

St. Anne Church to Celebrate the Saint's Feast Day on July 26 with Masses, a Novena and Processions

STORY BY CARLOS BRICEÑO

All seemed hopeless for Joachim and Anne, a rich and pious childless couple, in regards to their wish to have a child. They both prayed, despite the fact that Anne was elderly. They knew that nothing was impossible for God.

Their prayers were answered when an angel appeared to Anne, saying she would give birth to a child who would be a blessing to the world. Anne named the child Miriam, which means Mary. (Yes, *that* Mary, the one who answered “yes” to God.)

“Without the efforts of Joachim and Anne, we don’t get Mary, and without the Blessed Mother, we don’t get the Savior of the world,” said Father Peter Jankowski, the administrator at St. Anne Church in St. Anne, IL, and St. Patrick’s in Mokenca.

His church honors St. Anne on her feast day every year, on July 26, with Masses and a procession. In years past, thousands would travel to the church, which contains a national shrine to St. Anne and also possesses a first-class relic (defined as part of a saint’s body) of St. Anne. The faithful venerate the relic as part of the feast-day festivities.

The church is also known as the site of several miraculous cures, Father Jankowski said. He cited a book called *Following Father Chiniquy: Immigration, Religious Schism, and Social Change in Nineteenth-Century Illinois*, written by Caroline Brettell, which chronicles St. Anne Church’s early history.

The book also includes the miraculous healing of a 22-year-old named Matilda Cunnea, who traveled from Calumet City to the church in 1904 to venerate the relic. Cunnea’s legs had been paralyzed for two years. But, after assisting in the daily prayers at the beginning of the novena to St. Anne, two days before the feast day, she told a nun that she thought she had been cured.

She asked the nun for help to get up out of her wheelchair. She then rose and began to walk. Cunnea’s wheelchair is kept in a side chapel at St. Anne Church as a reminder of that miracle.

This year, because of the pandemic, there has been a slight change to what normally has happened in years past. On July 26, there will be Masses at 9 a.m. and 11 a.m., in English, and a Mass in Spanish at 2 p.m. The noon Mass that is normally held St. Patrick’s Church in Mokenca will be canceled on that day, so that parishioners can attend services at St. Anne’s, Father Jankowski said. †



Here is the overall official schedule:

+ Daily novena Masses online, starting on July 18, along with nightly Masses outside at 7 p.m. To find out more, go to <https://www.stpatrickmokenca.org/76>

On July 26:

+ 9 a.m. Outdoor Mass in English with veneration and procession of relic (with Deacon Pat Skelly)

+ 11 a.m. Outdoor Mass in English with veneration and procession of relic (with Father Jankowski)

+ 1 p.m. Procession of relic from the Camino y Esperanza Retreat House on Wichert Road to St. Anne’s Church; the procession will also include an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe

+ 2 p.m. Outdoor Mass in Spanish with veneration of relic

Beyond attendance at Mass, it’s also important for the Catholic faithful to acknowledge and participate in processions and veneration of relics, Father Jankowski said. He eloquently talked about this during a homily earlier this year:

“For those of us invested in the faith,” he said, “we must keep embracing the signs, the symbols, the rituals, the traditions, the stories of the saints and of these holy people who have gone before us to remind ourselves of why we are here. The problem is, as always, that we forget; we get caught up with the way of the secular and the way of the negative sometimes instead of the way of the faith and that which is positive and holy in life. Through the life of faith and the example of those saints who have gone before us, we are able to encounter the presence of the divine within them and us, the path that directs us to heaven.”