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**May St Joachim and St Anne, parents of Mary
and Grandparents of Jesus, Bless you and all
your families, all the days of your life**



Grandparents Groups

Start up Guide



Introduction

'The future of the world and the Church passes by way of the Family' 1

Dear Grandparents,

Being a grandparent is a joyous and noble vocation. As a grandparent we all walk alongside parents as 'preeminent collaborators'² and together seek out the very best for our grandchildren.



The Catholic Grandparents Association (CGA) exists to promote the role of Grandparents and to support and value them in our Mission of Passing on the Faith and to Keep Prayer at the Heart of Family Life.

The world today is much different from the one many grandparents grew up in. Grandparents understand instinctively the great human, moral and spiritual challenges children face today in the world in which they are growing up. For many children today, their grandparents may be the only practising Catholic member of their family. However, even those children growing up with the blessing of devout Catholic parents must grow to maturity in a highly secularised world which radically competes for their hearts and mind and denies the need for God ³.

Grandparents include those, who through the strong family bonds that they nurture as great Grandparents, great uncles, great aunts and so on, are "Grandparents at Heart". All are embraced by our association for their key and pivotal role in both sustaining the family and our faith.

CGA is dedicated to strengthen the vocation of Grandparents. This guide is designed to support you in and to develop and sustain your vocation as an actual ministry in your family, your local parish and beyond.

This guide will help anyone interested in forming and developing the work of CGA at various levels. It draws on the detailed information contained within our Supplementary Guidelines, which in turn defer to our Statutes, under which we continue to operate.

If you do nothing else, teach your grandchildren to pray.

May St Joachim and St Anne, Parents of Mary and Grandparents of Jesus, bless all grandchildren and bless all families.

Catherine Wiley . Founder of the Catholic Grandparents Association

1. Cf. *Familiaris Consortio* n.75.

2. *Message from H. E. the Most Rev. Vincenzo Paglia, Archbishop, President of the Pontifical Council for the Family to CGA.*

3. Cardinal Pell 2 Dec 2013

Group Registration Form

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Organiser Christian Name	
Organiser Family name	
Email:	
House number or name	
Street	
City	
State	
Zip Code	
Phone	
Parish Deacon/Contact Name	
Your Parish Priest:	
Your Parish	
Bishop:	
Diocese:	
I hereby agree to abide by the guidelines and policies of the Catholic Grandparents Association which include the sole use of the CGA logo provided and report requirements.	Please tick the box <input type="checkbox"/>
Organiser's Signature:	
Date Submitted:	
Date First meeting scheduled for:	

Catholic Grandparents Association's Enrolment Prayer

“Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Father, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of and loved beyond all telling by the Virgin Mary, protected by St. Joseph, and loved by your grandparents St. Joachim and St. Anne, I offer to you today my heart as Member of Catholic Grandparents Association.

In doing so, I commit myself to keeping prayer at the heart of the family, to help pass on the Christian faith within the family, from generation to generation, and in doing so, to commit myself to the obligations of Catholic Grandparents Association and its Spirituality.

With a grateful heart, I pray that my understanding be always obedient to your teachings and heavenly inspirations, that my heart be also inflamed with love of God and my neighbour, and that my will be conformed evermore to your Divine will. Amen.”

Nihil Obstat

+Ralph Heskett, C.Ss.R.
Bishop of Hallam

Proposed Concluding Prayer for Prayer Meetings

All praise to You, Lord Jesus, Lover of children. bless our family,
our sons and daughters,
and all our grandchildren.

Let Your Spirit fill our homes with warmth and grace,
that our families become one with the Father and with You,
who live and reign in unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God for ever and ever.

Amen.

