

Daily Devotions for Grandmothers



Donna-Marie Cooper O'Boyle

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By Donna-Marie Cooper O'Boyle



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*Lovingly for my children:
Justin, Chaldea, Jessica, Joseph, and Mary-Catherine
and my grandchildren: Shepherd and Leo
For my dear Grandmother: Alexandra Uzwiak
with a grateful heart to the Blessed Virgin Mary
and loving thanks to the great Saint Anne,
Patroness of Grandmothers*



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Acknowledgments

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Introduction

Is your name “Grandma”? Or are you “Nonna,” “Grammie,” “Granny,” or “Mimi”? Are you “Nana,” “Gram,” “Abuela,” “Yamma,” or “Yaya”? Perhaps you are “Lola,” “Meme,” or “NaiNai.” The list for the many endearing names for grandmothers goes on and on. Sometimes, the grandchild chooses the name for his or her grandmother. One day, he or she expresses it—and it sticks!

I’ll never forget meeting and holding my first grandchild, Shepherd, on the day he was born. My heart was filled with a special love I had never experienced. I find it almost too precious to express. This same experience happened with my second grandchild, Leo, a few years later. My heart was bursting with grandmotherly love when he came into the world. The remarkable blessing of grandmother love grows as I grow with Leo and his big brother Shepherd.

I chose the name “Grandma” when my oldest daughter, Chaldea, asked me what I would like my grandchildren to call me. I didn’t hesitate in telling her. My own grandmother was named “Grandma,” and I desired to be like her!

My heart holds vivid memories of my own grandmother, the only one of my grandparents I knew, since the others had passed on before I was born. My grandmother’s vibrant faith and

inspiring trust in God certainly stirred the embers of faith in my little heart as a child. Watching her finger her rosary beads and experiencing the joie de vivre expressed through her sparkling eyes and beautiful smile proved to me that my Grandma was indeed an integral part of my life. Her example of love and grace nourished my heart then, and it still does now as I recall her love and care. I am sure that she prays for me from Heaven.

A grandmother's love is so incredible and unique. I have no doubt that God blesses grandparents with an exceptional and even heroic love for their grandchildren. As I explain to others when they ask about it, "There is nothing like it!"

Grandmothers fill such a significant role in their grandchildren's lives. In addition to the many things that grandparents do for their grandchildren—loving them, caring for them, and perhaps even helping raise them—their unique loving relationship provides a sense of security and support for the grandchildren. Children who are close to their grandparents tend to have fewer behavioral and emotional problems. They become resilient and are better able to deal with trauma and stress. Adult grandchildren also benefit from advice and the life experiences shared by their grandparents. At the same time, studies show that grandparents become healthier too! Years are added to their lives when they are lovingly involved with their grandchildren.

In addition, there is something else that is so amazing to consider about grandmothers, mothers, and grandchildren: every single egg that a woman will ever have in her reproductive system was developed when she was a fetus residing inside her mother's uterus. This means that while your mother was in your grandmother's womb, the egg that would later be you resided inside there too. You started your life inside of your grandmother! This also means that, if you have given birth to a daughter, then your grandchildren

were just eggs inside of her when she was inside of you! It is pretty incredible to ponder.

As wonderful as this close biological bond may be, it's important to acknowledge that the vocation of being a grandmother can be challenging. A grandmother I know shared with me that she has shed many tears over her role. She thought it would be very different from what she experienced. With time and prayer, she now views her role in a new light. My friend began to understand that there was a whole lot more involved in being a grandmother. For instance, sometimes, there's the challenge of not interfering with the way in which the parents are raising the grandchildren. Here is where continual prayer for her grandchildren's spiritual well-being comes into play.

Another challenge grandmothers may face is that not everyone has the blessing of seeing her grandchildren regularly because they might live far from one another. My grandchildren live about a three-hour drive from me. I wish they were next door! When we cannot get together in person, we do videoconferencing. I thank God for modern technology.

Some grandparents may not be able to see their grandchildren at all. They may be estranged in some way—perhaps because of broken families or because the adult children have left the Church and don't want their churchgoing parents (the grandparents) to influence their children. Or, if the grandchildren are older, they themselves may be in conflict with their grandparents. In these or many other scenarios, grandmothers may hold intense pain in their hearts because they cannot see their grandchildren. For example, I met a woman at one of my speaking engagements who was sorrowful over her dilemma and asked my advice. Her son's Hindu wife prevented a relationship between her and the grandchildren. I suggested to this woman that she

earnestly appeal to her son and let him know how much she desires to be a part of her grandchildren's lives. In such sad situations when a grandmother cannot be directly involved with her grandchildren, however, she can rely on the spiritual aspect of her vocation and keep her family in prayer.

