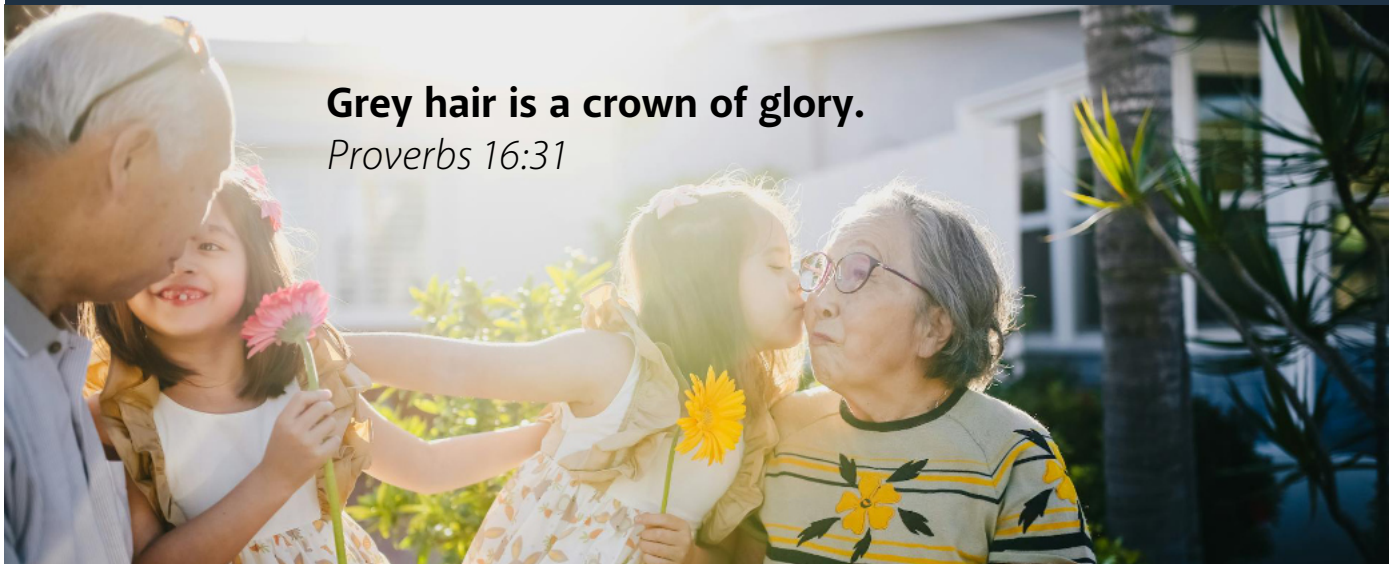




GRAND NEWS

A newsletter for all Grandparents in the Diocese of Arundel & Brighton

No. 3 - Lent 2025



Grey hair is a crown of glory.

Proverbs 16:31

A message of hope in the Jubilee Year of Hope

I "hope" that you are all having a wonderful Lenten journey, on the road to the foot of the Cross with our Lord, especially in this Jubilee Year of Hope.

In the midst of the confusion which dominates the world in 2025, it often seems that finding and celebrating the gift of hope is a challenging task. But perhaps this is the blessing that the message of Lent is bringing to us this year: the rejection of the worldly and the embracing of the eternal.

Looking beyond the chaos, greed, selfishness and egotism that seem to fill our news channels each day, as I'm sure all grandparents do, I often find myself more concerned about things much closer to home: the safety and wellbeing of our children, our grandchildren and our Church family.

One of the concerns we frequently find ourselves discussing is the seemingly constant worry about the generations to come: wondering if our grandchildren will know or want to know that special gift of friendship with Christ, and receive

the Eucharist as members of our Catholic community. The question rings out loud and clear: 'Is there a desire among the young in this technological, social media, AI-obsessed world, to find, celebrate and worship God?'

It is with such confidence in my heart that I can share my answer to these questions, and that answer is undoubtedly 'YES.'

Let me explain a little more:

I want to share with you a truly glorious and special encounter of hope that I had at the *Flame Congress* at Wembley Arena, on 15 March. It is one of the reasons that I am able to affirm my confident "YES" to the above questions.

The event saw 10,800 young people, from School Year 9 to University age, coming together from across the UK to celebrate the Catholic Faith and their hope in the Risen Lord. The day left me with a heartfelt humility, a sense of being re-energised, and overflowing with hope.

Flame was filled with music and song, energy and faith, with the thousands present singing together about their love for and encounter with the Lord

(although, I happily admit that as a granddad, I didn't understand what they were singing at times).

Interspersed with the music were speakers from the St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP) and the Mini Vinnies (the youth arm of SVP), sharing how they were bringing Christ to those in need in their communities. Delegates from CAFOD in Africa talked about the amazing work they are doing to bring hope and life to those most in need in the poorest parts of the world. The stillness, interest and respect shown by all those present was a blessing to behold.

The day continued with TV adventurer Bear Grylls and Isaac Harvey MBE, who both gave testimonies of their faith journey and what Christ means and brings to their lives.

