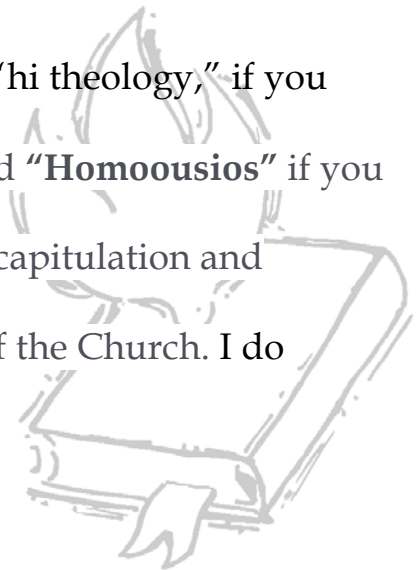


Feast of St. Anne
17th Sunday OT – A
In-Church Latin Mass Homily
July 25, 2026

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

One of the comments that has been made to me in the course of my years here at St. Anne's and St. Patrick's Church, is that people look at those sitting in our pews, and they say, "Where are the youth? Where is the next generation of faithful that are going to populate these pews in the years to come?" If you pay attention, you can see a good number of our youth here in our sanctuary. A lot of the times, you do not see a lot of these individuals, but at the Latin Masses and the Spanish Masses I celebrate, and often at our English masses, we have so many young families that join us and fill our Churches with a wonderful sense of grace.

When I preach homilies, I very easily can go "hi theology," if you want. I can preach about "**Anakephalaiosis**" and "**Homoousios**" if you want. I believe in the Church teachings about recapitulation and consubstantial – these are foundational beliefs of the Church. I do



believe in the high theological terms, but when the faith is lived out by those who simply love their God and love their neighbor, when those around me are living the gospel message in a way that puts many of us to shame, *that lived experience* resonates with me, because it is just not preaching the word, but living it in daily life experiences.

Prior to the services we are offering this weekend, I was talking to one of our younger couples here at St. Anne's who have decided to join us here at Mass, namely Whittaker and Sophia. Anderson. As Whit and Sophia were trying to figure out where to live and pray, they eventually felt that this church, the first shrine of the United States, was what they considered their home. Whit and Sophia wanted to be married here, and their marriage took place in this church with their family present. Sophia's family lives in the area and are very faithful to the cause.

Whittaker's parents actually are missionaries over in Taiwan, who have returned to the states to take part in the baptism of the newest addition to the family – that baptism will take place on August 23.

I cannot but help to think that with all the struggles that exist between Taiwan and China in the other side of the world, for Whit's

parents to live such a positive, Christian disposition of life, their example of family and faith really hits me in a good way. Their faith reminds me that this love of God is not just here locally but extends itself throughout the world; the charism of St. Anne is not just local but universal.



As Whit and Sophia were gifted with baby Adelaide (whose namesake in the faith is a saint of the Roman empire), a parishioner took a picture of what is now considered the youngest and oldest parishioners at St. Anne – Adelaide Anderson (just weeks old) and Ruth Sparenberg, who turns ONE HUNDRED YEARS OLD at the end of the month!

In this week's bulletin, I am including a wonderful history of St. Anne's Church that Ruth gave me that was published about 40 years ago. For those who view our online homilies, I have included the history at the end of this printed edition.

At 10:00 a.m. today, I also celebrated a wedding liturgy for a couple who have been attending Mass over at St. Patrick's for years and who

finally decided to have their marriage celebrated at the other church I serve. Husband Austin and son Brendon, who are very invested in the parish life, often help as Altar Servers at the Masses we celebrate.

Parents Mike & Sally have prayed a great amount of time for their son to get married inside the church.



Many weeks of
the year, dad
Austin and son
Brandon server
together at our
Masses as a shared

experience. I was thinking about when they shared that ministry together, during the sign of peace at Mass, I often notice how father and son serving hug each other at that moment, sharing that love in the sanctuary of our church.

Mother Sally glows when she tells me how Austin, Brandon and she travelled to Europe a short time ago so that father and son could participate in a karate tournament together. At this tournament, both

won gold medals for their respective classes. When I see father and son experiencing these moments together, when I had the honor earlier today to serve as a witness for Austin and Kendra as they ministered to each other in the sacrament of marriage and saw how God's grace was shared between them, I give thanks to God that another young family has found their way to God and to this church in a most special way.