Nihil Obstat

+Ralph Heskett, C.Ss.R.
Bishop of Hallam

Grace Before Meals

Bless us, O Lord, and these Your gifts, which we are about to receive, from Your goodness,
through Christ our Lord. Amen

Or old English version

Bless us, O Lord, and these Thy gifts which we are about to receive from Thy bounty,
through Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

Background to the Catholic Grandparents' Association

The Catholic Grandparents' Association originated from Catherine Wiley's heartfelt prayer to find a birthday present for Our Lady. The idea of a pilgrimage to Walsingham was born and this would be to honour St Joachim and St Anne, Our Lady's parents with a day of faith and fun for grandparents and their families. From this grew other pilgrimages and more regular meetings of grandparents.

Initially these grandparents recognised the unique gifts that they have to give to their families. They also sought support from each other in their often challenging roles. They quickly recognised the benefits of meeting together formally and so small local groups were formed.



Catholic Grandparents' Association exists now in many countries. These function under the care of the Bishops' Conference in each country and remain linked to the original CGA through a common aim and purpose. For more information visit:

www.catholicgrandparentsassociation.org

CGA is a Private Association of the faithful which operates under Statutes granted by Archbishop Michael Neary, Tuam, Ireland and also with the permission and blessing of the relevant local Bishop.

We have also produced a comprehensive set of Guidelines under which all groups of the Association agree to operate.

Note—References in this booklet refer to the Supplementary Guidelines to the Statutes of the CGA. Copies are normally held at Diocesan Offices, with Group leaders and also are available via the CGA Head Office

Steps for starting a new CGA Group in your Parish

Before you start a new group, you should first discuss with your parish priest the role of the group within the parish. Your local representative or the nearest CGA office are there to help you in this and in particular will confirm the agreement of your local Bishop.

(Ref Ch 6.n53, n61)

1. Set up a date for you, or a priest, sister or deacon to speak at, for example, Sunday Mass to explain the how the CGA can help grandparents and their families. Sometimes you will find someone from an existing group who can help you with this and who may be willing to speak. CGA can provide sample talks which you can use or adapt.
2. **Register your new group with the CGA National or International office by filling in the form on page 19. If this is not possible, contact your nearest CGA Office. (ref Ch 7 Sect 3 n103)**
3. In the weeks leading up to the Mass or other event, put an announcement in the parish newsletter about the creation of a new Grandparents' group, the first CGA gathering. Include your contact information for anyone with questions.
4. After the talk, be available hand out CGA information cards and leaflets and speak with anyone who might have questions.
5. During the first meeting, collect everyone's contact information to share amongst yourselves as a community of faith and support. Please forward a copy of the members of your group contact details to your national or international and diocesan centre.



There is a suggested framework for meetings available and this will always include Pope Benedict's prayer for Grandparents (Ref Ch 6 n51)



Grandparents' Prayer

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 11 in

***Registering your group.
(Ch. 6 Sect 3 n99 to105)***

To retain the worldwide community that is the CGA and to ensure that all groups are kept informed, it is vital that you register your group with the Catholic Grandparents Association, through either your local head office or the national head office, so that you can receive up to date information and support.

Please fill in and return the form on the opposite page to one of the two CGA offices below and if you are established under the Marriage and Family Life Office in your diocese please send them a copy:

**CGA International Office.
Enterprise House,
21 Oak Street, Fakenham.
Norfolk. NR21 9DX
01328 560089
or our
Founding Head Office,
Castlebar Street, Westport, Co. Mayo, Ireland.
Tel. (+353) 98 24877.**

The relevant information can also be e-mailed to
info@catholicgrandparentsassociation.org

Aims of Groups

The aims of Grandparents' Groups are:

To recognise and support the Vocation of Grandparents, to help them pass on the faith, keep prayer at the heart of family life and foster mutual support for each other.

Grandparents will meet to pray together and discuss passing on the faith and keeping prayer at the heart of family life. In this they have a unique identity which in many respects adds to their intrinsic value.

They achieve this by assisting grandparents in:

- Acknowledging their vital role in the family
- Developing loving relationships with their grandchildren
- Furthering intergenerational dialogue
- Passing down their faith to a younger generation
- Striving toward these aims within a community centred on prayer
- Supporting each other in person and in prayer



Thinking about your meeting

Just a few things you might want to consider:

How often will you meet?

