

The African Experience of Grandparenting

A closer look at the role of grandparents in African societies shows that grandparents are treasures in Africa. So the establishment of the fourth Sunday of July as the World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly by Pope Francis is an opportune moment to celebrate the place of grandparents in African cultures. While African countries (except South Sudan which in 2013 declared the second Sunday of November as the National Day of Grandparents) had not previously set aside a special day to celebrate the roles and functions of grandparents in African cultures and communities, it is not an exaggeration to say that grandparents are pivotal in African societies.

The role of grandparents in African societies, one could argue, cover the life of their grandchildren or progenies from the cradle to the grave. These roles can broadly be classified as cultural and social roles and functions. One of the main cultural roles of grandparents in some African cultures is that of giving family, cultural and ethnic identity to their grandchildren. For instance, among the Orring people of Nigeria, children are incorporated into a family of kindred through an official naming ceremony. At such ceremonies a newly born child is given the name of the paternal or maternal grandparents (or any of the ancestors). It is such names that elders hold in esteem. Through the names of grandparents that grandchildren receive, the grandchildren acquire the family, cultural and ethnic identity. Prior to the naming ceremony in which an Orring child receives the name of one of his or her grandparents, he or she is, strictly speaking, not a member of the family or kindred. The situation of such a child can be likened to that of a catechumen who strictly speaking does not have Christian identity prior to his or her baptism. Because of the centrality of grandparents in giving identity to their descendants, male children are sometimes given the name of their grandmothers. This happens in families where there are only male children. The role and importance of grandparents with regard to names is not limited to the fact that grandchildren are named after their grandparents. Grandparents also have the role of naming their grandchildren in some African cultures. For instance, in most Southern Africa cultures, grandparents have the special role of naming their grandchildren. Another important socio-cultural role of the grandparents is that of enculturating or socialising the grandchildren into their culture and heritage. This is done through telling of stories, folklore and proverbs. This is a form of traditional education through which children are introduced into the history and culture of the people. This is not just factual education but a means through which values are inculcated into the younger generation. In a word, grandparents have the role of transmitting values. For this reason, in contemporary

African societies, it is encouraged that grandchildren should visit their grandparents during holidays. In this way they will learn life values that will give them roots in their particular cultural identity. While it is true that parents can inculcate such values in their children, grandparents are more effective or efficient in transmitting cultural values to grandchildren because of a special bond that exists between them. A common phenomenon in present day African societies is that grandparents, especially grandmothers, generally take care of their grandchildren. In some cases, grandmothers are second mothers to their grandchildren and in some cases, they are the only mothers that their grandchildren have. This phenomenon arose because of two reasons. Firstly, the challenges of career opportunities cause some young, working mothers to experience unhealthy tension between the demands of career development and family responsibilities, especially, the raising of young children. So in order to create a balance between the two responsibilities, the social role of rearing children is transferred to grandmothers since they are often retired and know the family ethos. The second reason is an unavoidable social condition. At the beginning of the century, HIV and the AIDS pandemic caused havoc in some African countries. The consequence of the devastating effect of HIV and AIDS in some countries is that many young parents lost their lives. Due to the state of affairs in those countries, the raising of children became a social role of grandparents. The special place of grandparents in the lives of the grandchildren was captured by the action of the graduating student of the University of KwaZulu Natal a few years ago. During his graduation ceremony, the young man upon being called, went up on stage with his grandmother and while on the stage insisted that his grandmother be hooded. By that act, he wanted to pass the message that without his grandmother, he would not have achieved his qualification. Of course one could ask whether his action is in according with the protocols of a graduation ceremony but that is a different question altogether. All he wanted to show is that his grandmother is a treasure in his life.

Grandparents Prayer

I thought about this in the context of grandparenthood, thought about what the idea of a grandparent conveyed; in the main it seems to be experience, wisdom, protection. Everyone can hope, after a relatively long life, to have acquired those virtues, whether or not we become grandparents. I paused my pen, read back, thought some more, watched some more fleeting snow fall and waited for further inspiration. It must have been because I had been thinking about Shakespeare, because, Enter, stage left (or whatever the midwife is positioned) seven pounds' worth in weight of shrieking new-born baby. Mum and dad have a moment's respite while newcomer is dumped on the scales, having had the cord cut, and then it's over to the novices, the tenderfoots, the totally unprepared and the abjectly terrified-parents! Baby interrupts her indignant shrieking, takes a squint at the novices and makes a mental note, "Got your number. You don't have a clue," and from then on baby is in charge. Enter, stage right, and, significantly, bearing cake, either grandma or grandpa (this being an equal opportunities piece of writing and men being potentially accomplished bakers), or, alternatively, a kindly, middle aged or elderly neighbour who wants to help out.