As a response to this gift of marriage (among other moments of grace as well), parents Sally and Mike have invested spiritually and financially in the life of our parish. Sally led our Council of Catholic Women at the parish and is an active member of that group. Mike and Sally were also catalysts in providing major funds to pave our back church parking lot (something that never had been done until two months ago!). Mike and Sally brought a friend to church who also provided a significant donation towards the parking lot. What God has done for this young family, and what this young family has done for us, has been nothing short of SPECTACULAR!!!

It has been so wonderful that the family has helped us with such significant ways, make it possible for us to have a parking lot in the back

of our church, and another parking lot behind our gymnasium, but most importantly, their presence every week advance, and all the wonderful things they have done. They been bringing people to stay here, in teacher, and all kinds of places, far from here, to attend our services, because they are invested in what we are trying to do to offer God's love to the people of faith.



At 2:00 this afternoon, we had another wedding service for a couple named Benjamin & Itzel Caro. The

Caro family owns a farm in the area, and Benjamin was one of the first individuals that was part of the Christian initiation process with me a few years ago. When I first started the students in our Christian Initiation program in 2019, Benjamin received his sacraments at the Eastern Vigil and now has been coming to church faithfully over the last seven, eight years.

When Benjamin & Itzel approached me and asked if they could be married on this particular day (which happens to be six months exactly before Christmas Day and the Vigil of the St. Anne Novena), for me was the best kind of Christmas gift I could get six months to the date before Christmas, because our Lord's grace was offered to two young couples who wished to receive the sacrament in our beloved Churches. who are offering them to their families.

Benjamin asked if it were possible that they could have what was called a Cabalgada (a Horse-Drawn Procession, prior to the service at 2:00 p.m., where he and his father could process up to the front door the church, on horses, which I found a wonderful thing to do in the country. They also asked me if they could be greeted and serenaded a mariachi band. I told them that I do not stand in the way of grace and that both of their requests were very acceptable.

Benjamin was so moved by us allowing him to the mariachi band and the cabalgada, that he decided to offer the same cabalgada after the St. Anne's Day English Mass the following day and then precede the 12:00 p.m. Mass in Spanish that same day. So after the 9:00 a.m. Mass and

prior to the 12:00 p.m. Mass, we are going to have two horse-drawn processions, one around the city, and at 11:00 a.m. from the Cerrito de Camino y Esperanza Retreat House to here to St. Anne's for a Mass here in the church.

Kyle & Bobbi Volek are a young couple at our parishes. Bobbi is a stay-at-home mom; Kyle is a part-time contractor and owns farm in Beecher, IL on which he runs his catering business, "The Barn & Vineyard." Kyle & Bobbi are parents to three very young children who were baptized at St. Patrick's Catholic Church in Momence. They and a couple other young families in our area have been very invested in the faith life of the church and often attend our Sunday Masses as a group.

Some time back, Kyle and Bobbi asked that we help them get their marriage convalidated in the Church; I found that nothing stood in the way of both of them getting married. We have tried to help Bobbi & Kyle work through the sacraments together so they would be right with God.

Not only is Kyle an owner of a catering business; Kyle is also a part-time contractor who works with his cousins when there is a lull in his

catering business. It was Kyle who took an impossible task of creating parking lots for us that were way too expensive for a community like ours to do on our own (one parking lot behind the church was priced out initially at \$100,000 and the one behind the gym for \$330,000).

A few months ago, Kyle told me that a cousin of his was hired by the city of Momence to rip out and grind the old road on Second Ave. in Momence that runs parallel to St. Patrick's Church. From Kyle's suggestion, his cousin was able to grind down the road that paved Second Ave. and take the crushed remains to make a foundation for a future parking lot behind our gymnasium. We were told a few years ago that before we could pave a gym parking lot, we would need to create a packed foundation that would hold a concrete or asphalt layer properly.

