

Reflection Monday Week 17 Sts Anne and Joachim 2021

St Anne and St Joachim: a 2nd century tradition gives these names to the parents of the Virgin Mary. The cult of St Anne became popular in the 6th century in the East, and in the 10th century in the West, (Anne is the patron saint of Brittany); Joachim was added much later. It helps us to name the parents who helped the Virgin Mary become the woman she was? Consenting to the Incarnation, she took the most important decision ever taken by any human being. She would have been greatly helped to do this by her parents. The Holy Spirit gave her the strength to take the decision; but her parents' training nourished her wisdom. Those who have children should seek to bring them up to the best of their ability, to meet challenges that, like Anne and Joachim, they have no way of even imagining.

Given it was grandparents day yesterday, it is appropriate to celebrate the grandparents of Jesus today. Read Pope Francis' message for Grandparents Day (4th Sunday July):

"I am with you always" (Mt 28:20) Jesus promises his disciples before ascending into heaven. Jesus repeats those words to you today, dear grandfathers and grandmothers, dear elderly friends. I also address the same words to you *"I am with you always"* on this first World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly. The whole Church is close to you, cares about you, loves you and does not want to leave you alone!

Tradition has it that the Lord sent an angel to console Joachim who had no children. Musing sadly outside the city gates, a messenger from the Lord appeared to him and said, *"Joachim, Joachim! The Lord has heard your insistent prayer."* The Lord continues to send *angels* to console our loneliness and remind us: *"I am with you always"*. He says this to you and to me. May every grandfather, every grandmother, every older person, (especially those among us who are most alone), receive the visit of an *angel!* These angels will have the face of our grandchildren or the face of family members, lifelong friends or those we have come to know during these trying times, when we have learned how important hugs and visits are for each of us.

There is no retirement age from proclaiming the Gospel and handing down traditions to your grandchildren. Today, you have a renewed vocation. You are needed to help build, the world of tomorrow in fraternity and social friendship, together with our children and grandchildren; a world in which we will live once the storm has subsided. Keeping memory alive is a true mission for every elderly person: Edith Bruck said *"even illuminating a single conscience is worth the effort and pain of keeping alive the memory of what has been."* The foundation of life is memory. Pope Benedict said: *"the prayer of the elderly can protect the world, helping it perhaps more effectively than the frenetic activity of many others."* Your prayer is a very precious resource: a deep breath that the Church and the world urgently needs; your intercession for the world and for the Church has great value. I ask the Lord that we open our hearts in sensitivity to the sufferings of the poor and intercede for their needs. Repeat to all, especially the young, the words of consolation: *"I am with you always"*! Keep moving forward! May the Lord grant you his blessing!