

A Grand Mum's Love

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I really miss my grandparents. I always remember them at my Masses as a priest. If I have attained any height in life, it is thanks to them. Their encouragement and love were top notch. In as much as I cannot discard the unreserved love of my parents growing up; I always know that the love and prayers of my grandparents were the real deal. Those old guys know how to pamper you and make you feel special. At times they overvalue you and challenge you to reach your goals.

I miss those impromptu vegetable and okra soup from my maternal granny and the mkpafefere (African Rosewood plant) and ekporoko (stock fish) soup from my paternal granny. We often travel to the village either maternal or paternal to visit our grandparents without any prior notice (there were no mobile phones at that time) and once we arrive my grand mum will enter her garden just at the backyard to get some vegetables, fresh okro or mkpafefere and quickly she will prepare a very delicious and nutritious soup for us. Even if you said that you just finished eating from the house in the city before coming down to the village that wouldn't be a sufficient reason to reject granny's food.

After eating she will ask if you need more. Then she will ask you about how you are doing in school, if you have done your assignments and if you have passed all your exams. Then she will ask you about life in general. And once you guys are ready to go back she will squeeze some currencies into your hand so that you will buy snacks in school during break time. As kids sometimes, we took such gestures for granted but as grown-ups we now understand that those gestures meant so much for a young boy growing up.

Because, I am fortunate to be born into families with strong religious backgrounds on both sides, I always have this feeling that my grandparents were more religious than I am even as a priest. They really animated and encouraged my vocation to the priesthood. I was so unfortunate not to have any of them live to see my day of ordination. On my first thanksgiving Mass I mentioned them specifically during the memento. They really played a crucial role in my growing up. And I am convinced that they are now in a better place praying for us who still struggle in this valley of tears.

I remember vividly those days when we were on holidays at the village, my maternal grand mum will take I and my younger brother on her bicycle for the Morning Prayers at the station and Morning Masses the parish centre (especially on First Fridays for the Sacred Heart Devotion). I can't ever forget that my first apostolic work as a minor seminarian, it was my grand mum who took me on her bicycle to the place of apostolic work in the summer of 1999. At the end of the Apostolic work (which lasted for about a month) she came again to take me back. How can one ever forget that? She was so devoted and committed, amazing and lovely.

Unfortunately, she died when we less expected. I remember that I was undergoing my Pastoral Year as an Auxiliary at a Girl's High School in the winter of 2010 when I was told that she passed away. It was a shocking news to me because she had been bubbling with life when we met during the last Christmas Family Get-Together. She really animated faith and devotion in me. We learnt so much from her. It's been

roughly about fourteen years she passed away yet her love and memories stay evergreen.

My paternal grand mum, on the other hand, passed away few months to my ordination, but before she embarked on that journey of eternity, she left a souvenir for her grandson who was about to become a priest – a complete set of priestly vestments. Such gesture of love in life and in death is undoubtedly unquantifiable.

I chose to pen down this reflection as a personal journal in tribute to my grandparents whose exemplary way of life and devotion impacted so much in the man I was to become. Indeed, love conquers all things and love is the greatest desire of humanity. The good men and women of yesteryears ought to inspire the good men of today and the future. Virtue is teachable says Plato. The virtue of love in our troubled world is the most desirable. Whoever has been taught and shown love should endeavour to teach and show same to others.

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