

MEMORIAL OF STS JOACHIM & ANNE, PARENTS OF THE BL VIRGIN MARY
QUEEN OF THE AMERICAS GUILD CONFERENCE
SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE, LA CROSSE, WISCONSIN
26 JULY 2014

Sir 44, 10-15
Ps 132, 11, 13-14, 17-18
Mt 13, 16-17

HOMILY

Praised be Jesus Christ, now and for ever. Amen.

How fitting that the feast day of Saints Joachim and Anne, Parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary, should occur during our annual Queen of the Americas Guild Conference dedicated, this year, to the deeper reverence for Holy Matrimony and its fruit, family life. We count upon the intercession of Saints Joachim and Anne for all of our labors to foster holy marriages and sound family life. At the same time, we reflect upon their marriage and its incomparable fruit, the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, as an extraordinary expression of God's plan for married life.

The feast day of Saints Joachim and Anne leads us to reflect upon the truth that God chose to bring about our redemption through the family. He sent God the Son Who was incarnate in the womb of the Virgin Mary, the child of Saints Joachim and Anne, and the spouse of Saint Joseph. Through the Mystery of the Redemptive Incarnation, we are directly related to the maternal grandparents of Jesus, Son of God and Son of Mary. The words of the Book of Sirach about the "godly men" in the history of salvation apply, with special meaning, to Saints Joachim and Anne:

These were godly men
whose virtues have not been forgotten;
Their wealth remains in their families,
their heritage with their descendants;
Through God's covenant with them their family endures,
their posterity for their sake.¹

¹ Sir 44, 10-12.

We are the spiritual descendants of Saints Joachim and Anne, the parents of the Mother of God and our Mother in the work of salvation.

Today, let us recall with special joy the priceless moral and spiritual heritage which has been handed down to us by “godly men,” the holy men and women of the Old Testament who looked forward with steadfast hope to the coming of the Savior, and the holy men and women of the New Testament who, one with the Virgin Mary, have welcomed the Savior into their lives and followed Him faithfully in the Church. The hope of Saints Joachim and Anne is realized for us in the Church: Christ has come, has redeemed us, and remains with us always through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the Church. Contemplating the life of the holy parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we comprehend, with deepest gratitude, the words of Christ to us in the Gospel:

Amen, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people
longed to see what you see but did not see it,
and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.²

Recalling the greatest gift which has been given to us in the family, namely, our faith and life in Christ, let us, counting upon the help of the prayers of the Virgin Mary and of her parents, Saints Joachim and Anne, commit ourselves anew to the work of strengthening the life of faith in all families and of assisting, in a particular way, those families who have drifted away from the Lord and, as a result, suffer grave moral and spiritual harm.

Let us rededicate ourselves to sound catechesis, to the teaching of the faith, in its integrity, in our homes and schools. Let us recall that our children and young people depend upon us to hand on to them, as “godly men” and women have done throughout the ages, the faith and its practice. In imparting to our children and young people an ever deeper knowledge of the faith, let us be especially conscious of the many false, harmful and even diabolical lessons which they are daily being taught in a godless, secular culture.

For the sake of our young people, we must give particular attention to the fundamental expression of our culture which is education. Good parents and good citizens must be attentive to the curriculum which schools are following and to the life in the schools, in order to assure that their children, our children, are being formed in the Christian virtues which have made our nation great and are not being deformed by indoctrination in the confusion and error concerning

² Mt 13, 17.

the most fundamental truths of human life and of the family, which will lead to their slavery to sin and, therefore, profound unhappiness, and to the destruction of our nation. Today, sadly we find the need to speak about “traditional marriage,” as if there were another kind of marriage. There is only one kind of marriage as God has given it to us from the Creation and as Christ has redeemed it by His saving Passion and Death.

