

## Reflection on the Catholic Grandparents Association

Going back over the years, the Grandparents and the Elderly were the silent minority. They were never really appreciated for the work and help they were to young families. But then through an inspiration that Catherine Wiley (Founder of the Catholic Grandparents Assoc.) had at Our Lady's Shrine in Walsingham, in England, as she prayed on the 8<sup>th</sup> of September 2001, (Our Lady's Birthday), she wondered what she could do as a birthday present for her.

She had just become a grandparent herself, and thought, if she did something to honour Our Lady's Parents, she would be happy. Then thinking that Ss. Joachim and Anne were actually the human grandparents of Jesus, she organised a Pilgrimage to the Shrine for the next year to say 'Thank You to Our Lady' and to honour the Grandparents of Jesus. So, the seed for the Catholic Grandparents Association was sown. The next year it spread to Knock Shrine and is now thriving there and all over the world. The mission of the Catholic Grandparents Association is: - *'to help Grandparents pass on the faith, to value and support them in that role and keep prayer at the heart of family life.'*

Grandparents have gone into the schools to explain about the Rosary and how to say it. They have given Rosary Beads to the children, Miraculous Medals, and Prayer Books. They have held Mass on the Feast Day and presented Symbols of our Faith and gave a copy of the Special Grandparents Prayer written by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI for the Association to each member of the Congregation.

Our Founder Catherine Wiley had constantly asked Pope Francis to instigate a Special Day of Prayer for Grandparents. On the 30<sup>th</sup> of January 2022 after he said the Angelus, he announced that the last Sunday in July was from then on in the Church a Special Day of Prayer for Grandparents and the Elderly. He said he was one now himself and would like to be included.

Grandparents and the Elderly are now so well respected and appreciated. It has been highlighted how important they are in minding grandchildren, bringing them to school, teaching them prayers and bringing them to Mass, bringing them into the Church during the day, showing them the Stations of the Cross, the stain glass windows, the statues and how to be reverent in the Church, and bless them with the Holy Water.

This year the Grandparents and the Elderly Pilgrimage is on Sunday, the 28<sup>th</sup> of July (the Sunday nearest the Feast Day of Ss. Joachim and Anne 26<sup>th</sup>). It is one of the biggest Pilgrimages to Knock.

God bless all Grandparents and the Elderly. Your Church needs you. Your Family needs you. You are appreciated.

Betty Murphy (Carlow)