- You will need to decide what is best for you as a group but we recommend you meet at least once a month.

Where will you gather?

- The parish hall (most people know where it is and it makes it easy for new people to join). If you are using parish premises you must do this with the permission of the Parish Priest. (Ref Sect 6 n53)
- In one person's home (this can be a big commitment from someone, but the home creates a great environment of comfort and trust.)
- Consider rotating homes (again, homes are warm, loving places. This option also gives you the chance to see each other in your own space - a great way to build the group.)

When will you gather?

- Again at a time that best suits your group, Tuesday is the day dedicated to St. Anne, the mother of Mary and Grandmother of Jesus
- After a Sunday or weekday Mass
- Over lunch or tea

How long will you spend together?

- We recommend at least an hour (but feel free to go longer if you like)
- Meetings will start with prayer and include an opportunity to meet socially, perhaps with some refreshments.

Some Resources

The Essential Grandparent: A guide to making a difference. Dr Lilian Carson.

Long Distance Grandparenting. Connecting with your grand-children from afar. By Willma Willis Gore

Grand Loving: Making Memories with your Grandchildren by Sue Johnson

Know Me Hold Me, Sing To Me: What My Grand-child Taught Me About God by Kathleen Chesto

Rich in Years, by Johann Christoph Arnold. Finding Peace & Purpose in a long life.

Eyes of My Heart: 27 Writers Reveal The Hidden Pleasures and Perils of Being a Grandmother by Barbara Graham

Spending time With Your Grand-children. Toad Cottages and Shooting Stars: Grandma's Bag of Tricks by Sharon Lovejoy

Experience of Being a Grandparent. Chicken soup for the Grandma's Soul. Grandparents and grandchildren Share Their Stories of Love and Wisdom

CTS booklets *The Role of Christian Grandparents* by Keith Chappell or *Reasons to Believe* by Adrian Lickorish

Being a Catholic Grandmother Exploring the role of grandmothers. Foreword by Catherine Wiley. Redemptorist publications.

I am with you. Scripture reflections for couples. ISBN 9780957101029. Reflections on both human love and God's love for us through the Sunday Readings (Years A,B and C)

Home is a Holy Place— A resource produced by Bishop's Conference in England and Wales exploring Family Spirituality. www.homeisaholyplace.org.uk

Registering Your Group

number and contact details of the CGA Friends who either attend or support their Prayer Meetings.

Finally, to ensure both the transparency of CGA worldwide and also to enable accurate records of members to be kept, Leaders are required to keep regular contact with their immediate local office. This may be a Diocesan, National or the Founding Head Office, as well as provide for the CGA database, the information on contact details to anyone of these offices.

Being a Group or Chapter Leader

Leadership is important to the growth and well being of the CGA as it accepts its obligation to fulfil its mission. Similarly, financial and operational transparency is vitally important and the CGA reports both membership and financial information obtained from CGA Group Leaders to the diocese.

Accordingly, Group Leaders are required to forward to the National Centre, information on deceased members and contact information on new members in their group, at least annually, the number and types of meetings held and the number of participants at each meeting.

Financial information must include all money and goods received, how any money was spent (by category, your national head office can help) and the remaining balance. Reports are best provided on a 'financial year' basis (i.e. April to March.)

As many people are likely to join 'on-line' CGA will maintain a full database of all registered members. Local groups or head offices will be advised by CGA Head Office of any new members on a regular basis from within their area or region.

What do people look for in a CGA Group?

