On July 26 the Roman Catholic Church commemorates the parents of the Virgin Mary, Saints Joachim and Anne. The couple's faith and perseverance brought them through the sorrow of childlessness, to the joy of conceiving and raising the immaculate and sinless woman who would give birth to Christ.

St. Joachim and St. Anne have been a part of the Church's liturgical calendar for many centuries. Devotion to their memory is particularly strong in the Eastern Catholic churches, where their intercession is invoked by the priest at the end of each Divine Liturgy. The Eastern churches, however, celebrate Sts. Joachim and Anne on a different date, Sept. 9.

Pope Benedict in July 2009 spoke about today's feast of Sts. Joachim and Anne, parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary and grandparents of Jesus.

The Pope then asked the faithful to pray for grandparents, "who in families are often the witnesses of the fundamental values of life."

"The educational role of grandparents is always very important and becomes even more so when, for various reasons, parents are unable to dedicate an adequate amount of time to their children. I entrust to the protection of St. Anne and St. Joachim all grandparents of the world, imparting a special blessing."