'. We thank him for his life and his guidance and we now have a strong intercessionary in heaven.



Luke Dolan

## **Ireland's oldest man has died at the age of 108.**

Luke Dolan, from Cloonfree, Strokestown, Co Roscommon, passed away on Sunday at Cloverhill nursing home. He had lived at home on the family farm until he was over 100. A keen GAA man, he attributed his longevity to a boiled egg every day, plenty of sugar in his tea and a devoted wife. He was also off the cigarettes for almost 50 years, having kicked the habit at 60.

One of seven children, he had one sister, Mary-Kate, who had lived to the age of 106. A father of seven himself, Mr Dolan's wife Peggy passed away in 2005 at the age of 85.

Sunday 9th November 2014

### **Mickie Berry,**

Johns Row, Westport. Beloved husband of Pauline, much loved father of Eamonn, Ann (Burns), Dolores (Brady), Frankie (Moyle), Paula (Crumlish) and Michelle (Mulleady) dearly loved grandfather and great-grandfather

Mick Berry

## **Gerard Gibson**

son of James and Catherine Gibson. Brother of Kenneth, Marie-Clare & Fiona.

He was 49 years old and died on 7th November following a tragic accident at home where he lived with his parents.

Gerard suffered from retinitis pigmentosa which progressively affected his field of vision.

Requiem Mass for Gerard was held at St. Ninian's Church, Dundee.

He was dearly loved by all his family and his many friends.

## **Sean Staunton (former Editor of the Mayo News)**

Deepest condolences to the family of Sean Stanton, his wife Sal, daughters Reine, Leone and Sarah, his brothers Eamon and Laurence, Grandchildren, nephews and nieces. A great family man, grandfather and friend of CGA. May he rest in the peace of the Lord



# Grandparent's Day

On September 17th 2014 one of our local primary schools, Scoil Naomh Eoin, held their first Grandparents Day. An open invitation was given to the wider community and two members of the local branch of the Catholic Grandparent's Association attended.

The Grandparents arrived at the school, signed in and collected their grandchild who took them on a tour of the school.

Two of the senior pupils were asked to take us around and we were very impressed at how exceptionally well they completed their task. It was a pleasure to experience modern education in action and observe how enthusiastic the children were with all aspects of the curriculum. In addition to the core subjects being taught the school has



the benefit of a well equipped computer room, an inviting library, and a sensory garden complete with a 'bug hotel'. There was also a fruit and vegetable patch for the children to tend. A wonderful display of the childrens' art and craft work was exhibited throughout the school.

The school principal, Ms. Mary Mc Mahon, addressed the gathering and warmly welcomed everyone. She spoke about how important Grandparents were in the lives of the children and invited anybody who could help to enhance the school - life to do so.



The day was such a success that I'm sure it will be the first of many in Scoil Naimh Eoin.

Mary Cartwell

## The Carlow Cathedral Group

are now formed 2 years. We started off very simply, and month by month we grew into a caring and sharing group, getting more confident. We have 15 members. We are helping our Grandchildren to pray their little prayers. During the last year, we visited the schools for Grandparents Day. We had a beautiful Celebration of Mass on the Feast of Sts. Joachim and Anne, 26th of July. We had a full bus for the CGA. Pilgrimage to Knock accompanied my our new Bishop Denis Nulty.

At the moment we are putting together a Programme (with the help of Faith Development Services), to go into 2 Primary schools to teach the children how to say the Rosary, so it's been a busy year.

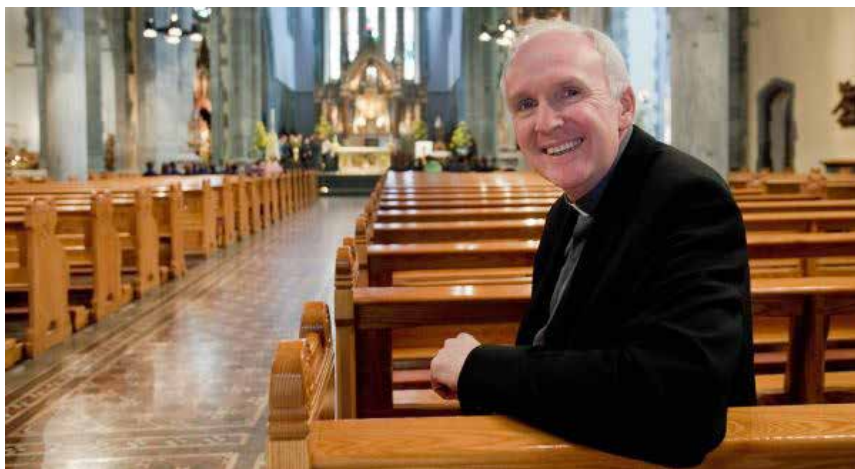


# 9th Annual Pilgrimage at Knock



*Sunday 13th September 2015*

*We are delighted  
to have Bishop  
Brendan Leahy  
as our Chief  
Celebrant for 2015*