And this brings me to the core of the message of hope that I took from the event: the day concluded with Adoration led by Cardinal Vincent Nichols. A stadium with nearly 11,000 young people, who had been dancing, singing, cheering and full of exuberant energy all day, fell absolutely silent as the Lord was brought into their presence and placed before them. The Lord's call of "Let the children come to me" felt so prophetic at that moment.

The heart of the message of the day (and in fact the title of the event) was that the youth of the Church can become "Unstoppable", when they are doing the

Lord's work: when they pray and use the gifts of their life for the glory of His Kingdom, they are "Unstoppable".

This is where the message of Becky Sedgwick's book "Grandparenting for Faith" becomes so powerful for us all as grandparents: that desire for Christ, the desire to belong and be part of the community of Christ is genuinely there. I came away wondering how we as grandparents can connect with that indwelling seed of faith that is so clearly present in our grandchildren's hearts. What witness can we give to provide the "good soil" to help that germ of faith to flourish and grow? As granny and granddad, how can we help our future generations to become "Unstoppable" as the next disciples of Christ? – because that inner desire is real.

**Deacon Simon South,
Marriage and Family Life Adviser**



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THE IMPACT OF BECKY SEDGWICK'S BOOK "GRANDPARENTING FOR FAITH"

One of our grandparent group members shares her reflection on Becky's book:

"Wherever you are on the spectrum of grandparenting for faith, Becky Sedgwick's brilliant book will help. In it, she points out opportunities for sowing seeds to encourage a relationship with God. These are also gentle ways to inspire all family members. When I had finished, I had an overwhelming urge to read it again."

Celia Longley



SHARING WHAT WE LOVE, WITH THE ONES WE LOVE

Building on the message of hope that I shared with you in the opening article, we do need to face this truth: the majority of Generation X (born 1965-1980) and millennials (b.1980-1999) – our children – do not attend Mass, or not regularly.

However, the overwhelming evidence (Pew Research) is that our grandchildren are seeking a connection with something that is built on a moral and loving foundation, and not part of the turmoil of the world around us. They are seeking God, but perhaps not aware that He is Who they are looking for. Did you know that twice as many Bibles were sold in 2023 as in 2019, and predominantly to Gen Z (born after 2000)?

There are five recognised steps to building a relationship with God and this is where grandparents can potentially blossom, because the first step is TRUST. Our grandchildren are looking to find someone who they trust and respect. I truly believe this is why so many people share the importance of their grandparents in their spiritual growth, because they do trust and respect them, and often have a different type of relationship with their grandparents than with their parents. Trust is foundational for the next steps and is often engrained in our relationships with our grandchildren.

The next step after finding someone who they can trust is SPIRITUAL CURIOSITY. Listening to the stories of Christ in our lives, sharing our witness of faith, built on trust, leads to a questioning mind: "Perhaps there is something to this, after all?"

Once there is an open mind and curiosity, we see SPIRITUAL OPENESS. This is when we see a desire to know more, to find out, to ask questions – still very much building on the initial seed of trust. Being open and honest and sharing your own experiences and encounters with Christ and His Church will strengthen this openness.

And as the questions become answered and there is a building of understanding, we enter the next phase, which is SPIRITUAL SEEKING. As their questions are answered, the enquiring Christian moves towards seeking a relationship with Jesus. For them, Christ changes from being a story and a lesson to being known as a real person, someone that you can have a genuine relationship with, someone who you want to spend time with – a friendship, which in turn blossoms into DISCIPLESHIP and a desire to share what they have found, encountered and believe. And all this begins with a relationship of trust with someone special in their life and an open ear.



A MESSAGE FROM THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC GRANDPARENTS ASSOCIATION

For me, Lent is the beginning of the end, a reminder of our own mortality. Our Holy Father told us we should become reconciled to death, to prepare for it. Nobody likes to talk about death or think of it; this is the best time, as we journey with Our Lord Jesus Christ towards the glory of our resurrection.

Lent is a time of waiting, reflecting and prayer. It is a time when you can truly be the best version of yourself. By taking stock of your life, what you have done, what you have failed to do, what you would like to do, you will be amazed at what you remember with a loving heart.

I count down the days to Good Friday "Crucifixion Day" as I reflect on my life and the countless ways that I have contributed to the suffering and death of my Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. I pray for forgiveness and reconciliation with all those alive and dead whom I may have hurt, offended, injured or neglected in any way.

I earnestly pray for the suffering souls in Purgatory, particularly those who have nobody to pray for them.

Every morning, going to Mass, I pass a rehab centre for addictions, where many young people are gathered outside. My heart goes out to them, and I pray that someone, somewhere, today will have the courage and the strength to say "No". I pray for the families who are feeling despair and pain as they continue to hope and pray.

I pray for the people in prison, that they may feel the love and mercy of Jesus, like the good thief, they're the companion of Jesus on the Cross. I pray for grandparents who have been separated from their grandchildren for whatever reason.

I pray for the grace to help my children and grandchildren to make their Easter duty: to try and help them to go to Confession and to receive Holy Communion.

I pray for all grandparents and families that they may find ways to peace, forgiveness and reconciliation during this beautiful season of promise. I look forward to meeting all of you one day in our heavenly homeland where all our troubles cease in eternal peace with our risen living Lord, Jesus Christ.

