

## Feast of St. Ann

These days, the wild elephants are causing havoc in my home diocese-destroying homes and killing people. People are sleeping on the roof top at night.

When I was growing up in 1950s there were no elephants but tigers. Once 2 nuns belonging to a Religious Order called St. Ann were going to some place. Those days there were no roads and no transportation facilities. As they were walking through a dense forest, they heard the roaring of a tiger. So, they started to say their rosary and other prayers asking God to save them. Soon, they were face to face with the ferocious looking tiger. The tiger looked at the nuns all dressed in white saree. Suddenly the tiger kind of knelt down and folded both his paws. The frightened nuns thought that God heard their prayers and converted even the heart of the tiger who was praying to God. Then the nuns heard the prayer of the tiger,” Bless me O Lord and these your gifts which I am about to receive, from your bounty, through Christ our Lord.” Hearing this prayer, the nuns folded up their sarees and ran for their lives and no one saw them again.

In this story we can see the power of the prayer. Prayer of the 2 St. Ann nuns converted the tiger and prayer of the tiger made the nuns to run for their life.

Prayer was very essential in the lives of Ann and Joachim whose feast we celebrate this weekend as St. Ann is Patroness of our parish. Though married for many years, they were not blessed with a child for a long time. They gave themselves to prayer to God that He would work in them the wonder that He had worked in Abraham and Sarah, and give them a child to comfort in their old age. God sent the Archangel Gabriel to them, who gave them tidings of the birth of “a daughter most blessed, by whom all the nations of the earth will be blessed, and through whom will come the salvation of the world.” Anna conceived shortly thereafter, and gave birth to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Gospels give no indication as regards the parents of blessed Virgin Mary. According to tradition, Ann and Joachim were the parents of Mary who became the mother of Jesus.

It was in the womb of Saint Ann that Mary was immaculately conceived. From the first instant of her life, she was in a state of grace and free from all stain of Original Sin. It was her parents, Anne and Joachim who raised her to be faithful to God’s word and remain free of sin.

Ann and Joachim were given the great honor and responsibility of raising Mary to be the Mother of God.

Today Joachim and Ann are honored because it is, they who nurtured Mary, taught her, brought her up to be a worthy Mother of God. It was their teaching that led her to respond to God's request with faith, "Let it be done to me as you will." It was their example of parenting that Mary must have followed as she brought up her own son, Jesus. It was their faith that laid the foundation of courage and strength that allowed her to see her son die on the cross.

The strong characteristics of Mary that are evidenced in her decision-making, her steadiness in the face of crisis, her practice of continuous prayer and treasuring the Word in her heart, her devotion to the Jewish practices and traditions, her dedicated services to relatives and neighbors all are indications of the close-knit, loving and God-fearing upbringing she had.

Besides being parents of Mary, Sts. Ann and Joachim are grandparents of Jesus. During those days people families up to three generations were closely knit. Since, there were no babysitting services, usually, the grandparents took care of the grand kids. So, we can assume that little Jesus might have actually grown up in the laps of Sts. Ann and Joachim. He might have learnt to walk holding the hands of Sts. Ann and Joachim. Little Jesus might have learnt few Jewish prayers and some scriptures from his grandparents as well. So, we can say that Sts. Ann and Joachim are the most privileged grandparents of the world.

Today's Gospel reading is very nicely applicable to them. "But blessed are your eyes, because they see, and your ears, because they hear. 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." Yes, Sts. Ann and Joachim were blessed that they could see, hear and hold Jesus in their arms.

So, this feast of St. Ann and Joachim should inspire all the parents and grandparents to become like Sts. Ann and Joachim. They should help their children and grandchildren grow up in faith so much so that some of them could later on be able to say as Mary said "thy will be done" and dedicate their lives fully in the service of God as priests and nuns. This is the biggest challenge for the parents, grandparents and children and grandchildren of St. Ann parish Warsaw.

This feast of St. Ann and Joachim should inspire also the young ones to love and care for their parents and grandparents as well as other elders as Mary and Jesus did.

Life of St. Ann and Joachim should inspire us to be generous as they were. It is said that they lived devoutly and quietly, using only a third of their income for themselves and giving a third to the poor and a third to the Temple.