## CGA Mornington branch in Mornington, Co. Meath.

Now you can visualize us all! As you can see we are a mixture and delighted that we have two men in our midst! We are really establishing ourselves and now have a Secretary and Treasurer (we collect one euro 'tea money' for expenses).

Our topic for our last meeting was 'The Nativity' and ways of telling stories to young children. It gave me the idea (this am at 7!) that perhaps we could have a display of cribs in our Parish Rooms. Sunday after mass would be best as we have a children's Liturgy group in our parish and they 'entertain' the little ones at 11.30 mass. I need to put it to the meeting.



We had our first meeting on September 23rd. We will now have meetings on the first tuesday of the month taking a break for the summer months.

Back Row (left to right):

Margaret Floody, Raphael Mahon, Maurice Byrne, Maura Byrne, Norine Maher (Chairperson), Bernadette McHugh (Secretary), Anne Burke, Patricia Mooney.

Front Row (left to right);

Eithne Killeen, Bridget Callan (Treasurer), Joe Connolly, Margaret Kelly, Jacinta Coyle, Fr. Willie Cleary (Curate and Spiritual Director).

## **MEMBERS NEEDED**

**for New West Clare branch  
of The Catholic Grandparents Association**

**Please contact: Charlie Lewis**

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[catholicgrandparentsassociation.org](http://catholicgrandparentsassociation.org)





## Diocesan Day Report by Betty Murphy

Maura and myself attended, in The Osprey Hotel, Naas, Co. Kildare, on the 2nd of Oct '14. We had been invited by Fr. John Cummins, ADM of Cathedral Parish Carlow, he had been appointed Vicar of Evangelisation in our Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin, by Bishop Denis Nulty, both of whom are great supporters of CGA and realize how important our Association, is in passing on the faith to our grandchildren.

Representatives of each parish were present on the day. During the Talks people were encouraged to visit the various stands around the room, and Bishop Nulty and Fr. John pointed out that the CGA were present as well. So between Talks people came to us and we spoke about CGA and gave out information and we asked if they would like to give a contact no. and Priest's name and Parish, so we did receive 11 inquiries on the day. It was a very successful day.

I would like to personally thank Maura Printer (Now retired) for the work she has done and for inspiring us to set up our Group In Carlow Cathedral Parish. Also to Catherine Wiley (Founder of CGA) for following through on her Inspiration in setting up the CGA and for helping Grandparents to feel inspired to pass on the Faith to their Grandchildren, and to all who work hard behind the scene in CGA. Grandparents, Lets pray for each other.

*This is Photo of our group and friends from our day at CGA Pilgrimage Knock Sept 14th.*

*Our Grandson Darragh announced to me, very proudly 'Nanny I signed up to be a Mass Server'.*



## Scoil Mhuire gan Smál Report by Betty Murphy

In February, I visited Scoil Mhuire gan Smál, a girls Primary School in Carlow, on Grandparents Day. It was wonderful to see that 150 Grandparents attended. The children conducted the prayer service. and sang for us. We had refreshments, and were invited to look around the school and see everything that was going on.

I had been invited by the teacher to go into 2nd class which was my granddaughter Kate's class, to speak to the children about what it was like when I was going to school, which happened to be the same school. S the teacher said to talk for about 15 minutes.

Well there was great interaction with the children, and I would look at the teacher and ask is that enough but she'd say keep going, so it lasted 1 hour, and then I said to the children, I'm finishing now but I will tell you a little true story. When I was about 7 years of age, (Their age), I asked my Mam for a square of red felt material, she was a dressmaker so I loved the feel of material, so as it happened I saw a pattern of a little Fawn in a Magazine. I asked my mam would she show me how to make it. So I cut out the pattern, I drew around it with a pencil, and then cut out the pieces, she showed me how to stitch the pieces together and gradually this little animal was beginning to form. I stuffed it with bits of material and sewed it closed, then sewed the eye, nose and mouth. Then put on ears. Well I loved this little Fawn. I would show it to my children and then Grandchildren now and again.

