

Grandparents give eternal gifts

A grandfather was playing on the floor with his two-year-old grandson. Some change fell out of the grandfather's pocket. The little grandson picked the money up and handed it to his grandfather. "This is yours," he said. The grandfather handed the money back to the child and said: "Put this in your piggy bank."

The little boy thought for a moment and then he picked up a nickel, handed it to his grandfather and said: "You keep this. Give the rest to the poor!" A two-year-old!

Obviously, that little child showed the effect of some great parenting - and grandparenting.

This month we celebrate Father's Day. But this is also the month of June brides and June grooms! A perennial question new couples ask is: "Is this a good time to have children?" An obvious answer, aside from personal circumstances, is that every time is the right time to have children.

We live in an age that's filled with bad news. It's easy to conclude that this is a scary world and a dangerous world. Protecting ourselves with fear, however, never works. Fear only makes us anxious. Prudence protects us. Wisdom protects us. Fear only holds us back.

What is so easy to forget is that we are not simply reacting to the world, but we are in the process of creating the world. God has invited us to be co-creators with him - not just of life, but of quality life.

Someone has wisely said that "Children are the messengers we send to a world and a time we will never know." We need to send good messages and good messengers.

The best gift any couple can give to their children is to be good parents themselves. The world tells us a lot about looking good, getting stuff, having pleasures. The world doesn't tell us a lot about caring and compassion and love for the poor. The little boy mentioned above will be a wonderful message to our world and the world of the future.

Next to being great parents, the next best gift that couples can give is wonderful grandparents. Good grandparents are as close as it gets to experiencing God's unconditional love. And, in the best of circumstances, it works both ways. Grandparents feel unconditional love for the grandchildren and the grandchildren feel the love from them. There simply is no substitute for experiencing that kind of love early in life.

I preach, and I believe in, God's unconditional love. But I did not really have a relationship with either of my grandparents. I've never "felt" God's unconditional love. Since my own parents separated early in my life, I've carried anxieties and insecurities even into my "advanced" age.

So I have to confess that, at church gatherings, or any gatherings for that matter, when I see children running and laughing - delighting in life - I want to congratulate their parents and grandparents and extended family - aunts, uncles, cousins. The love that you are giving these children is not just a gift that lasts a lifetime. You are giving them a gift that lasts forever!