This spiritual aspect of being a grandmother can even extend to women who do not have grandchildren of their own. For example, I know a grandmother who is not a biological grandmother. She was chosen as an honorary grandmother by a priest at her parish so that a little girl would not be alone on Grandparents' Day. They have continued their relationship into the girl's adult life. Whether "official" or honorary, every grandmother is exceptional and perhaps even tailor-made!

I wrote *Daily Devotions for Grandmothers* to provide a daily devotional for Catholic grandmothers of all kinds and in all situations, knowing that they will greatly benefit from encouragement, affirmation, and Church teaching, as well as many tips, anecdotes, and compelling stories. I am praying that the reflections will uplift weary hearts while offering a great big dose of hope to grandmothers who might not fully realize how important their unique vocation is in the eyes of God, or those who might be anxious about the well-being of their grandchildren. I pray as well that this book will help those grandmothers who already know of their God-given vocation but would welcome the daily inspiration to strengthen their journey. Not every reflection specifically pertains to being a grandmother, but all can be assured that this book will be infused with much nourishment for their spiritual journey.

Enjoy *Daily Devotions for Grandmothers*. May it stir your heart and nourish your faith! Perhaps you'll pour yourself a soothing cup of hot tea to sip as you do your daily reflections. Envision Mother

Mary with you and allow the reflections to “steep” in your heart as you “savor” throughout the day, giving thanks to God for such a sublime vocation.

What an amazing gift to be part of a family in which parents, grandparents, and children all help one another to get to Heaven! May God bless your beautiful and unique vocation as a grandmother. Rejoice in every moment, knowing that God hears your prayers for your grandchildren.

Yours in Jesus, Mary, and Joseph,

DONNA-MARIE COOPER O’BOYLE

July 26, 2018, Feast of Saint Anne and Saint Joachim,
Parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary
and Grandparents of Jesus

How to Use This Book

Each part of the book (or month) has a specific theme based on popular Catholic tradition. Each month is introduced with a pertinent quote from Scripture or Church tradition.

Every day of the year, *Daily Devotions for Grandmothers* will offer the opportunity to meditate upon Scriptural verses, quotes from the saints, or some aspect of Church teaching, as well as to ponder an inspiring story, to pray a suggested prayer that matches the theme of that day, and to savor a special takeaway throughout the day.

Each of the 366 reflections (or days) will have these five elements:

- ☞ An inspiring quote or verse from Scripture or Catholic teaching, which will correspond with the theme of the month.
- ☞ *Steep*: The short story, anecdote, or teaching to ponder.
- ☞ *Act*: A suggestion for a way to put the day's reflection into action.
- ☞ *Pray*: A short original prayer to pray that day.
- ☞ *Savor*: A takeaway "spoonful of honey" to savor in your heart that day.

Though each day's reflections cover a lot of territory, it should only take about five to ten minutes to read, steep, act, pray, and savor (or you can carry out the "Act" at another time during the day when you are able). Hopefully, you can savor each theme all throughout the day.

Enjoy every day!

JANUARY

The Holy Name of Jesus

Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus. . . .

Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

PHILIPPIANS 2:4–5, 9–11

January 1

[This is] a fitting occasion for renewing adoration of the newborn Prince of Peace, for listening once more to the glad tidings of the angels (cf. Lk 2:14), and for imploring from God, through the Queen of Peace, the supreme gift of peace.¹

SAINT PAUL VI

STEEP While still in the heart of the Christmas season, we celebrate the Solemnity of the Mother of God, Mary's greatest title (and she has many!). We are reminded of Mary's significance in the life of her Son, Jesus. On this day set aside to celebrate Mary's motherhood, we can also consider the significance of our own role and importance in the lives of our grandchildren.

Mary's grand solemnity may be drowned out by noisy New Year's celebrations. While celebrating the New Year, we must not neglect our dearest Mother in Heaven on her special day of honor.

ACT Include Mother Mary in your New Year's celebrations. Express your love to her and ask her for "the supreme gift of peace" in your heart and in the world.

PRAY Dear Mother Mary, thank you for being my Mother. Please guide me and watch over my grandchild(ren).

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be.

SAVOR Mary is my Mother! I should call upon her often.

January 2

Very truly, I tell you, if you ask anything of the Father in my name, he will give it to you.