So I took the Little Red Fawn out of my bag to show them and they were delighted to see it, and then I said that about 10 year ago I wrote a Poem about making it, and I read the poem for them. The Poem, My Little Red Fawn.

*As I read the last two lines, tears came into my eyes, I was just their age when I made the little Fawn, never thinking I would ever get old, but now here I was a Grandparent. A little child came up to me with a little hankie and said 'Here Mrs Murphy dry your tears. - A very tender moment.*

I look a little worse for the wear,  
But I'm getting on now, you see,  
Though I'm supposed to be one year old,  
I came here in nineteen fifty.

For a fawn is a one year old deer,  
Beside my mother, the doe, I'd stand,  
She and my father, the stag, are long gone,  
But I live in Peter Pan land.

Would you believe, I was once a felt square,  
Left aside as an old rag would be?  
Along came a seven year old, and I'm glad,  
She saw something of what I could be.

She cut out my pieces and sewed them together,  
I gradually took on a new look,  
She stuffed me with pieces of cotton,  
This a whole day nearly took.

All was well, but I couldn't smell,  
Or hear, or see where I was going,  
So she stitched on a nose, eyes and ears,  
Now she can see something for her sewing.

From day one I was cuddled and loved,  
By my new Mam, who made me, you see,  
I never felt lonely if she had to go out,  
I knew she would always bring me.

Well I'm lucky I survived this long,  
And I hope that my end is not near,  
Mam calls me 'Her Little Red Fawn',  
And I call her my 'Old Mother Deer'.

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# Greetings from Navan Branch CGA

Navan C.G.A. is now celebrating four years in existence having been founded in August 2011. Our main aim is to help grandparents pass on the faith to our grandchildren and through our nurturance, love and example encourage our children and grandchildren to keep prayer and faith at the heart of their homes and their lives.

We further, aim to support the many grandparents whose grandchildren are living in other countries because of emigration etc. and those grandparents who may not have contact with their grandchildren because of complex family circumstances.

Our monthly meetings are minuted and we are privileged to have spiritual reflection from Sr Cecilia at our meetings.

Some of the activities we have enjoyed include:

Christmas Celebrations with our grandchildren which have included a candlelit procession to a live crib, carol singing, and stories and illustrations about the first Christmas. Santa has also visited us and the children enjoyed art work and treats.

We took part in the 10am Mass on the Feast of Sts Joachim and Ann and during the offertory procession our grandchildren Aine, Aoife, Daisy Mae and Lucy presented the priest with the 'Grandparent Prayer', the CGA candle and floral tributes for Our Lady's altar. Hugh (11yrs) prayed the 'Grandparents Prayer' from the pulpit.

We have organised 'Summer Garden Parties' 'Treasure Hunt' and 'Pony Rides' for our grandchildren. All have taken place in Bachelors Lodge, Navan thanks to the generosity and kindness of our dedicated Chairperson Maureen Lowry and her family.

Some of our local primary school pupils took part in the 'Children's Prayer Appeal' when teachers and parents facilitated and encouraged the children to compose prayers for their grandparents (living and deceased) to mark 'National Grandparents Pilgrimage to Knock'. We were very moved by the love, and appreciation which the children expressed so openly and honestly for their grandparents, and their art work was superb! It was a great honour for us to bring these prayers with us on the day of the pilgrimage and place them on the altar in the Basilica in Knock.

Some members attended 'Grandparents Appreciation Day' in a local primary schools on 'Grandparents Day' and enjoyed an enthusiastic welcome from both the Principal and the students. It is hoped that this "will be the first of many in Scoil Naomh Eoin"



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Some members also travelled to the Eucharistic Congress in Dublin in June 2013 . We returned home with a great sense of renewal and encouragement from the inspirational presentations of Fr. McHale and Catherine Wiley.

Members provided and local businesses donated 'A food hamper' to the local St. Vincent de Paul society and requested that local grandparents in need be given priority access to the hampers.

We organised a successful 'Coffee Morning' in aid of the National C.G.A. and the local association in The Martry, Navan. We enjoyed the social dimension to the morning and appreciated the courtesy and hospitality of Marie Kenny and her staff. Marie provided the venue free of charge and raffle items were donated by members and local businesses.