Kyle was friends with a second cousin who was a contractor and pavior. With the help of his two cousins, one removed the ground asphalt from Second Ave. and piled it up on top of a second lot; the other cousin removed the ground behind the lot, found someone to take away all the dirt, formed a "berm" with the remaining dirt to beautify the area by our grotto and lot, and then took the ground down asphalt

and laid it down as a base for however we wish to pave the gym parking lot in the future. Kyle's cousin also found a business who brought us two semi-trailers to take away all the dirt away from the removed earth at no cost to us. A project that normally would run about \$330,000 significantly became lesser by addressing the most important aspect of this parking lot project, crushing the concrete and the gravel, and then using it as a foundation for a back parking lot, taking a \$330,000 project, and recently reducing it down to \$25,000.

Why would Kyle and Bobbi, a couple in their 30s with a small family to raise and trying to make ends meet on their own, help us with a major renovation project such as this concerning the creation of *two* parking lots for such a reduced cost? In my heart, I believe because Kyle and Bobbi consider our parish community their "spiritual family" and have decided to make their new home a better place to live for all of us and certainly them as well.

Like so many young families who have said the same thing to me, these young families were welcomed into our community (when sometimes *not* welcomed by others) and wanted to invest in our

parishes to show that they could give back. Kyle decided to take this concept of “family” one more step, by donating 250 pounds of pulled pork that he cooked at his catering business, with fire-roasted corn in a cup (donated by Van Drunen farms) and bringing everything he cooked to St. Anne’s Church for the feast day celebrations. fire roasted cone, ordained by Mandarin and farms. He cooked all of it for us.

So when the food and health department came to visit us at 3:00 p.m. this afternoon to make sure the food was prepared according to state law, they asked us, “Who is doing the cooking?” When we responded, the caterer Kyle Volek, they responded, “Here is your permit. Have a nice day.” The health department very much knew what Kyle meant to this area and what he was doing for us so the health department joined the “Body of Christ” to help out the parish cause. In this same light, our local Knights of Columbus council, members of our Hispanic community and the ladies from our Sodality of St. Anne (among others) have contributed to make this entire weekend celebration possible.

For those of you who might think that what I just discussed has nothing to do with the gospel message, then I respond by saying this...

what I just described is not just good souls listening to the gospel message; they were commissioned at the end of Mass “to go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life” (the last sentence spoken at the Novus Ordo Mass, commissioning the faithful to serve the Lord by serving others). These good souls are not just *hearing* the gospel, *they have chosen to live it*. In my understanding of the faith life, I find it useless (or to be “an empty gong” or “clanging symbol” to use a St. Paul reference) to preach about emptying myself as Christ did for us (called in Greek kenosis or self-emptying), something that Jesus modeled for us on the cross and referenced by St. Paul in the Second chapter to Philippians, when he wrote,

Christ Jesus, Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself (*kenosis*), taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
(Philippians 2: 5-11)

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things,* nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rm 5: 38-39).

When the gospel message is *lived*, when you see young families investing themselves in this way, to tell God that they care, when you see all these young individuals who are in the sanctuary doing what they do today, when you encounter young and old who care enough about the faith life of the Church to join us in prayer in three different languages and three different styles of prayer, *that* gives me hope. It gives me hope because it tells me what we do in God's name is not a vain effort but a response to God's calling to us through prayer, study and service.

When he served as a local bishop, Pope Benedict, XVI once referenced what you are doing today as a symbol of faith, the "remnant" of the Church, so to speak, as if a fallen Church has regrown anew. The image I have for what you are doing today are the olive trees at the Garden of Gethsemane that were cut down by the Roman army just after 70 AD in their effort to eradicate the faith. The trees re-grew from

the remnant left behind and becomes a symbol to me of what all of you are doing today. The remnant from 70 AD took root and today have become new, more lush, more vibrant trees, with wonderful fruit.

You are the remnant. *You* represents the youth of the Church. That is why, when I think about a person like St. Anne, who said to our Lord, that she would serve the Lord by raising this special daughter, in a way just like Hannah did in the first book of Samuel with her son and just like our Blessed Mother did with her Son, God's Son, St. Anne's grandson. When you and I make that kind of sacrifice for the sake of our Christian family, look what happens as a result. As a dysfunctional family, sinful people united in prayer as the Body of Christ with God as our head, we may not always like each other; we may not get the physical healings that we seek out. When we are united in prayer, study and service, we are God's family, united in the Spirit, serving our God by serving each other.