- Affirmation and support
- Sharing the experiences, successes and challenges of grandparenting
- Prayer and reflection
- Planning and organising activities
- Socializing and meeting in the support of others
- Supporting the mission, vision and purpose of the CGA



Members of the Worldwide CGA at the Families Pilgrimage in Rome (2013)

CGA Fosters the Spiritual Conviction of Grandparents as:

A source of enrichment for their families

Strong pillars of Gospel Faith

Guardians of noble domestic ideals

Living treasuries of sound religious traditions

Teachers of Christian wisdom and courage

(Prayer for Grandparents, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI)

A typical Grandparents Meeting (ref Sect 6 n51)

Welcome

Create a warm and comfortable space to hold your first meeting, maybe arrange chairs in a circle. Have refreshments available as people arrive. It is helpful if someone can do this for you and leave you free to greet people as they come in. If you would like, provide blank name tags, so people can write their names on them as they arrive. Allow people to socialize and become comfortable for the first ten or fifteen minutes. At that point, if people have not headed to the chairs, lead the way by sitting down in your circle and suggesting that you officially begin the first meeting.



Opening Prayer

Light a candle and make the Sign of the Cross. Quiet your hearts and minds from the struggles of life, recalling the many graces God gives us, particularly our grandchildren.

After this short time of reflection, pray the Holy Rosary as the official start to the gathering. Praying the Holy Rosary is recommended and intentions for individuals can be added. The Rosary is followed by a Prayers to the Holy Family, St Joachim and St Anne and the *Prayer for Grandparents*. (Ch 6 n51 i–vii)



Photo © Phil Butcher

New Members

CGA has provided suitable prayers (Page 22) for the meeting, including a Prayer of Enrollment for new members joining the group. Being a grandparent is a commitment and being a member of CGA furthers this commitment in supporting the vocation of grandparents. (Ch 6 n51 vi)

Finances (Ch.8)

The continuing work of CGA relies upon donations. All CGA groups are self-sufficient and with the relevant permissions (Ch.8 n121) have the capability to raise funds to support both their own activities and also the wider mission and purpose of CGA.

CGA is dedicated to having accurate and transparent accounting systems. Whilst the amounts in question may be relatively small, all funds received must be accounted for and spent in identified support of the CGA Mission and Purpose.

Members acting on behalf of the CGA are unpaid volunteers, all offerings made to members and officials acting on behalf of CGA are presumed to have been made to the respective CGA Head Office or Local group. (Ref Ch 8 n109)

In accordance with both Church and civil law, all funds received and spent must be both properly accounted for and only spent for the intended purpose. All fundraising activities require permission of the local Bishop or pastor. In addition, CGA insists that all its goods and funds be under the supervision of the local Bishop to whom financial reports are to be made available. (Ch 8 n124)

Member and Friends Information

Members and friends agree to provide relevant details as part of the membership process. These should be submitted electronically or exceptionally on paper. These details will only ever be used to enable effective contact between CGA and Members and friends and will be subject to the relevant civil laws in each country where CGA is active and will never be shared with Third Parties.

Local leaders must keep records of all who normally attend the local prayer group meetings. They are similarly required to keep in regular contact with the local Diocesan or National Office where these exist, or if this is not possible, with the Founding Head Office .

For the purposes of group contact, Local Group Leaders are required to keep a written record of the contact details and number of enrolled Members who attend their Local Group. Similarly, and for the same purposes, the Leader is advised to keep a record of the

Becoming a Member (Ref. Chapter 5 Section III)

Becoming a Member of CGA requires commitment to the aims and ethos of the association. Normally, this is done through attending three consecutive Prayer Meetings. CGA has provided a simple way in which this can be achieved through the prayer of enrolment.

You can become a member, supporter or friend of CGA by joining on line at www.catholicgrandparentsassociation.org or by completing a membership form and sending to either the national or relevant head office.

All that is required, on your part, is to embrace the responsibilities of CGA Members.

Once enrolled at a prayer meeting or on receipt of a Membership Enrolment Form, we will send you a copy of the Pope's Prayer for Grandparents and keep you up-to-date on all developments in the CGA through our website and our newsletters.

CGA Membership is free. However, the continued work of the Association is supported by voluntary donations. We welcome donations from all members and friends to ensure the continued and sustained work of CGA.

