

# Homily - The Memorial of Ss. Joachim & Anne

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Ex 32: 15-24, 30-34

Ps 106: 19-20, 21-22, 23

Mt 13: 31-35

The mother of the Madonna by Rev. Matthew Russell...

There is one sweet Saint above  
Whom I fear we do not love  
With the love which is her meed.  
Worthy of our love indeed  
Is the good and kind St. Anne:  
Let us praise her all we can.

She within whose virgin breast  
Babe Divine took sweetest rest,  
Jesus' Mother meek and mild.  
Nay, she is thy child on high -  
Where she reigns, though must be nigh.

Thine, O Mother! the delight  
To behold this blossom bright  
Opening out in beauty rare;  
Thine to hear her infant prayer;  
Thing with wondering love to trace  
Her increase in peerless grace.



Had'st thou gone from earth before  
Gabriel to Mary bore  
Marvellous message from above?  
Did thy tender Daughter's love  
Hover o'er thy parting breath.  
Sweetening the pang of death?

This we know not – but we know  
That in heaven, as here below  
Blessed Mary, meek and mild.  
Is thy grateful, loving child.  
Oh! how great thy power must be!  
Use it, kind St. Anne, for me.

Bid thy Daughter ask her Son  
To forgive the wrongs I've done  
And in spite of all to spare.  
She will heed her mother's prayer –  
And His Mother's prayer, 'tis plain,  
Never, never can be vain.

What new grace shall I implore?  
Ah! To feel yet more and more  
Of that filial love and zeal  
Which the Breton peasants feel –  
Honoring as best I can  
Mary's Mother, good St. Anne.

I found this poem written by a Jesuit priest named Matthew Russell,  
who was the publisher and editor of The Irish Monthly, which he  
established in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. He lived for 79 years. He died just after

the time that Matilda Cunea was healed by this miraculous Relic of St. Anne in 1907. I was thinking to myself about this poem because Matthew Russell, by his own admission, did not ever leave his home area.

Fr. Russel did not travel well. In fact, he once wrote,

Your reference to me as a traveled man, amused me. I have never seen the Lakes of Killarney. At present I never once pass outside our own grounds. I am the least traveled of men, considering my opportunities. I had to pass two years in France, at Laval; three days in Paris between going and coming; and two visits on compulsion to London, to marry a niece and to bury my brother – that is all my traveling. And yet how far his name and fame have traveled! Despite his regular work on the Irish Monthly and other activities, Father Russell brought out a large number of books, both in prose and verse, many of them biographical and devotional.

For a man who was so little traveled in his heart and in his prayer and in his devotion, Fr. Russell offered this beautiful testimony to good St. Anne. As Fr. Russell would attest, we do not have to know St. Anne personally to know about her. We do not not have to have her in flesh and blood in front of us to know the power of this beautiful grandmother. What we know about here in our faith, in our tradition,

according to the proto Evangelium of Saint James, is that St. Anne and her husband Joachim, praying to God that in her elderly age, St. Anne might bear a child, received a gift from the Lord who was protected from original sin, a daughter whom Anne and Joachim named “Mary.”

Because Joachim and Anne raised this beautiful daughter and gave her such a wonderful life free of sin, this blessed daughter and soon to be mother presented all of us an infinitely more beautiful gift, namely the Savior of the world. We are truly blessed that these two grandparents played the role that they did as grandparents and role models for all us, a role that inspired Fr. Russell to write this poem all the way from Ireland. I give thanks that through this poem, Fr. Russell connects the two parishes I serve – the Irish heritage of the beautiful St. Patrick’s Church located in Momence, IL and this church in which we celebrate this devotion for the 142<sup>nd</sup> year, the church and city named after this grandmother.

Perhaps what Fr. Russell offers us can be a testimony and prayer that might inspire us to be better people, holier people, holier parents and

holier godparents for the children and children's children of the world. On this feast of Good Ste. Anne, where we will offer the anointing of the sick for those who grace us with their presence at these masses, we are very blessed that we have these devotionals, these prayers, this Novena that this community has offered the nine days preceding this feast, the nine days of online Masses that have been produced on our parish's website. If you have been keeping up with us online, we have remembered the good souls that have made these devotions possible, especially the Viatorian clerics who brought this relic from France to Quebec to here to this town of 1200 people, small in size, but large in grace. This grace has affected so many souls who have come from the Midwest to ask for this blessing and have received this blessing because they had faith.

To have faith is to have God's presence in our hearts. Even if, after venerating the relic our Lord did not heal us or others physically, certainly spiritually God was with them... and us as well! Especially in this age, we learn how God is always with us; the Lord's grace always

guides us on our journey of life to the everlasting one that awaits us on the other side of our earthly journey.

To carry the sentiment that Fr. Russell offered in his prayer to Good Ste. Anne, we must have the spirit of this good souls in our hearts – we may not have known her geographically or personally but we learn of her heart and soul through the life of her mother and certainly her grandson. If this celebration has any meaning for us, we too must be dedicated to praying to the saints as if they have entered our hearts and inspired us to live a life as if it were a poem or song or other inspiration that gives us hope for what is yet to come, asking for these saints to intercede to the great mediator, our Lord Jesus Christ, his mother, Mary, his grandmother St. Anne, and the wonderful ministry and model of faith that we are called to follow.

What new grace shall I implore?  
Ah! To feel yet more and more  
Of that filial love and zeal  
Which the Breton peasants feel –  
Honoring as best I can  
Mary's Mother, good St. Anne.

May we honor this grandmother, her daughter and certainly her grandson by sharing this poem, this song, this story with the people that we meet. This is our prayer.