Matilda Cunnea serves as this example for us, as symbolized by that wheelchair in the back of the church. Her wheelchair is there. The stained-glass window adorning our chapel door, donated by the family



of Matilda Cunnea, is here. Over the last 146 years, some good souls left behind their crutches after being healed by that relic; those crutches are here. Fr. Achilles Bergeron, who kept bringing people from Chicago by train starting in the 1890s was responsible for those like the Cunnea family coming to pray here because he believed in veneration of this relic when he was a young man growing up in Bourbonnais and attending the Novena with his family.

What you do, the young and old families of our Church, make a huge difference in the life of faith, based on your own unique time and talents. When we have faith in God, the physical healings may or may

not come as a result, but more importantly, *infinitely* more importantly, are the spiritual graces that lead us from this world to the next, because God is going to lead us and guide us and carry us and give us hope... if we come together as a Body of Christ to live together, play together and play together, if we are as invested in prayer, study and service as are the Caro family, the Fuhrmann family, the Volek family, the Cunnea family and all of you as well.

In a moment, we are going to offer what is called the “Litany of St. Anne, asking the grandmother of our Lord to be with us, to walk with us, to give us strength and to show us how to empty ourselves (*kenosis*), so that we can allow God to unite us so that we can live together as one body, united by the Spirit with Christ as our head. On this particular day, we especially pray for our moms and grandmas; we pray for our dads and grandads. We remember the sacrifices that those who have gone before us made on a constant basis for the sake of their families and we are called to do the same. Let us give thanks to God, our blood relatives in faith, the people in this Church, those in our community, and to be *kenosis* for every person that we meet. This is our prayer.

THE HISTORY OF ST. ANNE PARISH

The village of St. Anne owes its origin to the migration of the French-Canadian "coureur du bois". The first settlers were Ambrose and Antoine Allain in 1848. In 1850, Fr. Charles Chiniquy of Montreal was asked to help establish the band of French-Canadian immigrants. In 1851, he took six residents to a site near the Allain brothers; they built their homes on what they thought was the highest elevation, this being the spot where the Catholic Church now stands, known for a time as Beaver Mission.

The first place of worship was erected and dedicated on April 17, 1852 to St. Anne, the grandmother of Jesus, from which the village and township derived their names. Fr. Chiniquy was the first pastor. He built a log church and school which were to become the factor of greatest interest in the community. In 1853, the Bourbonnais pastor, Fr. Courfault was called away for a time and Fr. Chiniquy served both churches. After Fr. Courfault returned, a bitter quarrel developed between the two pastors which resulted in severe church discipline. Courfault was returned to France, Chiniquy was excommunicated but refused to acknowledge the Church action until 1856 when the official notice was nailed on the church door. When Chiniquy left the church, a number of his congregation followed him to an "Independent Christian Catholic Church" which in 1860 became the Presbyterian Church in St. Anne.

The church sent numerous missionaries to Ste. Anne from 1856 to 1859 in attempt to win back the apostate members, but with little success. Visiting priests from Beaverville's St. Marie, served the church from 1859 to 1871. On February 23, 1871, Fr. Michael Letellier was named pastor. In the spring of 1871, Fr. Letellier organized a committee to construct a new stone church. The stone quarried in Momence was hauled in by parishioners who volunteered not only their time but also their money. Construction began in 1872 on the Allain homesite and opened for use late in 1873.

It can be said that Fr. Chiniquy founded the parish but Fr. Letellier deserves the title of Second Founder. His pastorate was marked not only

by material construction but spiritual growth as well. Fr. Chiniquy organized the first Catholic School in 1855. It was very small and closed in 1856 after his suspension. Fr. Letellier started a Catholic School, later to be known as the St. Anne Academy, staffed by the Sisters of Notre Dame of Montreal, Canada. At one time, the Academy offered twelve years of instruction and room and board for out-of-town students at the Academy. St. Anne Academy closed in 1978 and was demolished in 1988.

