

Christmas Is Here, But Where Is Grandma Sue?

By Linda Ranson Jacobs

Christmas is almost here. All the stores have their Christmas decorations displayed. The mall is playing Christmas music, and at church people are singing Christmas carols at every service. Everywhere are Christmas sounds, smells, and decorations.

Even at Anna and Roman's house it looks like Christmas. Anna and Roman are in elementary school, and usually they are both really happy and excited about Christmas. But this year something is different. Their Grandma Sue died in October. Ever since then, their dad and mom have both seemed kind of sad. It was a surprise when they got the call that Grandma Sue had died. Their dad said she died in the middle of the night.

Anna wondered if that meant Grandma Sue died in her sleep. She kept trying to figure out if other people she loved were going to die in the middle of the night. The evening before the funeral, all Grandma Sue's friends and relatives came to the funeral home to pay their respect. Anna wasn't sure what "pay their respect" meant. All she knew was that many people were crying—and these were adult people. She had never seen adults cry before. When they cried, it made her cry. She was sad anyway, but when other people started crying, she did too. Her little brother Roman didn't cry. He was only in kindergarten, and Anna wondered if Roman really knew what was going on.

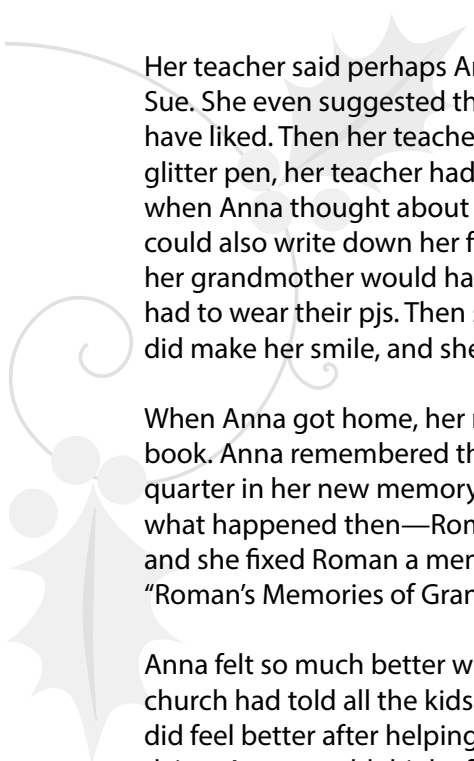
Anna missed her Grandma Sue very much. And now it was Christmas, and it didn't seem right that her Grandma wasn't going to be with them this year. It was Christmas, but where was Grandma Sue? Anna knew in her heart that Grandma Sue was in heaven. But she still missed her, and she wished she could have just one more Christmas with Grandma Sue.

Grandma Sue always made everything so special around Christmas. She fixed hot chocolate for Anna and Roman, and she put bunches of marshmallows in it. Grandma Sue had some special Christmas mugs that she put the hot chocolate in, and the three of them would always laugh and talk about what they wanted for Christmas while they drank their hot chocolate. Anna wondered if anyone was going to make hot chocolate this year for Christmas. And if so, would there be bunches of marshmallows in it? And what would they drink it out of?

Grandma Sue was always happy, and she would think up funny and silly things to do for Christmas. One time she made everyone wear pajamas to her house on Christmas Eve. She said if we didn't wear our pajamas and slippers, we wouldn't get a gift. When Dad said he didn't have any pajamas that looked nice, Grandma Sue said that's what she would buy him for Christmas. And you know what? That is exactly what she did, and when he opened his gift, everyone started laughing. Grandma Sue made him go put on his new pajamas and slippers.

Anna had so many questions about this death stuff. Her little brother, Roman, didn't seem upset at all. He just kept smiling all the time. Anna wondered if her family would have the same traditions this year. Her mom said maybe it was time to start some new traditions, but Anna wasn't sure she wanted to do that. If they did start new traditions, did that mean she didn't miss her grandma? Anna didn't want to forget her grandma. She could still remember what her hugs felt like and how she smelled and how Grandma Sue's skin felt when Grandma Sue hugged her.

Anna's Sunday school teacher said that Christmas is about Jesus' birth and His birthday. Her teacher said it was okay to be sad about Grandma Sue but that Anna could still be happy about Christmas. Anna didn't know about that. How could she be sad and happy at the same time? Anna wondered if she would ever be happy again because right now she felt very sad.



Her teacher said perhaps Anna might like to write down in a journal her favorite memory of Grandma Sue. She even suggested that Anna pick out a Christmas card that she thought Grandma Sue would have liked. Then her teacher gave her a special little notebook. On the front of the notebook using a glitter pen, her teacher had written “Anna’s Memories of Grandma Sue.” Her teacher said all year long when Anna thought about her grandmother, she could take out her book and write her thoughts. She could also write down her favorite Bible verses. So Anna glued in a Christmas card that she thought her grandmother would have liked. She wrote a story about last year at Christmas and how everyone had to wear their pjs. Then she drew a big smiley face at the end of that story. Remembering that story did make her smile, and she noticed she didn’t feel quite as sad as before.

When Anna got home, her mom suggested Anna put some pictures of Grandma Sue in her memory book. Anna remembered the last quarter Grandma Sue had given her, and she decided to put that quarter in her new memory book too. Then she showed her memory book to Roman. Well, you know what happened then—Roman wanted his own memory book about Grandma Sue. So Anna got busy, and she fixed Roman a memory book. On the front of the book she used glitter pens and wrote, “Roman’s Memories of Grandma Sue.”

Anna felt so much better when she was busy doing things. She remembered that her teacher at church had told all the kids that Christmas is a time of giving and helping other people. Hmmm, Anna did feel better after helping Roman. Maybe this Christmas when Anna was sad about Grandma Sue dying, Anna would think of ways to help someone else.

All of a sudden Anna remembered Grandma Sue’s favorite Christmas song. She told Roman about it, and they began singing it. While they were singing, their mom came in the room carrying a tray of Grandma Sue’s Christmas mugs of hot chocolate. She had found Grandma Sue’s Christmas mugs and had brought them home so they could drink hot chocolate out of them. She told Anna that every year they would get out the special Christmas mugs and drink hot chocolate out of them. And their mom had even put in bunches of marshmallows. Even though Grandma Sue wasn’t there with them, Anna knew she could always remember how special Christmas was when Grandma Sue had been alive. She knew she was still going to feel sad sometimes, but she knew it was okay to feel happy too.