Antoinette Moynihan Coordinator for Children's Adoration Nationally addressed one of our meetings. We are very encouraged by the work that Antoinette is doing and wish her continued success in her Ministry.

We were thrilled when Maire Printer took time from her very busy schedule to visit our parish. Maire spoke eloquently and convincingly at all our parish masses about the important role of grandparents, and the aims of the C.G.A nationally and internationally. Her talk was very well received and many welcomed the opportunity to chat with Maire afterwards. She urged as many as possible to join the association.

We published a booklet " The True Meaning of Christmas" which serves as a template for reflection on the spiritual aspect of the Christmas symbols. We have shared this booklet with other branches of the grandparents association.

Maureen Lowry and her daughter Naomi and Peter Tiernan represented us in Rome at the 'The Pilgrimage of the Pontifical Council for the Family to the Tomb of St. Peter to mark the Year of Faith' in 2013.

In 2014 Peter and Mary Tiernan represented us in Rome at the 'Meeting of Pope Francis with the Elderly and Grandparents' .

The highlight of our year is our attendance at the National Grandparents Pilgrimage to Knock in September each year since we were established. We have had a full coach on each occasion and acknowledge the time and effort that Michael Moran has put into the preparation of hymns and prayer for our journey there and back.

We look forward to expanding our membership in 2015.

We wish Maureen Lowry our Chairperson continued recovery to good health from her recent accident, and assure her that she is in our thoughts and prayers.

# You Are A Treasure



*Grandparents are often filled with an inner wisdom as great as that of any university theologian; Pope Francis urges us to cherish their company*

By Neil Xavier O'Donoghue

**I**N THE BOOK *On Heaven and Earth* written with his friend Rabbi Abraham Skorka, Pope Francis says, "I was lucky to know my four grandparents, when the first one died I was 16 years old. All of them gave me something, and I remember them all well and distinctly. **The wisdom of the elderly has helped me a lot, and it is because of this that, now and again, I tend to venerate them.**" In fact, the young Jorge Bergoglio was to spend a lot of time with his grandparents during the formative years of his childhood. Bergoglio tells us in his book of interviews *Pope Francis: Conversations with Jorge Bergoglio*, how he learned the Piedmontese dialect of the Italian language, and so much culture from his grandparents. As was typical for many immigrant families, his parents only spoke Spanish to him and gave more importance to the Argentinian culture of their adopted homeland.

But from his grandparents he learned the traditions of their Italian heritage. Considering that today, as Pope, he is Bishop of Rome and needs to speak Italian every day, these lessons he learned on his grandmother's knee have turned out to be very useful.

## Grandma Rosa

Pope Francis, however, did not simply learn Italian from his grandparents. He also learned so much about the Faith from them. Although his parents were good, practicing Catholics, his grandmother Rosa was the one who transmitted a special love of God to him. She lived around the corner from his family home, and he used to visit her every day after primary school. To this day he carries a letter she wrote to him, telling him how to be a good priest, in the breviary from which he prays his daily prayers. Although the Pope is a very intelligent man, he has a very simple

genuine faith. For example, he has a beautiful devotion to the Blessed Mother. Since becoming Pope he has made many visits to the image of Mary in the Basilica of St. Mary Major, particularly before and after any trip outside Rome. He often recommends that people go to Confession, and he is not afraid to warn them about the devil. **The source of this practical religion, that today is helping so many people, is not the university classes in Theology that he took, but the Faith he learned from his grandparents.**

## Family memory

In his first Sunday Angelus address after his election as Pope, he spoke about a grandmother that he had met after hearing Confessions in a Church in Argentina. Pope Francis shared how he had learned about God's infinite mercy, manifested in particular in Confession from that old lady. He noted that she was filled with an "inner wisdom, focused on God's mercy," and, according to the Pope, this wisdom was as great as any theologian at Rome's famous Gregorian University run by his Jesuit Order.

The Pope has often spoken of the place that grandparents have in a family and in society. He is well aware that in many places grandparents have the challenging task of raising their grandchildren. In his book *Open Mind, Faithful Heart* Bergoglio said that, "a family without memory hardly deserves to be called such. A family that doesn't respect and care for its grandparents, who are its living memory, is a family in disintegration, but the families and people that remember their past are families and peoples with a future." Also, as he said in a homily in November 2013, "Grandparents are a



treasure... the elderly pass on history, doctrine, faith, and they leave them to us as an inheritance." In fact, the Pope said, grandparents "often played a heroic role in handing on the faith in times of persecution. Especially in times past, when fathers and mothers often were not at home or had strange ideas, confused as they were by the fashionable ideologies of the day, grandmothers were the ones who handed on the Faith."

