

Homily

The Feast of Saints Joachim and Anne

St Ann Church
Covington, KY

July 26, 2020

My name is Scott. I'm a deacon assigned to St. Paul's Florence and I'm honored to be here for the Feast of Sts. Anne and Joachim. My wife and I love coming here during the Novena and spending time with you and your beautiful Church.

When Fr. Mick told me our focus was the Nicene Creed, I thought, "That leaves things wide open." Then he told me my attention would be concentrated on the last two lines, "I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come." There's an awful lot packed into these.

On the surface, it reminds us of where we are headed – eternity with God and all the angels and saints in our glorified bodies. But as I prayed on this, my heart took me deeper into the meaning of this wonderful gift from our merciful Father.

Who remembers the movie Finding Nemo? There is a scene where a colony of seagulls is mindlessly repeating, "Mine, mine, mine," as an albatross holds up a crab. It reminds me of my dog when I'm holding a treat; he jumps on me, clawing with his paws and nudging with his nose until he finally gets his snack, then runs off to a neutral corner of the room to enjoy his bounty. It also reminds me of my youth, when I would want something without regard for whose it was or how I might get it. And funny as that memory may be, it also reminds me of how so selfish I can be, even today.

My spiritual director often repeats to me how we live in a "take, take, take" world. Look at the chaos currently going on in the world today: systematic racism, protesting, rioting, defunding, politics, Covid-19, masks or no masks. We are dealing with an unprecedented amount of personal views being imposed on all of society. I'm not making a personal statement, just acknowledging that there is a lot of turmoil out there. And a lot of people are saying, "Mine, mine, mine."

Jesus reminds us how we will suffer trials and tribulations throughout our lives, and throughout all of history. Yet, He also tells us to count it as joy as we already know the outcome. In the end, we know that Jesus became one of us in all ways but sin, not to condemn us but to save us. And that He has prepared for us a place in heaven with Him and all the angels and saints.

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells us that the kingdom of heaven is the most precious thing possible, like a buried treasure or a fine pearl, and that we should embrace it completely, fully, without reservation, putting all else aside. Like placing all our eggs in one basket. Normally, that's not recommended, but absolutely it is for the kingdom of heaven.

Still, this is a gift. Just as everything we receive from the Father, not to be taken, but to be received.

When we take something, we don't give anything up. Imagine going through the grocery store with a shopping cart; we take things off the shelf and take things out of the cooler and from the deli. Our cart keeps filling up as we take, take, take.

But when we receive, we must first empty our hands to be able to receive what is offered. This is how God works in every way. The Father freely gave us His Son; the Son freely entered into His Passion; God gave us Free Will and we freely accept or reject God's gifts. But we cannot take. That's not how it works. We receive the Sacraments; we receive the grace of baptism; we receive absolution in reconciliation; we receive Jesus, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity in the Eucharist. We don't take.

What a precious way to look at our relationship with God – and with each other. We give to each other in friendship as brothers and sisters; we give to each other in Matrimony as husband and wife; we give, freely give, to each other when we share our gifts of time, talent, treasure.

When we take, it comes from a place of selfishness. When we give, it comes from a place of selflessness. And when we receive, it comes from a place of giving.

When we recite the Nicene Creed, we remember all of God's gifts to us and how it is God's plan that we receive these gifts, not take them. Especially when we are resurrected from the dead and when we enter into the life of the world to come.