In a special manner, let us teach our children and young people about the wonderful reality of the Communion of Saints, into which we have been introduced as members through Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Communion. Let us encourage them to come to know the saints, befriending them, following their example, and seeking their intercession. I think especially of the Virgin Mother of God, her spouse Saint Joseph, Saint Michael the Archangel, Saint John the Baptist, Saints Peter and Paul, and Saints Joachim and Anne.

I think, too, of the children and young people who attained heroic sanctity and are particularly strong examples and intercessors for our children, for example, Saint Tarcisius, Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face, Saint Dominic Savio, Saint Maria Goretti, Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, and Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati. These youthful patrons are a powerful help to children and young people in growing in the virtues of purity and modesty by which they are prepared to embrace their vocation in life with fidelity and perseverance. Becoming friends with the saints, our children will come to understand the meaning of the inspired words of the Book of Sirach:

Their bodies are peacefully laid away,
but their name lives on and on.
At gatherings their wisdom is retold,
and the assembly proclaims their praise.³

Through our communion with the saints, we come to understand in what lies our true greatness, namely faithful and enduring trust in God’s promises.

On the feast day of Saints Joachim and Anne, let us also contemplate all that it meant for them to remain true to the faithful and enduring covenant of divine love in the married life, as God had planned it from the beginning. In the life of this holy couple, we see reflected the splendor of the truth about the union of one man and one woman in faithful, enduring and procreative love. No doubt, Our Lord had in mind the example of his own grandparents when he

³ Sir 44, 14-15.

responded to the Pharisees who were testing him about the possibility of divorce. Our Lord answered their question by teaching the observance of the eternal law according to which God has created man and woman:

Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one”? So they are no longer two but one. What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder.⁴

When His disciples questioned Christ about the demand of God’s law for the married, our Lord responded that, with the call to the married life, God gives the grace to live in faithful, enduring and procreative love: “Not all men can receive this precept, but only those to whom it is given.”⁵

We live in a time when the fundamental truth of marriage is under a ferocious attack which seeks to obscure and sully the sublime beauty of the married state as God intended it from creation. Divorce is a common place in society, as is the pretension to remove from the conjugal union, by mechanical or chemical means, its procreative essence. And now, society has gone even further in its affront to God and His law by claiming the name of marriage for unions between persons of the same sex.

Even within the Church, there are those who would obscure the truth of the indissolubility of marriage in the name of mercy, who condone the violation of the conjugal union by means of contraception in the name of pastoral understanding, and who, in the name of tolerance, remain silent about the attack on the very integrity of marriage as the union of one man and one woman. There are even those, too, who deny that the married receive a particular grace to live heroically in faithful, enduring and life-giving love, while Our Lord Himself has assured us that God gives to the married the grace to live daily in accord with the truth of their state in life.

In our day, our witness to the splendor of the truth about marriage must be limpid and heroic. We must be ready to suffer, as Christians have suffered down the ages, to honor and foster Holy Matrimony. Let us take as our examples Saint John the Baptist, Saint John Fisher and Saint Thomas More, who were martyrs in defending the integrity of the fidelity and

⁴ Mt 19, 4-5.

⁵ Mt 19, 11.

indissolubility of marriage. Before the confusion and error about Holy Matrimony, which Satan is sowing so widely in our society today, let us follow the example of Saints Joachim and Anne, and let us invoke their intercession, so that the great gift of married life and love will be ever more revered in the Church and in society.

With the Immaculate Heart of Mary, let us now lift up our hearts to the glorious pierced Heart of Jesus, open to receive us through His Eucharistic Sacrifice. With our hearts, let us also lift up, in a special way, all those who have embraced the married life and our young people whom God is calling to the married life, so that they may live heroically the truth of the married state in ever true, lifelong, and procreative love. May our hearts, resting in the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, be purified of sin and strengthened by divine grace to give clear and courageous witness to the splendor of the truth about marriage and the family in a culture in which both are under fierce attack.

Heart of Jesus, formed by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, have mercy on us.

O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.

Saints Joachim and Anne, pray for us.

Saint Juan Diego, pray for us.

Raymond Leo Cardinal BURKE