

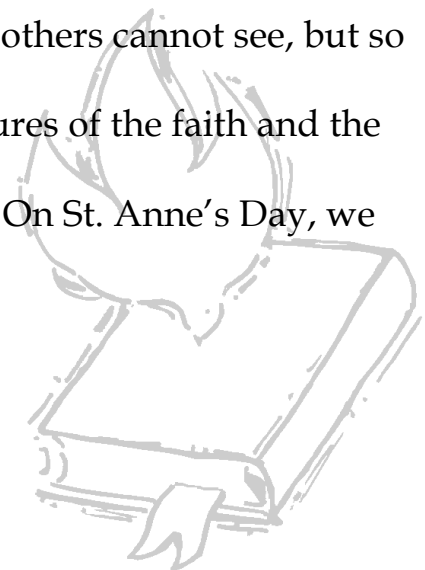
Feast of St. Anne
17th Sunday OT - A

Rev. Peter G. Jankowski
July 25-26, 2026

1 Kgs 3: 5, 7-12
Ps 19: 57, 72, 76-77, 127-128, 129-130
Rom 8: 28-30
Mt 13: 44-52

When I was introduced to these border town parishes in 2005, I had already led a confirmation retreat during my youth ministry years at St. Anne's Church (St. Anne, IL) I knew St. Patrick's was suffering at the time; I knew St. Anne's was led by a priest who served the community for over two decades. I also knew that both parishes are located in the periphery Churches of the Joliet Diocese, something that Church leaders say need to be our primary responsibility but often does not match their works.

While living there in 2005, I found out that there are great treasures here that are hidden in these communities, that others cannot see, but so many in the neighborhoods recognize the treasures of the faith and the people's love and the devotion to sustain them. On St. Anne's Day, we





visit one of these treasures, the Cerrito Camino y Esperanza Retreat on Wichert Road (the building used to be home to the school - the building is rather mundane but the grotto outside the building is ESPECTACULAR! St. Patrick's Church was established in the late

1800s and their current church building was dedicated in 1917. St.

Anne's Church has served the wonderful people here for 146 years with this Novena.

Over at St. Patrick's, the Dutch community established that parish, and since then a good number of the wonderful souls that have come to our growing communities, and people have figured out that these are treasures that need to be maintained, that need to be embraced, that need to be loved. The veneration of St. Anne's relic has resulted in numerous healings and blessings upon our faithful.

When you find out how blessed these communities actually are, you realize you do not need to be in the big parishes of the diocese. You do not need to be in places of prestige, because the kingdom of God is often

found in the smallest unknown places, which in this case is St. Anne's Church. There have been so many poor, so many neglected, so many hungry, so many lost souls that have come to me and have asked me here to stay with them, to love them, to welcome them into the family where they have not been welcomed before.

I find so much joy with these individuals that others neglect and when I have conversations with these good souls, to love these good souls, to embrace these good souls, to share with these good souls this gospel message makes what I do worth the struggles I face. With all this grace, I find strength in a world set to destroy rather than build. At those moments of grace, I realize that the sacrifices you and I make are worth it - to allow to work through me to save others is the greatest joy in my life.

It is not easy to maintain small parishes, especially in today's age, is very difficult to do, and that is why when someone had given me a gift of \$50,000 a year for the rest of my life, I told this individual, as long as I serve in these parishes, the \$50,000 goes to these parishes. I think in the last couple three years, I have donated anywhere from \$70,000-80,000

each year because I have to invest in them to show others that I care for them, that I am not taking advantage of them. I have to have the prudence and the knowledge to know where the faith of God is found, *and it is found here in this place that others neglect but where faith can be found.*

If you look really hard, you can see this faith and grace in the faces of the people in these communities, the heart of these believers who really love these local churches and just want to bring this faith to those who live in this periphery church. The people who want to start children's liturgy of the word, Bible study, vacation Bible school, youth ministry, those retreats that we had earlier this year for confirmation, where we served over 110 kids in two parishes over two weeks to bring them this love of God, to show people in this area that they are not forgotten, that they are loved... the little things we do produce huge dividends if we have faith in God.

Many of us serving south of I-80 have come to learn that diocesan leadership puts their efforts in the large parishes north of I-80 *but faith is found here because you are found here! You have faith!* Just as if you were at

the Vatican or any major basilica throughout the world, the same Real Presence of God *is right here*, north of I-80, body, blood, soul, and divinity can be found just the same in the tabernacle at St. Anne's as is in any other tabernacle of any other Catholic Church... and we should *never* take that faith for granted.

Over the last few years, I have been talking to so many parents and grandparents who take care of their children and their children's children, because it is not easy in today's age to raise a family, especially with the cost of living going up. I tell these parents and grandparents, "I will do my part," and I watch them do theirs, raising their grandkids while their kids are trying to make a living, trying to help out in any way they can. For grandparents, to put this forth an effort in their senior years is a great undertaking. Yet, just like Joachim & Anne and their special devotion to their daughter and to their grandson, you realize that just as Jesus was part of Grandmother Anne's family, so the grandparents, kids and grandkids spiritually are part of *ours*. Their families are part of our family, just as your family is a part of mine and certainly this family of St. Anne's that I serve.

We are the body of Christ; we are a family. If we are going to make this work, if we want to get to heaven together, then we live the faith life together. We are led by the Spirit through the priest, with the people, and if we are doing it together, look what happens; look what a parish can do if we work together. It is so important to respect our grandparents, to respect our parents, to respect the clergy, to respect and love and adore God our Father, who sent down his Son, Jesus Christ, who passed down this mission to the apostles and then the bishops, and in the local communities to people like me.

You understand that when St. Anne and St. Joachim were blessed with the gift of this daughter and then the gift of her son, St. Anne had an awesome responsibility to take care of, essentially, a grandchild who was the savior of the world. For this reason, we give thanks for Mary's motherhood and Anne's grandmotherhood and that grandchild who brought us a chance of salvation. We give thanks for a Father who sent down the Son to give us the Spirit so that we could be united as a spiritual family, brothers and sisters distinct in custom but one in faith.

Solomon, for a short period in his life, figured out God's master plan. Solomon had the wisdom to put family first. Then, as with so many people in life (including ourselves), the devil tempted Solomon, just like the devil tempted David and the kings, and even in today's age, so many good souls around us. To keep our family together and strong, we need to fight off Satan by allowing God continually to lead us and guide us, to allow the Spirit to fill our hearts so that we could be united, especially to take care of the poor, and the downtrodden, and the innocent, and the vulnerable.

As you know, I have made great sacrifices, sometimes at great cost, to protect the children in this society. I make this sacrifice, we are all called to make this sacrifice because this is what God calls us to do. We learn at the end of life, when all of this is finished, we will stand before God, and we just have to answer those two basic questions: Do you love your God, and do you love your neighbor?

At these Masses, the grandmother's grandchild sets the example for us. As he did, as he does, so we must do - we need to open our hearts to love every neighbor, every single person, not to push them away, but to

welcome them in. If we can do that, we have a chance to get to the other side.

Thank you so much for your devotion to the St. Anne Novena and to all of those who have made it possible. Fr. Jim Heyd, Fr. Sebastian Genoni, for all the priests and religious, and all of those who have joined us in these celebrations. They are beautiful and *you* are beautiful. Continue to do what you are doing so that we can promote this Novena, this Feast Day, this gift of healing that we are going to offer on July 26th through the Anointing of the Sick for every single person that we meet. God bless all of you. This is our prayer.