JOHN 16:23

STEEP January is traditionally dedicated to the Holy Name of Jesus. His is indeed a holy name. The second commandment instructs, “You shall not take the Name of the Lord your God in vain.” Yet sadly, many abuse it.

As a grandmother, you can teach your grandchildren to show reverence to Jesus. Bowing our heads upon hearing His Name, making the Sign of the Cross when passing a church, and offering a prayer when someone uses the Lord’s name in vain are all ways we can set an example for them to follow.

ACT Pray the Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus (page 409) throughout this month to grow in reverence for Jesus and His Holy Name and to make reparation for sins against His Name.

PRAY Dear Jesus, I love You. Forgive me for all the times I have not loved You and when I do not love You as I should. Please transfigure my heart so I may be a grace-filled grandmother.

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be.

SAVOR Jesus is the Name above all names!

January 3

Grandchildren are the crown of the aged,
and the glory of children is their parents.

PROVERBS 17:6

STEEP Grandchildren are an integral part of the family. The love that my own aged grandmother poured out on me and her many grandchildren, as well as the seeds of faith that she planted in my soul, made an unforgettable impression on my little heart as a child, and still do now that I am a grandmother myself.

Grandparents' love and prayers for their family are powerful! We might not see the fruits of the prayers we pray day in and day out. However, we must believe that our Lord certainly hears the prayers of a faithful grandparent.

ACT Tell God that you trust His holy will regarding your grandchildren. Pray for families who do not experience real love and care.

PRAY Jesus, I trust in You! Dear Mother Mary, please guide me and protect my grandchild(ren) from all evil.

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be.

SAVOR God hears my prayers. Prayer changes things!

January 4

Let there be thanks to you, my sweetness, my honor, my trust,
my God, let there be thanks to you for your gifts.²

SAINT AUGUSTINE

STEEP I remember waking up from my afternoon naps as a toddler. My grandmother was sitting right next to me, holding some sort of sweet confection. Waking up to her smiling face and cheerful demeanor was always a happy surprise and a sure comfort to my little heart. In addition, I was filled with eagerness to partake in her tasty treat!

A grandmother's presence speaks volumes, and its sweetness can remind us this month of the sweetness of the Name of Jesus. My grandmother did "small things with great love," as Mother Teresa often preached. Little things aren't so little when, by God's grace, the beautiful power of love is transported through them!

ACT Call upon the "sweet Name of Jesus" often today, and do your best to be present to your family.

PRAY Dear Jesus, I love You. Please help me each day to be a faith-filled grandmother.

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be.

SAVOR Jesus strengthens virtue in my heart, sparks good works through me, and nourishes pure affection.

January 5

But they urged [Jesus] strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.”

LUKE 24:29

STEEP I’ll never forget saying goodbye to my grandson Shepherd and hearing him utter the sweetest one-word statement. I had gently prepared him for my departure. Yet when it was time to leave, two-year-old Shepherd squeezed me tighter. He stuttered, trying to come up with just the right word. Then, he blurted out an urgent appeal: “Stay!”

That single word completely melted my heart. The exceptional love of a little grandson for his Grandma can be almost too precious to express!

ACT “Stay” present to your grandchildren today in a visit, a phone call, videoconferencing, or in prayer. If you can, “stay” a bit longer in prayer with God today.

PRAY Dear Jesus, Blessed Mother Mary, and Saint Anne, please watch over me and my family. Thank you, dear Lord, for the gift of my distinctive vocation!

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be.

SAVOR God strengthens my vocation as a grandmother with His joy.

January 6

Jesus, Strength of Martyrs, have mercy on us.

LITANY OF THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS

STEEP In the early Church, beginning with the apostles, martyrs suffered excruciating persecution. Some were stoned to death, crucified, or burned at the stake. In our own day, Christians continue to be persecuted.

There also exist the quiet martyrs who offer their sufferings to God as a form of reparation for sin. While we might not face physical martyrdom in our daily lives, we may sometimes experience this quiet martyrdom of suffering in our role as grandmothers. But we can have hope that our suffering will bear fruit! When meditating on the suffering of Jesus, Saint Faustina lamented that she did “next to nothing for the salvation of souls.” Jesus assured her that her “silent day-to-day martyrdom” ushered many souls into Heaven.³

ACT Offer your daily difficulties and sufferings to Jesus. Ask Him to redeem them for His glory and the good of others.

PRAY Dear Jesus, Strength of Martyrs, please grant me courage and strength. Holy martyrs, pray for me.