May St Joachim and St Anne, parents of Mary, grandparents of Jesus, bless you and your families all the days of your life.

With love and prayers

Catherine Wiley

Founder of The Catholic
Grandparents Association

A PRAYER FOR THE WELL-BEING OF OUR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN

St Ambrose reminds us that "God does not hear our words; He hears our hearts."

Heavenly Father, we lift up our children and grandchildren to You, asking for Your abundant blessings on their lives. May they be surrounded by Your love, guided by Your wisdom, and protected by Your mighty hand. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE MESSAGE OF A SAINT TO INSPIRE OUR GRANDCHILDREN

One of the many gifts that the lives of the saints help us with is inspiring us to be that little bit more holy and faith filled. The stories of the saints can also be very powerful for our grandchildren, as we explain that the saints were ordinary people just like us – none more so than Blessed Carlos Acutis, who passed away in 2006 at the age of 15, due to leukaemia.

Blessed Carlo Acutis will be canonized on 27 April this year. He was known for his deep devotion to the Catholic faith and his adept use of technology to share religious content and is set to become the first millennial saint.

Carlos has been admired for his work creating a website documenting Eucharistic miracles worldwide. His beatification took place in October 2020, and the recognition of a second miracle in 2024—an essential step in the progress to sainthood—marks the final phase to recognition that he has joined the eternal congregation.

Carols Acutis is celebrated not only for his piety but also for his ability to integrate his faith with modern technology, resonating deeply with young Catholics around the globe. He spent

many hours honing his skills as a computer programmer while remaining committed to prayer and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, showing that we can embrace the modern world and still remain firmly rooted in faith.

There is a wealth of information about Carlos Acutis available online to share with young people; why not have a look and share the story?

Source: [catholic.com](https://www.catholic.com)



A FEW WORDS FROM OUR DIOCESAN LEADS, MICHAEL AND CHRISTINE EVANS

We came together as the leads of the Grandparents' Parish Groups in February at the St Philip Howard Centre in Crawley and on Zoom, to spend time together, share our experiences and progress and to explore ideas for the year ahead. Members from Eastbourne, Effingham, Hastings, Henfield, Horsham with prospective group leaders from Brighton and Haywards Heath were able to meet, either in person or by Zoom, with Deacon Simon South, and Bishop Richard who joined us at lunchtime, with words of encouragement and gratitude.

Simon spoke of what he sees as a growing part of the mission of Grandparents in helping to build continuity in parishes for families in between the reception of the Sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation, the Holy Eucharist and Confirmation. This acknowledgement of how we can support, not just our own families but others in parishes, is exciting. We discussed how we can open our meetings up so that all who care that youngsters are growing up to have a loving

relationship with God can feel included in our meetings. In Horsham, godparents, great-aunts & uncles are welcomed as "honorary grandparents."

With Julia from East Brighton Parish and Pat from Haywards Heath hoping to find out more about our groups, it was interesting to hear from David and Johanna leading the newest group in Hastings. They have terrific support from their Parish Priest, Fr Eamonn Monson, who having been to the launch meeting, offers Mass for grandparents before every monthly meeting and its speakers, discussion, activities and prayer.

It is good to have dates in the diary for our Annual Pilgrimage which this year will be held at Worth on Wednesday 11 June and our Annual Formation Day, taking place once again at the St Philip Howard Centre on Thursday 25 September.



DATES FOR 2025

Wednesday 11 June: Grandparents' Pilgrimage at Worth Abbey

Thursday 25 September: Grandparents' Formation Day at The St Philip Howard Centre, Crawley.

HASTINGS AND ST LEONARDS GRANDPARENTS' AND OLDER PERSONS' GROUP

Our group continues to meet on the third Wednesday of every month, following Mass celebrated by Fr Eamonn Monson.

In December, some of our group had Christmas lunch with Hastings Old Town Monday Club, which was an enjoyable time for everyone.

In January, we had a time of sharing our news from the Christmas period. People were quite open about matters which were of concern to them, especially loneliness, illness, coming to the end of life, and from this meeting we asked our parish priest, Fr Eamonn, if he would be willing to talk to us at a future meeting about Hope in Adversity.

In February, we had a joint meeting with the Monday Club, organised by Claire Power, on the Pope's Encyclical, [Laudato Si](#), which was delivered by Jane Ripley, an environmentalist. The problems caused by climate change will, of course, be more severe for future generations and we, as grandparents, were encouraged to be more aware of the part we can all play in reducing emissions.

In March, Fr Eamonn gave us a well-received talk on Hope in Adversity, saying that we all have within us the core life of the Spirit, and that hope comes from our faith. Whilst we are in pain when we see our families in trouble, the gift of the Spirit can support and guide us through difficult times. In our next meeting, we will revisit this topic and discuss aspects which people might find helpful.

We also value just meeting together in friendship for a quiet catch-up and refreshments. People value this time as an opportunity to discuss concerns, seek advice from others and generally share in a caring and supportive environment. We always have prayers at the start and end of meetings, with a lighted candle.

Johanna, Ellen and David



**For more information on
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