Membership is open to all the baptised. CGA also welcomes all people of good will as 'friends' who share the aims and ethos of CGA. (Ref Ch 5 Sect. 4)

**News (Ch 6 n52)**

Perhaps recap the most important points from the last meeting and take a minute or two to sum up anything that has happened since the group last met. This can mean events in which grandparents have participated, family news (a new grandchild was born), or anything else a member wants to share with the group. This is also a good time to remind the group that, as a place of faith, trust and support, it is important to keep the conversations private and confidential. For your first meeting this usually takes the majority of the time as people learn about each other. This is time well invested.



Photo © Mike Evans

Conversation

With everyone focused on the Lord, begin the conversation for the week. Choose a question to discuss, something to read together and reflect upon, talk about an area of struggle as a grandparent. There are some suggested topic on page 11 for meeting ideas and questions.

Reflection

If it is relevant to the group, offer a few minutes for individual reflection. Encourage everyone to pray silently, in small groups, or jotting down a few thoughts. One person can offer a brief prayer, thanking God for the time of conversation and reflection as a way of bringing everyone back together.

Sharing.

CGA encourages sharing as an intrinsic part of the meeting. This means that each grandparent can share their experience in an open, trusting and friendly environment, thus supporting each other in their vocation. The group leader can facilitate this but be conscious that not everyone may wish to speak—some prefer to simply listen

Planning

It is great to plan events or activities that get us involved with our grandchildren as a CGA group. Talk about anything that needs to be discussed or announced for upcoming events. A list of suggested activities can be found on page 13.

Now is also a good time to send around a small collection basket to pay for the shared refreshments and also, if possible, to support the wider Mission of the CGA.

Before concluding, pick a topic for the next meeting, so everyone has the opportunity to prepare individually through whatever means (thinking, praying, reading, etc.).

Closing Prayer and departure

Close the meeting with a heartfelt prayer as a community centred on praying. We bless ourselves and wish everyone a safe journey and safe back!

A few tips from group co-ordinators:

Grandparents have spent a life-time being obliged to fulfil commitments. It is important that they never feel they have to apologise for not coming to a meeting - we are all busy people!

Also, in order to keep everyone up to date, a quick e-mail or telephone call summarising the meeting (with hard copies for the non-techies) with of course avoidance of personal details, can help with building the group.

Remember that not everyone has access to the Internet and e-mail. Consider printing off relevant information (newsletters etc.) for sharing at the meetings.

About St Joachim and St Anne



Joachim and Anne were the parents of Mary and the grandparents of Jesus and we celebrate their feast day on the 26th July.

The name "Hannah" means grace. In Galilee, where she lived, Mary's mother was probably called "Hannah" even though we know her as Saint Anne. So, if you are named "Hannah" or "Anne" you are named after the mother of Our Blessed Mother. It was in the womb of Saint Anne that Mary was immaculately conceived. From the first moment of her life, she was in a state of grace and free from all stain of Original Sin.

It was her parents, Anne and Joachim who raised her to be faithful to God's word and remain free of sin. Anne is the patron saint of Christian mothers, and Joachim the patron saint of fathers. They were given the great honour and responsibility of raising Mary to be the Mother of God, and can help mothers and fathers today to raise their children to love and follow God too.

The couple offered their little daughter to God in the Temple. As a young girl, she may have spent time in service to the Temple, working and learning with other girls. But it was probably her parents who taught her, and certainly Joachim and Anne who taught her to love and follow God's word and to know and understand the Scriptures.

When the Angel Gabriel came to her at the Annunciation, Mary knew the prophecies of Jesus' life and death. She knew the full extent of the honor and pain she would experience when she gave her 'fiat.'

Mary loved her mother and father. In this she is a beautiful example for children. Joachim and Anne loved their daughter and followed God's plan in raising her. In this, they are a shining example and intercessors for Christian parents.

The sainted couple is often depicted with Mary, holding a book of Scriptures, teaching their daughter to read. A church was built in the 4th century, possibly by Saint Helena, on the reputed site of Saint Joachim and Anne's house in Jerusalem.



Photo © Sinead Fox

Fund raise for charity (e.g. organise a quiz) funds are needed to support the global growth of the CGA and we would ask each group to hold an annual fundraising event for this purpose. Arrange a day/half day of reflection inviting the Parish and other Grandparent Groups.