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be.

SAVOR When offered lovingly, my day-to-day martyrdom of monotony and “pin pricks” can help to save souls.

January 7

All the works of My hands are crowned with mercy.

JESUS TO SAINT FAUSTINA, *DIARY*, 301

STEEP We are called to be merciful people, taking after our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet it's not always easy to be merciful, especially when someone harms us in some way. But God bids us to holiness and mercy—to choose the high road. This doesn't mean that abuse should be tolerated, but rather that we should respond with charity instead of retaliation.

Within the family setting, mercy and forgiveness should become common practices. Each day we can choose to grow in holiness or to go the other way—not to be merciful and loving. Some days are harder than others, but by imitating Jesus in His great mercy, we can be amazing examples to our grandchildren.

ACT Choose to be merciful today.

PRAY Dear Jesus, I am not always a merciful person. Yet I want to be, to please You and to help others. Please help me.

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be.

SAVOR Jesus is all about mercy. I should always imitate Him.

January 8

Our Lady of Prompt Succor, for observing perseverance in virtue and good works, pray for us.

LITANY OF OUR LADY OF PROMPT SUCCOR

STEEP How often we need to call on Mama Mary, whom we celebrate today as Our Lady of Prompt Succor. Yet we might hesitate, thinking she is too far removed, too busy, or perhaps wouldn't understand our suffering. Certainly, Mary knows about joys, sorrows, and the deepest pain. After all, she stood by the Cross of her Son and held His lifeless Body after He died.

Jesus gave us the beautiful gift of His own Mother when He was hanging on the Cross: "Here is your mother" (Jn 19:27). Our Lady is prompt to give us aid. We can be sure of it.

ACT Share your joys and your sorrows with Mary today.

PRAY Jesus, thank You for the amazing gift of Your Mother! Mother Mary, please mother me. Help me to mother others.

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be.

SAVOR Mother Mary teaches endless wisdom. I don't need to fear calling upon her.

January 9

And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.

LUKE 1:45

STEEP During the war between Russia and Ukraine, more than a million Ukrainians fled their home country, crossing the three-hundred-mile border to Poland after Russia invaded. My heart was deeply touched by the numerous news stories about compassionate Polish mothers and grandmothers leaving their baby strollers on the platform at train stations, along with photojournalist Francesco Malavolta's viral photo of the strollers. The strollers were stuffed with blankets and baby items in order to help the Ukrainian parents who had fled their war-torn country. I can only imagine the feelings of the desperate mothers with babes in arms coming upon the gifts of strollers awaiting them.

ACT Talk with your family about ways to help those who are unfortunate in some way. Endeavor to carry out your plans.

PRAY Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for the gift of life and the opportunity to help others in need. Mother Mary, please give me a compassionate heart like yours.

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be.

SAVOR How blessed I am to believe in our Lord and to help others believe.

January 10

I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

MARK 11:24

STEEP Are we asking enough in prayer? Do we trust that God will answer our prayers? The answers are really quite simple—spelled out succinctly in our verse above.

Our prayers are always answered. Yes, you read that correctly. The thing is, prayers might not be answered in the manner we had hoped. We don't always get what we want. We might not understand it, but there is always a perfect reason. After all, God only wants what is best for us so that we make it to Heaven one day. Sometimes, God allows us to wait, or to wonder, or to perhaps suffer a bit longer to earn graces for ourselves and others. We have to hang in there and trust God!

ACT Make many Acts of Trust: *Jesus, I trust in You.* And wholeheartedly trust Him as the Divine Physician Who knows exactly what you need and when!

PRAY Dear Jesus, I trust in You!

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be.

SAVOR So much happens in the waiting when we surrender our hearts to God. He knows what is best for our souls.

January 11

Jesus, our Way and our Life, have mercy on us.

LITANY OF THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS

STEEP I love my family and my faith! If you visited my home, you would observe lots of family photos all around but also many sacred images and statues. God calls us to teach the faith and make our homes a domestic church—a blessed place where we learn and grow together in holiness. Adding sacred art, spiritual music, and times for quiet are a few examples of ways you can set the tone in your own domestic church. These additions to our environment can uplift our own spirits, reminding us to pray and make wise decisions, but they also can inspire our visitors.

ACT Ponder ways you can make your home more welcoming and holy.

PRAY Dear Jesus, I want to be holy! Please help me inspire others with Your love.

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be.

SAVOR It doesn't matter if we live in a cave, a palace, or an apartment. Every home can thrive in the love of God.