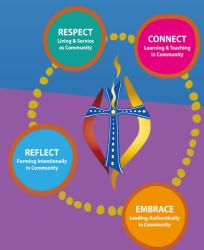


Family Prayer

Joachim and Anne and World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly

by Jacinta Roberts

Consultant Formation - Identity and Outreach



Speaking to Country

This prayer was written on Gimuy Walubara Yidinji country. The lands, seas, skies and waterways of the region now known as Cairns, were, are and always will be those of the Yidinji people. I pay my respects to the Elders past and present, for they are the knowledge holders, the storytellers and teachers in the family, community and beyond. We can learn so much from Elders on this Country and across other parts of the Diocese about being in relationship with others and the world. I pay my respects to all Elders today.

I encourage you to take time to pause...to feel the land beneath your feet...to focus on what you can see of the Land or water around you. Consider the Country you have travelled over...remember the Country where you grew up. Take the time now to honour the people who have cared for these lands and waterways for thousands of years...and all those who continue to connect, to care and to teach.

Context - Joachim and Anne and World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly

On 26th July, the Catholic Church celebrates Saints Joachim and Anne (or Anna), parents of Mary, grandparents of Jesus. Whilst we don't know anything of them from the Gospels or Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, their story is told in the Gospel of James (Protoevangelium) and through some of the mystical writers.⁽ⁱ⁾ Those writings attempt to give a more detailed account of the life of Mary, the mother of Jesus. We learn that her parents were wealthy, generous and childless. Their story is similar to others such as Hannah in the Old Testament, who prayed to God to be blessed with a child. An angel appeared to both Joachim and Anne, announcing they were to be parents.⁽ⁱⁱ⁾

Scripture

Sirach 44:1. 10-15

Let us now sing the praises of famous men (and women),
our ancestors in their generations.
But these also were godly men (and women),
whose righteous deeds have not been forgotten;
their wealth will remain with their descendants,
and their inheritance with their children's children.
Their descendants stand by the covenants;
their children also, for their sake.
Their offspring will continue forever,
and their glory will never be blotted out.
Their bodies are buried in peace,
but their name lives on generation after generation.
The assembly declares their wisdom,
and the congregation proclaims their praise.⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾



The Holy Family with St Joachim and St Anne Created by Bernardi Pietro. Fine Art. Encyclopædia Britannica ImageQuest, Accessed June 25, 2025. https://quest.eb.com/images/135_1587313.



Catholic Education
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Reflection

It is from Joachim and Anne that Mary would have learnt about the importance and traditions of her Jewish faith. From what we read of Mary, she was faithful and faith-filled, loving and courageous. Family was always important to her, as was keeping the traditions of her faith. She accepted the will of God. As a young child, Joachim and Anne brought her to the Temple to be raised in the faith. Today, Catholic communities remember and venerate Joachim and Anne as patrons of many family causes, such as fathers, childless couples, grandparents and pregnant mothers.

Franciscan Media, has an interesting reflection on the importance of the feast and grandparents. "It reminds grandparents of their responsibility to establish a tone for generations to come: They must make the traditions live and offer them as a promise to little children. But the feast has a message for the younger generation as well. It reminds the young that older people's greater perspective, depth of experience, and appreciation of life's profound rhythms are all part of a wisdom not to be taken lightly or ignored." ^(iv) Not only can you look at this quote in terms of living the Catholic faith, but any faith tradition, cultural knowledge and tradition or spiritual or secular experience of life. The World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly is celebrated on the Sunday closest to the Feast of Joachim and Anne, which, in 2025 is July 27.

Whatever the dynamics or specific make up a family takes, there are many important elements or responsibilities those supporting adults have, in the development of the children in our schools. Our families' greatest gift to a child is love. Through that love, we are taught compassion, forgiveness and responsibility. Not all the lessons are centred around the 'good' elements of living in a world that involves all different types of people and challenges that come up. Our parents, Elders and caregivers teach us to be resilient, how to face adversity and come out stronger and what to do when we stumble or when we fail. We need others modelling how to manage the hurt, or to say sorry when it is us causing the pain.

For our small people, they need help negotiating their world of finding, making and keeping friends. They also need to understand who they are and their place in the world. What is their family story? To whom and what are they connected? What is their Country? What makes them special? It is through conversation, spending time with family and the telling of stories that allows for these things to be unpacked, for a child to feel valued and connected. Sometimes families may have had a disconnection from their family story and cultural connection due to dispossession, displacement, death or perhaps even natural disaster. Sometimes it is a whole family unit searching and learning together.

Another important thing that is nurtured within the family is faith. For Catholic children, they may learn to pray, to worship and to know God and feel the love of Jesus from a very young age. Lessons are taught through the stories that are told, the words that are shared and the action that is witnessed. Quite often as adults we hold happy memories of a grandparent who prayed the rosary every day, or an uncle from the family village who became a priest, or went along with a family member to make food for others, volunteer at a parish event or even visit the elderly in their homes; all actions grounded in faith. I have memories of my mother doing things for others throughout her life; sewing, cooking, washing, visiting, knitting, cleaning, making cups of tea, shopping and even sharing flowers, vegetables or plants from her garden. She helped grow my children into who they are today. Not only did and does she give, but she does in a way that nurtures her own gifts. I feel blessed to have her model strength, compassion, generosity, concern and love for others.

Prayer

Lord Jesus,
Look with love on all grandparents.
They are a source of enrichment for families and our world.
May they continue to be strong pillars of faith and treasuries of tradition.
Make them teachers of wisdom and courage, passing on to future generations the fruits of their experience.
Help families and society to value the role and voice of grandparents and Elders.
May they never be ignored or excluded but encounter respect and love.
Amen.

Adapted from Pope Benedict XVI's Prayer for Grandparents

<https://www.catholicgrandparentsassociation.org/pop-es-prayer/> Accessed 19/6/25

Call to Action

- Take time to honour the special people in your life that have been your teachers, your guides in faith, your support, your advocates, your models. Perhaps they did not always get it right, but they were there.
- Pray for parents, grandparents and care givers, and find a way to thank them for the example that they were to you, or for the way they helped you become the person you are today.
- Connect in with neighbours or older people in the community who may not have family, offering to assist them in some way.
- Spend time with Elders listening to their stories and learning from their experiences.
- As a family, investigate and create or source items for people in aged care to make their day brighter.

References

- (i) "Saints Anne and Joachim | Tradition, Legends, & History." n.d. Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed June 19, 2025. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Saints-Anne-and-Joachim>.
- (ii) Andrew Hamilton, "Mothers of Faith," Australian Catholics, (2024) accessed June 19, 2025. <https://www.australiancatholics.com.au/mothers-of-faith>.
- (iii) "Overview-Readings and Antiphons Saints Joachim and Anne," Roman Missal: English Translation. International Committee on English in the Liturgy Inc., 2010 Quoted in Liturgy Help, Creative Ministry Resources, accessed June 19, 2025. <https://www.liturgyhelp.com/calendar/date/2025Jul26/1>
- (iv) "Saint of the Day - Saints Joachim and Anne," Franciscan Media, accessed June 19, 2025. <https://www.franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day/saints-joachim-and-anne/>