Liaise with first communion and confirmation catechists to establish prayer partnerships between grandparents and candidates.

Join in diocesan or national events such as the CGA Pilgrimages or seminars. It is always valuable to get involved with your nearest pilgrimage, these are wonderful opportunities for a lovely family day of faith and fun.

Think about creative ideas at your event to keep prayer at the heart of the family and to pass on the faith.



Photo © Katherine Bergin



Photo © Katherine Bergin

One example is the altar cloth made by everyone leaving a 'hand-print'. The Altar Cloth can be made during the day and used at the Mass and any following services.

Consider setting up a photo booth and 'prayer wall'

where Grandparents and Grandchildren can take some fun photos to remember the day by and also leave a prayer to share.

This only requires some 'silly' clothes, wigs etc., a laptop and camera. The photo's can be e-mailed to everyone. This also enables you to introduce the CGA to new members and to keep in touch.



Suggested topics for discussion at group meetings

Awe and wonder

How can you help your grandchildren see the presence of God all around them. How can you show them ways to start each day with God - saying "good morning" to God when you are cleaning your teeth makes an easy time to remember!

Your children and grandchildren no longer go to church.

How can we accept that adults can make their own decisions without rejecting you and your faith. How can we continue to nurture them without suffocating their right to adult decisions?

What challenges do modern children face that you or your children did not.

Less time spent with family at daily meals and other gatherings, less involvement with relatives and friends and more time spent with electronic devices and less time spent talking to God and in the presence of the Holy Eucharist.

Encouraging children's relationships with God:

Candles - lighting one on the anniversary of baptism as well as on birthdays

Saying grace before meals and night time prayers - finding child centred ones as well as traditional ones, talking about families and your heritage.

Linking with the seasons of the Church

Thinking about Jesus and his life, giving some focus during Advent and Lent - making Nativity scene &/or Easter garden, wishing them a happy Saint's day, Just discovering God's presence all around us. Reflecting on the Gospel reading of the previous Sunday (*Lectio Divina*)

Discuss the current high profile questions of right to life.

The views across generations can differ greatly. Understanding exactly what the Church teaches and openly discussing this can lead to better understanding

The Pope's homilies (which often include references to families and grandparents) available at: www.vatican.va

Talk about how our faith has helped us in our lives and our own grand-parents and their spiritual legacies.

Use an appropriate article from publications (e.g. Bishop's Conference Publications, Catholic Magazines and newspapers etc.) to discuss.

Use extracts from Catholic Truth Society Booklets (e.g. The role of Christian Grandparents) as topics to discuss.

Swap words/tunes for graces that may be sung around the meal table by grandparents /grand-children.

Share children's prayers and songs. Or evening songs or hymns that you used to sing.

The Pope Francis effect – how is it relevant to your family and your grandchildren.

CGA**Grandparents' Pledge**

Dear God

I promise with the help of your grace
to do my best to fulfil my vocation
to pass on my faith to the next generation.

Grandparent Group Events

Grandparents might like to consider acting as a group to consider the following ideas.

Consider helping organise a service to be held with their grandchildren, for example on July 26th, the feast of Saint Joachim and Saint Anne, with refreshments and fun. Afterwards grandparents can enrich the lives of all children with their stories, love and gifts. It is a wonderful way to include others from the parish whose grandparents or grandchildren may live far away.



Photo © Phil Butcher

See if you can link with your local school. Many are happy to have a week or a special day to celebrate grandparents. Specifically inviting grandparents to share in something at school adds great richness. Children can share their learning or use the grandparents as a source of knowledge; some simply share a celebration in honour of their grandparents. There are special considerations when visiting schools



Photo © Sinead Fox

and both the school or Diocesan Education service can help with this. It is a good idea to open this to the parish to welcome in other grandparents for those children whose own are deceased or unable to visit. You could even have a celebration with the school at a Mass.

Sharing Stories and Intergenerational Dialogue.