

## Grandmothers to the Rescue!

The “wisdom of the ages” is a terrible thing to waste – especially when it can save the world

*Virginia Rathbun*

What is one antidote to the dissolution of our society and the corruption of our young? Is there a group of people who can counter the messages of relativism, materialism and instant-gratification that the society trumpets? Is there a sleeping giant ready to awaken for the right cause?

There is! This group of people handed down tradition, religious belief and wisdom for centuries, and was respected and still is in many third world cultures.

They are grandparents, and more often, grandmothers, and they are needed today more than ever.

Many of today’s grandparents have lived to see the calamitous results of the

1960s rebellion against Judeo-Christian values in favor of hedonism, which puts them in a unique position to reject the culture’s approval of vice and sin, and articulate a case for the return of virtue and faith.

As women are often the glue that binds families, as well as the primary nurturers, we have great power and influence over our young. Since the culture is an adversarial force in the influential areas of education, entertainment and law, there must be strong reinforcements on the side of the family. Absent much loving guidance and instruction, what will be the moral formation of this generation of young people? If we consider some of the tragic events of the last ten years – the destruction of the twin towers, the two wars we are fighting in the Middle East, the country’s financial crises and the sporadic killings that have occurred in our schools – it is clear that the country of “amber waves of grain” that our ancestors grew up in and the values that unite the people of this country are both in great peril.

Tradition, faith and the elders of a society are its spiritual and corporal roots. Severed from its roots, a society is doomed to perish. Ultimately, it is only the youth that can save this country from either disintegration from within or enemies from without. But who will give them the tools they need, both



spiritual and practical to accomplish this daunting task?

Parents lack time and energy, often working long hours just to stay financially afloat. Children have worse role models and more personal autonomy than ever before, a lethal combination for young minds and souls. Cell phones and computers allow the young to access porn and indulge in sexual sin. Because of constant stimulation through technology and our culture of instant gratification young people lack patience, self-control and good judgment. This leaves them vulnerable to corruption by every new toxic fad and ideology that gets pumped out of Madison Avenue, Hollywood and Academia.

For decades this country has worshipped at the altar of youth. This attitude marginalizes seniors and convinces them that their day in the sun is long gone. And many feel they have earned the right to relax and enjoy themselves. They have. But isn't the time spent helping a wayward child more of a real joy than golfing? Should we fiddle while Rome burns?

If we want to be taken seriously by a generation that needs us, we must assume the role of wisdom bearer.

Modern science supports us. A recent article by Jeffrey Kluger entitled "Gray Hair and Wise Brains" featured in a 2009 Time magazine special, *Your Brain: A User's Guide*, states that families need the wise judgment and powers of analysis that only come with what brain research scientists refer to as the "crystallized intelligence" of elders. We must not hide our light under a bushel.

## **Grandmothers and women of grace and age to the rescue**

In many third world cultures, a grandmother is accorded much dignity. She has wisdom – the fruit of experience and spiritual growth. She does not need to imitate the young in their quest for amusement and beauty. She knows the real purpose of life and the timeless value of inner beauty.

As women of grace, if any of us walked the wide road of destruction in our youth, God gives us a chance to redeem ourselves by reaching out to this troubled generation of youth. If as parents we were too consumed by materialism or other cares and we neglected to properly instill the faith into our children, again, the Lord gives us another chance. Therefore, is it not morally imperative for the sake of saving our souls, as well as the souls of our loved ones and those of future generations, that we take action?

A grandmother can be a powerful force for good within the family. A teenager may have an antagonistic relationship with his or her parents, but a warm relationship with a grandparent. Most parents would welcome any support a grandmother wants to give in the effort to instill faith and values in their children. A grandmother can be peacemaker, mediator, and a teacher of virtue. All she need do initially is express unconditional love to the grandchild and her desire to see him or her thrive and make healthy choices.

Three of the spiritual works of mercy are to instruct the ignorant, counsel the doubtful and console the sorrowful. Is there any doubt our young

are ignorant, and despite an exterior show of bravado, hurting and insecure inside? Sexually transmitted diseases are so pervasive nearly every sexually active teen is infected. They are suffering spiritually, physically and psychologically. A grandmother can make a very strong case for chastity to a teenager.

At first teens may seem unapproachable, but they know love when they feel it, and they know sensible advice when they hear it. A grandmother can tell a teen all the mistakes she has seen others make and the consequences they suffered. She can correct prejudices and misconceptions the child may have about our faith. Just by giving her love and time, she is a model of attentiveness, empathy, and self-donation – a beautiful example to a teenager of what real love is.

A grandmother can inform the teen of the cardinal virtues of justice, wisdom, moderation and courage. She can share stories of the saints in ways that are relevant to some struggles a teen may be going through. A long-distance grandmother can write letters. A grandmother's words can also find their way into another child's ears when the grandchild shares some good advice with friends.

Wisdom spreads horizontally into the culture and vertically down the generations. Wisdom has always been passed down orally or by the written word. Few young people today read because of the distraction of technology. How much more important are our words? And will God not bless such acts of love and selflessness? He is in on any good work we undertake.



The baby boom generation knows how to fight for a cause. It famously labeled itself the ME generation and insisted on peace while it declared war on the family, the church and the culture.

Now, we know who the real ME is. It is He who said, I AM. And we also know the real war. The forces of darkness have always sought to indoctrinate the youth against God and family and rid society of faith and tradition. Can we see the ominous signs of euthanasia on the horizon? Is this the poetic justice coming to a generation that pushed for abortion rights?

Our calling couldn't be clearer. Though I speak of grandmothers, no older woman is excluded from this mission. If you are someone's aunt or a member of a church or community, you are also called.

Grandparents and all wisdom bearers have the opportunity to leave a powerful legacy. What will be that legacy? Money gifts, and the message that materialism saves? Or will it be a legacy of helping to guide a soul to its Maker and its eternal destiny?

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*Virginia Rathbun is a freelance writer, wife, mother and grandmother from Peoria, Arizona.*