



July 29, 2012

Solemnity of Sts. Joachim and Anne—Parents of the Virgin Mary

"Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to those who were reclining and also as much of the fish as they wanted"—John 6:11

Dear Friends;

Two men recently died and they were walking the golden streets of heaven. It was more beautiful and joyous than they had ever imagined. One of them turned to the other and said, "Isn't this wonderful?" The other replied, "Yes, and to think we could have been here ten years sooner if we hadn't eaten all that healthy oat bran."

Today we celebrate our parish feast like today's passage from the Gospel according to John—a picnic on the grass. Jesus is our nourishment for everlasting life. Like Jesus we begin with thanks. And we share what we have and who we are. And miraculously we have enough—the bread of Christ teaching, the food that is his body and blood and companions for our journey to the Reign of God. We have all that we need to feed our world's hungers!

Today we celebrate the parents of the Virgin Mary and grandparents of Jesus. They are not mentioned in the New Testament. Their story comes to us from the *Infancy Gospel of James* written around 145AD. This was a work, though not included in the canon of scripture, was held in high regard in the early Christian East and later in the Christian West. Its story has been the source of much art. The Italian Renaissance artist Giotto painted frescos of the early life of the Virgin using as his source the *Infancy Narrative of James*.

The story of Sts. Joachim and Anne come out of the biblical tradition. An elderly couple is without child—like Abraham and Sarah, Zechariah and Elizabeth. An angelic messenger tells them they will have a child. This child is destined for important work. Mary is to be the mother of the Savior.

The name Anne (ours is the original spelling) comes from the Hebrew name Hannah which means 'grace.' The name recalls the elderly prophetess in Luke's Gospel tale of the presentation of the child Jesus in the temple. It also recalls the Old Testament story of the Prophet Samuel's mother. Hannah came in tears before God begging for a child she is told she would conceive and a year later Samuel was born.

The story of Joachim and Anne is a Christian Midrash (Jewish way of explaining Scripture) that tells us that Jesus, the Son of God, came to be born in a real human family. And everyone needs grandparents even Jesus. This, our patronal story, is a reminder that God comes to be near us in the reality of our lives. It is a story of hope and grace.

Today we stand in prayer with those who are hoping for a child. We also bless all our grandparents who are models of patient endurance and prayer. And we honor our forebears who for ninety-six years have made St. Anne parish a place of faithful service of Jesus and his Gospel.

St Joachim and St Anne pray for us!

Peace,

Fr. Ron