### Precious legacy

Last September Pope Francis had a special day for grandparents. St. Peter's Square was filled with grandparents (many of whom were accompanied by their grandchildren). Having greeted everyone, Pope Francis listened to various testimonies from grandparents from different parts of the world. He was particularly moved by the testimony of an elderly couple from Ebbil, Iraq, who bore witness to their faith in the midst of the many hardships faced by Christians there. Then the Holy Father addressed some words to the grandparents present. He did not suggest that the elderly rest on their laurels, but pointed out that they had important work ahead of them. **"Old age, in particular," said the Pope "is a time of grace, in which the Lord will renew his call: the Lord calls us to preserve and transmit the faith; he calls us to pray, especially to intercede; he calls us to be close to those who may be in need. The elderly — grandparents [especially] — have a capacity to understand the most difficult situations: a great ability — and when they pray for these situations, their prayer is strong. It is powerful."**



## GRANDPA'S TABLE

In his homily at Morning Mass on 19 November 2013, Pope Francis exalted the precious role of the elderly in the Church and in society, and recalled a story he was told as a young child.

"There was a father, mother and their many children, and a grandfather lived with them. He was quite old, and when he was at table eating soup, he would get everything dirty: his mouth, the napkin... it was not a pretty sight! One day the father said that, given what was happening to the grandfather, from that day forward he would eat alone. And so he bought a little table, and placed it in the kitchen. And so the grandfather ate alone in the kitchen while the family ate in the dining room. After some days, the father returned home from work and found one of his children playing with wood. He asked him: 'What are you doing?' to which the child replied: 'I am playing carpenter.' And what are you building?' the father asked. 'A table for you, papa, for when you get old like grandpa.'

This story has stayed with me for a lifetime and done me great good."

Pope Francis' paternal family, from left: grandfather Juan, father Mario José Francisco and grandmother Rosa Margarita.



Once again, the Holy Father stressed the particular mission that grandparents have in passing the Faith to their grandchildren. "To Grandparents, who have been blessed to see their children's children, so there are entrusted an even greater task: to convey the experience of life, the story of a family, the story of a community or even of a people; to share with simplicity their wisdom and the same faith which is the most precious legacy! Blessed are those families who have grandparents nearby! The grandfather is in a way twice a father and the grandmother is twice a mother."

### A wise grandfather

At that meeting with grandparents, Pope Francis was joined by Benedict XVI, the Pope Emeritus. The relationship between these two Popes is in itself a manifestation of Divine Providence. Being Pope is not an easy vocation. So as a special grace from God, Pope Francis, a man who has always treasured the relationship he had with his own grandparents, has

discovered a grandfather figure in the Vatican as he started his new ministry. When Pope Benedict XVI resigned, many people were sceptical on how the Church would cope with a second Pope. Certainly Pope Benedict is a very different person to Pope Francis, but they have a very close relationship. Speaking to journalists on his way back from the World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro, Pope Francis was asked about his relationship to the Pope Emeritus. This was how he described it: **"There is one thing that describes my relationship with Benedict: I have with great affection for him. I have always loved him. For me he is a man of God, a humble man, a man of prayer."** I was so happy when he was elected Pope. Also, when he resigned, for me it was an example of greatness. A great man. Only a great man does that! A man of God and a man of prayer." Then he describes their day to day contact. "Now he is living in the Vatican, and... it's like having your grandfather in the house, a wise grandfather. When families have a grandfather at home, he is venerated, he is loved, he is listened to... if I have a difficulty, or something I don't understand, I can call him on the phone [and ask him] 'Tell me, can I do this?' He is a great man; this is a great man!"

Pope Francis embraces Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI before the September 28 Grandparents' Day Mass at St. Peter's

# Christmas: The Legend of the Poinsettia

Many, many years ago, in a little village in Mexico, there were two children, a brother and a sister, called Maria and Pablo. They were so poor that they barely had enough food to eat. Their clothes were ragged and worn, and they walked barefoot because they couldn't afford any shoes.

All through the season of Advent Maria and Pablo watched the festivities, processions and parties. But nobody invited them to join in.

When they went to church they saw the big manger being set up, and heard all the children being invited to bring a present for the Holy Child on Christmas Eve.



