

GrandCamp celebrates courageous grandparenting

Writer's Note: Below is my interview with Gwen and Jim Colfer, Holy Apostles' parishioners and authors of the GrandCamp Field Guide.

Why is grandparenting so important in today's culture?

The culture has changed so dramatically since we were raising our children that it often takes much more than the two parents to raise godly kids with a relationship with Jesus who will carry them through the tough times. Our son-in-law, Bobby, says it best in our GrandCamp Field Guide: "Grandparent[s] who love their children and grandchildren should jump at the opportunity to play a bigger role in the lives of their offspring. Passing on traditions, history and values at the most critical moments in a young child's life is not the work of parents alone. It takes an effort by everyone concerned with equipping strong children to handle the challenges of today's shifting world."

"Often young marriages are filled with stress, having to raise children with both parents working, and coming home exhausted from their day on the job. It is hard to find the slots of time available to talk with their children about important issues. Today's culture is so different from that of decades past that grandparents need to make themselves available to assume a larger role in raising their grandchildren," said Jim.

What is intentional or "courageous" grandparenting?

"Intentional" or "courageous" grandparenting differs from traditional grandparenting in this way: Intentional or courageous grandparents dare to be a different kind of grandparent from that normally seen in our culture. Courageous grandparents prioritize around planning intentional ways to communicate and spend time with our grandchildren in specifically meaningful ways. While it is important to plan fun times with our 'grands', it is, at the same time, important to plan for ways to have discussions with them about the "important stuff" in their lives. It requires making a plan for giving them Biblically-based direction for solving their daily problems, for how to cope with a secular world that is often antithetical to our Christian values and for how to establish and grow a personal relationship with Jesus.

Courageous grandparents don't simply look to recreational pursuits, travel and leisure ad infinitum, as is often the case with the retired generation. Instead they look for ways to contribute courageously to the all important task of passing on our faith to our grandchildren in intentional ways.



*Jay Wonacott - Director
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We actually have dedicated hundreds of hours over the past eight years to making a plan for and executing this goal. We've only been able to accomplish this with the superb help of the most amazing grandparenting resource: Christian Grandparenting Network, which can be found at www.christiangrandparenting.net. The best book to enable a full understanding of this concept can be obtained at: www.christiangrandparenting.net/shop/courageous-grandparenting/.

What is GrandCamp?

GrandCamp is a grandparent and grandchild camp program. The vision is to "give grandparents opportunity to build a grand faith-adventure experience with their grandchildren that truly matters both in this life and eternity. Our desire was to build an environment where their relationship with each other would grow into something special, and where they would grow in their relationship with Lord..."

It is our conviction that given the opportunity to

share the story of God's redemption and grace, in the context of meaningful and memorable experiences removed from the typical distractions of life, this will build a legacy that will have a profound impact on another generation – our grandchildren. We also believe that a 'camp' environment (not necessarily rustic) is the perfect context for that process.

We have attended four of the "official GrandCamps" where only the grandparents and grandchildren camp together, and then after that, we embarked on creating our own special GrandCamps for the next four years. We always chose entertainment-friendly venues, where the kids and we could have fun together in the daytime and early evening. Then we could devote the rest of the evening to all six of us sharing our experiences of living the faith in our everyday lives, with Bible stories and verses as our authority and guide. We had deep discussions about the "important stuff" in their lives that we will treasure forever!

What's the impact of attending a GrandCamp?

Our daughter-in-law, Susan Colfer, says in the Guide, "For the kids, they have had an opportunity to develop a relationship with their grandparents that I have not seen in many other households, including my own as a child. They have grown incredibly close to the grandparents and feel comfortable talking to them about so many facets of their lives. GrandCamp has helped bridge the generational gap that has become quite broad in our society. It

is common for many kids not to spend a lot of time with their elders, and GrandCamp has helped foster a sense of respect for the elder generation. It also gave the kids a sense of responsibility and pride in being able to help their grandparents with some of the day-to-day skills while they were together."

How can people get involved with a GrandCamp?

For starters, the National Grandparents' Day of Prayer is celebrated on Sunday, September 10. This is an opportunity for grandparents to pray for their children and grandchildren. Free resources are available at: www.grandparentsdayofprayer.com. If you are grandparent and would like more information about help to launch a GrandCamp in Idaho, please contact the Gwen or Jim Colfer at: christiangrandparents@gmail.com or www.grandcamps.org or www.grandcamps.org/grandcamp-field-guide/.

Guest commentary

Prison ministry important part of Father O'Sullivan's work

By John Mebane

While your August 4 article about the passing of Father John O'Sullivan was very informative, it left out a very important part of Father's work.

As you can no doubt tell from my address, I am a prison inmate here in Idaho.

For many years, Father O'Sullivan was a significant part of the prison ministry in this area.

He was faithfully here every other Sunday to celebrate Mass and taught a weekly catechism class.

If Catholic materials were needed at the prison, he either found someone to donate them or, more likely, quietly purchased them himself.

Believe me, Father O'Sullivan was no meek Irishman. Just ask anyone who talked in the sanctuary during Mass or any of the Catholic inmates who told me that if I watched the movie, "The Da Vinci Code," that I couldn't become Catholic. (Father felt that while the story was inaccurate, it did have a message for us and that watching a movie was not what determined who could or could not become Catholic.)

We learned that the easiest way to get him sidetracked during catechism class was to ask his thoughts about Easter egg hunts.

Apparently, in a particular parish, Father was

quite vocal when the children wanted him to speed things up during Mass so the hunt could begin!

It took this firm, no-nonsense priest to bring a very wayward "prodigal son" into the church in 2007.

As a teen-ager, I had been physically abused by two supposedly godly leaders from another denomination.

It took this 80-year-old priest with his Irish temperament to show me by his example what a true servant of Christ is supposed to do and how he should live his life.

Father O'Sullivan dedicated his life to being a true servant to all his fellow men, even teaching a future president of Ghana. He no doubt was joyfully welcomed into heaven by the one, true King of Kings.

Watch over us from heaven, my dear friend.



Photo courtesy of Bill Molitor