Parish of Ahamlish and Inishmurray

Grange ♦ Cliffoney ♦ Mullaghmore

Rev. Christy McHugh

Tel: 071 9163100

Web address: www.ahamlish.com Email: ahamlishparish@gmail.com

Postal Address: Parochial House, Grange, Co. Sligo. F91 HR26

Issue 234, Saturday 17

24th July 2021



Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

May you live to see your children's children

Psalm 128:6

Visit us on ahamlish.com

&

Ahamlish Parish Sligo Facebook Page.

Adoration every Thursday, 7-9pm Grange Church

Join us for every mass online through our FB Page at Grange Church

Masses Cliffoney		
Sat 24 th July	2pm	Baptism
Sun 25 th July	10.30am	Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Feast of St. James
Fri 30 th July	8pm	Kevin Fowley (17 th Anniversary)
Sat 31 st July	2.30pm	Baptism, Mullaghmore
Sun 1 st August	10.30am	Bridie Brady
	1.30pm	Tim + Brigid Gunnigle Baptism
Sunday Collection: <i>Collection: 459</i> <i>Formation of Future Priests: €30</i>		

Grandparents Prayer Continued:

Squalling infant does a double-take. "Ah experience personnel. Might have a bit of a tussie here. Regroup. Resume wailing." Levity aside, the message is one of wisdom and support. Grandparently personage, having taken baby on, proceeds to the kitchen where mum and dad, both a little red-eyed and in their dressing gowns, are grappling with the inner workings of a steriliser. Several lasagnes, dolled up in a freezer bags, plus the cakes, are handed over, then the lifelong support system goes into action. There is love, of course, nurturing, and the confidence which comes with experience. All shall be well. This will pass. Following that idea of the wisdom which comes with advancing age, I thought about the growing child.

A dear friend in Northern Ireland sent me, at Christmas, Kavanagh's A Christmas Childhood, an exquisite poem. The transposition of the expected word order in the title, which would more normally be, "A Childhood Christmas," tells us that the season of Christ's birth infuses the narrator's childhood with wonderment and awe. With holiness.

The music of his father's melodion and the chime of milk in the pail transforms the mundane place into Bethlehem. The narrator measures his years in past Christmases; as he says in that sublime line, "And I was six Christmases of age." Yet it is not the music and the milking, rapturous as these references are; I am moved by the little boy's "box pleated coat" and his earlier "(pulling) on in a hurry" of his trousers. I think of the nurturing hands and minds parents, grandparents, older adults, who shelter and protect the young, who conjure the magic of Christmas, which as we so often hear, is "for the children." Not all childhoods are happy and not all older adults protect innocence, but thankfully, the paradigm is such.

The snow did not live up to the promise of the weather forecasters, but as night came on, a deep frost formed. I gazed out of the window, thinking of the timelessness of the elements, about temporal time and the place of our forebears in our lives. Not everyone will become either parent or grandparent, but we all have grandparents, whether we meet them or not. There's a latent power there, witness the popularity of sites which help us trace our ancestry. Do we try, consciously or not, to seek out the protection of those who have gone before us? Many of us are privileged to have or to have had, a wise and loving older person in our lives, a grandparent or someone standing in for a grandparent, to guide us through those times of crisis, a bit like a tutelary spirit. For some, stories about ancestors who have survived against the odds, or achieved something extraordinary for the times in which they lived, can act as an inspiration. I think again of Kavanagh's boy narrator, with his "...prayer like a white rose pinned/ On the Virgin Mary's blouse" of who it might be who taught him to pray, however we conceive of that word, and who were the nurturing presences who counted his Christmases with him. Returning to my working title, "Grandparents (roughly)," there I was, in summer 2018, on a residential road in Mooncoin, County Kilkenny taking a photograph of the site of the bakery which our great, great grandmother ran, to send to my third cousin in Pennsylvania. Two hundred years ago, a marriage in Kilkenny linked two women on different continents and we remain astounded and awed. In conclusion, I recognise that I have wound about, a little like a convoluted family tree, and moved through Shakespeare, comedy sketch, and philosophical speculation, perhaps I had better end on a simple note. A grandparent figure is that person, who, when at times in life we drop our (metaphorical) glove, picks it up and returns it with a reassuring smile or hug. All shall be well.