The village children chattered excitedly about the best present to bring, and ran off to gather up their money and buy something very special. Maria and Pablo had no money to buy a gift, so they just stood and listened.

Christmas Eve arrived, and Maria and Pablo set off early to church, to make sure that they could get a good seat where they could at least see the Christ Child in the manger, even if they didn't have a present to give Him. Maria sobbed as she walked along the dark and dusty road, and Pablo tried to comfort her.



Then, a soft glowing light shone through the darkness, and the image of an angel appeared in the sky above them.

“Do not be afraid! You can take a present to the Christ Child! Gather some of the weeds growing here, and take them to decorate the manger. Any gift given with love is precious to the Saviour of the World!”

Maria and Pablo stood, rooted to the spot in confusion, as the light faded and the angel disappeared. Gradually they came to their senses, and gathered armfuls of the lowly weeds growing beside the path, which the angel had shown to them.

They arrived at the little church before anyone else, and started to decorate the manger with the humble weeds. They were still busy at their task when the other children arrived with their expensive presents. When they saw what Maria and Pablo were doing, the children jeered and laughed at them.

Maria and Pablo felt tears of shame welling up in their eyes, when something incredible happened!

Suddenly, the weeds burst into bud, and bright red flowers with petals that looked like radiant stars, gently unfurled. Everyone was amazed by the beauty of the fragrant flowers.

They realised that a gift of love is dearer to Jesus than the costliest present money can buy.

Ever since that day, Poinsettia flowers have been used as Christmas decorations. They are a symbol of the true meaning of Christmas – God's loving gift to us of his precious son.



Spiritual Child Network



# Celebrating Advent with your Grandchildren

## Looking forward to Bambinelli Sunday

Christmas is a wonderful time for all children and also for grandparents.

There will be many schools which will have a nativity play where undoubtedly many kitchen 'tea towels' will double as shepherd headdress!



However, the season of Advent, the four weeks preceding Christmas, is a time of preparation. The word Advent comes from the Latin 'adventus' which means a 'coming or arrival'. It is in this very special time that we should prepare to celebrate the Birth of Our Lord.

One tradition that we have continued in our home, is to have a Crib (in fact we probably have three!).

It is really good to get all children or grandchildren coming to the house to gradually 'build' the crib over the weeks of Advent, adding the characters one by one. We also have an Advent wreath with candles that are lit on each Sunday during Advent and we can say a prayer and invite any who are visiting to also say one.

The third Sunday of Advent is often referred to by its Latin name, Gaudete Sunday, which indicates that it is a day of 'rejoicing.' Traditionally the purple candle in the Advent Wreath is replaced with a pink or 'rose' one and for the Mass the priest may wear rose coloured vestments

Pope Francis reminds us that 'In the liturgy, the invitation to rejoice, to arise, resounds repeatedly, because the Lord is near, Christmas is near. Like a mother, the Church encourages us to follow faithfully the spiritual path in order to celebrate the feast of Christmas with renewed exaltation.'

There is an old Italian tradition also that on this Gaudete Sunday families are invited to bring to church the Baby Jesus from their home cribs to be blessed. This is known as 'Bambinelli Sunday'. Why not try to develop this in your own parish?

So, Advent becomes a time of preparation, rejoicing and awakening as we eagerly await to celebrate that first Christmas morn and welcome Jesus into our lives, our homes and our communities.

Speaking at last year's Bambinelli Sunday Pope Francis reminds us all, "Dear children, when you pray in front of your manger scene, also remember me as I remember you, may the Virgin Mary help us to hasten our steps toward Bethlehem to meet the Child that is born for us, for the salvation and joy of all men. The joy of the gospel is not just any joy, it is the joy that comes from knowing you are welcomed and loved by God.

This joy truly remains even in suffering, because it is not superficial, but goes down to the depths of the person who commits himself to God and trusts in Him."

***Gaudete, Gaudete Christus est Natus  
Ex Maria Virgine, Gaudete!***

***Rejoice, Rejoice, Christ is Born of the Virgin Mary, Rejoice!  
Happy Advent everyone!***



## 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 of society.

Support them! As they grow older,  
may they continue to be for their families  
strong pillars of Gospel faith,  
guardians of noble domestic ideals,  
living treasuries of sound religious traditions.  
Make them teachers of wisdom and courage,  
that they 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!

*Benedictus PP XVI*



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