

Homily  
St. Ann Novena  
Sunday, July 18, 2021

The Blessing of Grandparents

My granddaughter, Emma, turned one year old in May. She started taking her first steps around the same time and now she's walking everywhere. Her doggy-brother and doggy-sister now have to be even more careful to avoid Emma's terrorizing tail-pulling. My wife, Donna, is blessed to be able to watch Emma during weekdays while Emma's mom and dad work. This means Donna gets to watch Emma grow and be a part of Emma's development. She's careful not to become Emma's daytime-mom while at the same time she's there to teach Emma the important things about being a toddler, such as "Wheels on the bus," "Baby Shark," and "Where's Grandma."

I, on the other hand, am blessed to receive pictures from my wife daily as I get to watch Emma grow, even if only digitally on my phone. I get to play with Emma a couple times a month since I'm out of town all week and our weekends are so busy. But during those times Emma and I are together, we laugh and play and sing and dance. She hands me things then she takes them right back; can't she make up her mind? She wears me out; her energy level seems to know no limits.

And all this is possible because Donna and I raised our son, Emma's dad.

I believe it was Zig Ziglar who said we are actually raising our grandchildren when we raise our children. I believe that makes sense because Emma's dad is the father he is in great part by the way we raised him. And what a blessing it is to see him be a father to Emma.

I can see the correlation with Jesus as the Good Shepherd. In today's reading, the apostles, taught by Jesus, return to Him and share their experiences in working and teaching in His Name. Then, as Jesus pulls the apostles away to rest and relax from their good work, He sees the crowds and has pity on them, as a shepherd has pity on his sheep, lost, alone, hungry, eager to learn.

Jesus is raising us through the apostles that He raised in the Good News. What a blessing we are to Jesus as we struggle to learn, not only from Him but from his apostles, their disciples, the early church fathers, all the saints and on and on.

Just look at Paul in the second reading; he is teaching us about Christ's peace, which he learned from Christ. In a way, Christ is both our Brother in His humanity and our grandfather in His teaching, through scripture and tradition.

Grandchildren are a blessing to us as it reflects our morals, our integrity, our faith. You don't get good fruit from a rotten tree. You can't harvest wheat when planting weeds. Jerimiah warns us in the first reading, "Woe to the shepherds who mislead and scatter the flock of my pasture, says the LORD." I pray we did a good job with our son and it looks like we did alright, a blessing to our heavenly Father.

Our Blessed Mother was set apart by God from before she was born. Jesus chose Mary to be His Mother. Imagine if Mary were born of not-so-good parents. Not possible. Anne and Joachim were as important to Mary's role as the Mother of God as God was when He gave Mary her nature, just as each of us are who we are by the nature given us by God and the nurturing we received from our parents who received nurturing from their parents.

Anne and Joachim were raising Jesus, their grandson, as they were raising Mary as she grew. Jesus is who He is by His Divine and human Nature AND by the nurturing He received in His humanity growing up, in the arms of His mother, His father AND His grandparents. What a blessing indeed!

Good or bad, right or wrong, when I look at my granddaughter, I know she will grow and learn in a major way because of her grandmother and me. If we did a good job with her dad, then she will be a blessing to us, her mother and father, her entire family and the family of God. She is and will be a reflection of us and of God.

And she will continue to be a blessing to the world long after I am gone. She will be a blessing to her future husband, if she answers that particular call. She will be a blessing to her children and her children's children, all in some small part because of me. And that indeed is a blessing that warms my heart, to know I've made a contribution to this world, the magnificent creation of our God and King.

And imagine how Jesus looks upon us. Are we a blessing to Him who loves us and craves to be with us? Do we crave to be with Him? Do we reflect Jesus in what we say and do? Do we continue to bless those around us as He blessed His apostles and they in turn blessed their disciples?

In a few moments, we will witness Jesus present before us, blessing us with His Most Sacred Body and Blood. And we, in turn, will be dismissed to be a blessing to those we encounter in the world.

Just as Emma blesses me with her smile and her energy, just as she is a reflection of my efforts at raising her father, I choose to be a blessing to my wife, to my family, to my parish, to those whom I encounter in the world with the Good News of our Lord and Savior, who blesses us beyond all understanding. Blessed am I indeed. And blessed are you in Christ Jesus.

As I dismiss us this evening, let's take that final blessing and in turn go be the blessing to all the world as God intended us to be.