The Faith Café for Grandparents

The Faith Café is an initiative of the Catholic Grandparents' Association which was introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic as a social and spiritual space for Grandparents to meet online once a month to chat, to offer prayers and intentions and to just be together in the spirit of faith. It has been a lifeline for so many people during this time of pandemic and has connected Grandparents across the world from Ireland to the USA, from the UK to Australia. Register for the Faith Café by email to info@catholicgrandparentsassociation.com Once you register for the Faith Café, you will receive the details of how to connect in for the gathering on Zoom. We look forward to welcoming you to the Faith Café

Star of the Sea Retreat Centre - Mullaghmore

New events added at Star of the Sea, Retreat & Conference Centre, Mullaghmore. Details on www.staroftheseacentre.com For information and bookings please contact Louise or Frank at staroftheseacentre@gmail.com or on 071 9176722.

Masses Grange - All these masses available on Facebook		
Sat 24 th July	8pm	Vigil Mass
Sun 25 th July	12.00	Elizabeth + Richard Kilcoyne Matt Gilsenan (22 nd Anniversary) Martin O'Dea, Ardnaglass Hugh McDonald, Monaghan (1 st Anniversary)
	1pm	Baptism
Mon 26 th July	7.30pm	Feast of Joachim + Anne
Tue 27 th July	9.30am	Sean Brett, Tubbercurry died 7 th June
Sat 31 st July	1pm	Baptism
	8pm	Mass
Sun 1 st August	12.00	Kathleen, John Pat + Patricia Tivnan

Sunday Collection *Grange Collection: €995* *Formation of Future Priests: €55* *Peter's Pence: €50*

Please remember in your prayers:

Roy Kelly, Knockmore, Co. Mayo died July 21st. Our sympathy to his wife Teresa, daughters + sons, especially David + his wife Sandra Currid (Ballyscannell). Funeral took place at Knockmore Church on Sat 24th July with burial in Ballinahaglish Cemetery.

Hazar Hashemi (16) died July 17th Drumcliffe, Co. Sligo. Rest in peace.

Sinéad Duffy, Leitrim + Sligo suddenly 13th July. Our sympathy to her family especially her son Jason at Grange Post Primary School. Rest in peace.

Tom Geary, Cliffoney died 20th July at St. John's Community Hospital aged 95. Predeceased by his wife Annie Higgins. Our sympathy to his sons Michael + Brian (London), daughters-in-law Natalie + Sharon + his two granddaughters Sarah + Samantha, great grandchildren and the Geary, Higgins + Oates Family. Funeral Mass took place in St. Molaise Church on Sat 24th July at 12.00 with burial in Ahamlish. Rest in peace.

Pope's Intention (universal) for July 2021

We pray that, in social, economic and political situations of conflict, we may be courageous and passionate architects of dialogue and friendship.

Garland Weekend 23-25th July – Tobernalt Holy Well

The Garland Weekend ceremonies usually take place on 23-25th July. Due to the prevalence of the Delta variant and in the interest of safety of all pilgrims and the many helpers in the Carraroe Parish we have decided to cancel the ceremonies this year at the Holy Well. We are also conscious that many people are not as yet fully vaccinated. Weekend Masses reflecting on the Holy Well will take place in Carraroe Church and people are invited as usual to visit the Holy Well throughout the weekend. Mass from the Holy Well will be broadcast on Sunday 25th July on churchtv.ie/carraroe at 3.00pm. Small group will continue to gather at the Holy Well for the Rosary and various Prayer Services.

Lough Derg

The Lough Derg Pilgrim Path on the lough shore is now open daily. The full route is a 12km loop, with a shorter 8km option, and several information boards highlight features of particular interest. Leaflets are available at the Visitors Centre.

A guided walk experience will be offered *on Sunday 25th and Saturday 31st July*, with Mass outdoors, weather permitting. Further dates for these guided walks will follow for late August and early September. For bookings and further information email info@loughderg.org or telephone 0(0353) 71 9861518. www.loughderg.org *Lough Derg Pilgrim Path, Pettigo, Co Donegal. F94 N289*

FleadhFest Sligo 2021

Fleadhfest - a virtual Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann - will take place in Sligo between 1st-9th August, streaming concerts, sessions, competitions and other elements central to the Fleadh Cheoil, and all free to air via Fleadhfest.ie.

In the lead up to the festival, we have produced a video which highlights the struggles we have all had during the pandemic, and how music can help us through the challenges that we still face daily. We'd really appreciate if you could share the links below. Below are the links we have posted on Facebook and YouTube. These links will go live at 8pm this evening, Tuesday 20th July.

Youtube: <https://youtu.be/c1no77osFMA>

Facebook: <https://facebook.com/fleadhcheoil.ie>

Dropbox: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/jz7vm223750j1ng/AAcAF098T6v0f1zo6SWclPga?dl=0>

Irish Wholesale Flags: 093-42024/ 087-3355456

For all your Flag deals!