Fr. J.U.A. Artel succeeded Fr. Letellier 1883-1886. His main contribution was to further the establishment of the school. In 1886, Father Z.P. Berard came to the parish and began the longest pastorate in the history of the church, 1886-1932. In 1889, a rectory was built and remained there until the new one was built 1980.

The first novena to Ste. Anne occurred in 1881 but it was not until July 26, 1887, that the first pilgrims came. Fr. Bergeron, pastor of Notre Dame Church, Chicago, brought them by a special train. A new era began for the Church of Ste. Anne, for thousands of people come each year to celebrate the feast day, July 26. For the nine days preceding the feast, special devotions each morning and evening are conducted. On the feast day, July 26, the celebrating begins with Eucharist and concludes with Benediction. The relic of Ste. Anne is carried in public procession through the village. Since the pilgrimages began, Ste. Anne Church has become known throughout the country as "the Original Shrine of Ste. Anne in the United States." Thousands have testified to favors and graces received through the intercession of Ste. Anne.

In 1893, the church was struck by lightning and burned leaving only the walls. New construction began, making possible the enlargement of the church and sanctuary. In 1900, three new altars in gold and white were installed, remaining to this day with some alterations. In 1906, to meet the demands of the parish needs a parish hall was constructed across the street to the east of the church. This building remains today and is used by the parish and community for many activities.

Lightning struck again in 1911, causing considerable water damage to the organ and interior of the church. Repairs were finished in 1912. In 1920, after nearly forty years, the school needed repairs. The work was almost

completed when the building caught fire and burned to the ground. The parish struggled but a new school was constructed. In July, 1932, Fr. E. J. Tailon became pastor of Ste. Anne, followed in October, 1936 by Fr. J. A. Dionne. It was during his tenure that the Sisters, the Servants of the Holy Heart of Mary, gave up the academy they had staffed since 1922. Fr. Dionne arranged for the Dominican Sisters of Springfield to replace them; they remained in the school until its closure. Fr. Dionne was the last diocesan priest to serve Ste. Anne Parish.

In 1942, Cardinal Stritch, Archbishop of Chicago, entrusted the administration of the parish to the Clerics of St. Viator with Fr. A. J. Landroche, CSV who served for six years. His was the task of guiding the parish in the days of World War II and its aftermath. Fr. Paul Hutton, CSV succeeded Fr. Landroche in June, 1948. In the fall of 1948, the diocese of Joliet was established and the decade of 1950-1960 witnessed the foundation and growth of the new diocese. In 1954, Fr. Hutton was transferred and Fr. Clarence Biladeau, CSV replaced him. The decade ended with the pastorate of Fr. James T. Sees, CSV in 1958, who succeeded Fr. Biladeau. Fr. Sees's tenure was short as he suffered a stroke in the spring of 1960 and had to be relieved of his pastorate.

In 1960, Fr. James L. Naughton came to Ste. Anne. He was responsible for the redecorating of the church in 1964. In 1969, Fr. J. F. Brown CSV came and Fr. Wm. R. Anson, CSV came shortly after to aide with the parish.

Since 1972 was the Centenary of the Parish, the exterior of the church was repaired, the windows re-lead and protective glass installed, the roof repaired and the interior redecorated. The sanctuary was remodeled, the pews returned to their original state after having been painted on the two previous decorations. To complete the decoration, the church was carpeted. In October, Bishop Blanchette came to celebrate a Mass of Thanksgiving to commemorate the Centenary.

In 1976, Fr. Brown retired and Fr. Anson resumed the duties of the parish. He was responsible for the construction of the new rectory. He remained until 1982 when his health declined and he was unable to continue. In 1982, Fr. Donald Lund, CSV came to Ste. Anne. Fr. Lund retired in 1990 and Fr. James Monahan CSV resumed the duties of the parish. While Fr.

Monahan was in Ste. Anne, a new roof on the church was constructed and the interior redecorated. Fr.

Monahan was tragically killed while riding his bicycle on October 6, 1996. Fr. Jim Curtin came to Ste. Anne as a temporary administrator while the Clerics of St. Viator selected a permanent priest. On December 8, 1996, Fr. James Fanale, CSV resumed the duties of Ste. Anne Parish. The people of Ste. Anne Parish are blessed with the Spirit of Ste. Anne.