

NOVENA TO ST. ANNE

Daniel A. Lord, S.J.

FIRST DAY:

“Who shall find a valiant woman?”

This was the cry of Solomon long before the time of the noble women who watched for Christ’s coming to earth.

The valiant woman . . . strong in her stainless virtue.

The valiant woman . . . keeping the laws and traditions of her people.

The valiant woman . . . fighting the quiet. battle of purity and decency.

The valiant woman . . . protecting her home, the strength of her husband, the future of her children.

The valiant woman . . . whom God loves and whom the powers of evil dread as their relentless enemy.

The valiant woman . . . like glorious Saint Anne, mother of Mary.

To Saint Anne the Catholic world has looked in admiration, has reached out in confidence; from her have come protection and generous love. To the grandmother of Christ we pray:

The Prayer of Saint Anne

O God, who didst vouchsafe to endow blessed Anne with such grace that she was found worthy to be the mother of her who brought forth Thine only-begotten Son, grant in Thy mercy that we who keep her festival may be aided by her intercession with Thee. Through Our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who livest and reignest with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

SECOND DAY:

It was in the peaceful little house of Anne and Joachim that Mary, the Mother of God, spent her girlhood.

There Mary knew the example of a woman who lived the simple ways of wife and mother.

Unknown save in the limited circle of Nazareth, Anne prepared the meals for her family, made and mended their plain garments, and filled the house with the perfume of her devoted service. She was a model of a wife’s diligence and a mother’s solicitude.

The young Mary watched this model of the simple domestic virtues.

This obedient daughter saw perfection in her mother, the perfection of small tasks done out of love for God and devotion to family.

Each day had a time for prayer.

Each day was filled with deeds of neighbourliness and acts of charity quietly and happily performed.

Mary saw in her mother how a woman can be simple yet great, how the deeds that God asks of us—however unnoticed or unimportant these may be—are the deeds that win His gratitude and make us saints before Him and benefactors before the world.

To this model of the simple domestic virtues we pray:

The Prayer of Saint Anne

(recite the prayer on page 1)

THIRD DAY:

Like all Jewish women of her day Anne dreamed of the promised Saviour. Surely the Messiah was sorely needed in her day when the plight of her people was so unhappy.

Never for a moment did she think that such an honour would come to her—but perhaps from her line, the noble line of David, there would come a woman worthy to be the Mother of the Messiah.

To Anne was not given the beautiful privilege of motherhood.

She prayed that God would send her and Joachim a son or a daughter.

Neighbours pitied her, as the Jews always pitied a childless woman. Around her grew up a flock of nieces and

nephews. But no child of her own came to rest in her arms.

She prayed for a child, and in the same breath she added: “..... if it be thy will, my Father.”

No impatience with God. No envy of more fortunate relatives. No self-pity. But a hope that never faded. And faith in God, who would do for her what was for His honour and her happiness.

No wonder that to Anne there was born at length in her old age the beautiful little girl who was Mary, fairest flower of womankind.

To this model of hope we pray:

The Prayer of Saint Anne

(recite the prayer on page 1)

FOURTH DAY:

Hope is a beautiful virtue.

Hope without prayer is a wasted thing. It is groundless optimism without root in faith.

We hope because we know that God in His love will do what is best for us. We pray so that He may know our desires and that if they are for our good He may fulfill them.

In the long days of patient waiting before the coming of Mary, Anne prayed from a humble and a loving heart.

Her life was a long simple prayer committing her to God’s Holy will.

Of a Sabbath she and her husband, Joachim, went together to the synagogue to pray with the other faithful Jews, who cried aloud for the long-delayed Saviour.

At daybreak she offered to God in heaven everything that she would do throughout the day.

Before and after meals she thanked the creator of the universe for the gifts of His Fatherly goodness.

At night she looked back upon the day and presented it as a gift to God.

And always underlying her prayer was the hope that the Saviour would soon be born and that God would send her a child—perhaps the child who would be nurse to the Messiah.

To this model of prayer we pray:

The Prayer of Saint Anne

(recite the prayer on page 1)

FIFTH DAY:

Joachim and Anne were coming into late middle age. The hope that they would have children seemed almost past. Longingly had they prayed for a child. Now they hardly dared hope any longer.

And then the wonder. Anne conceived, and the happy pair knew that they would be parents.

If there had been peace in the house before, now there was deepest joy. God had answered their petitions. God had blessed them with parenthood.

If Anne had hitherto done gladly the simple work of her household, she now did it with new purpose and high happiness. The house must be even more spotless for the coming child. Little dresses must be made, quilts and pillows sewed.

Each Sabbath in the synagogue Anne upon her knees thanked God, who had blessed her.

Each morning and each night she prayed the Father in heaven to bless with the fullness of grace and the richness of a life devoted to His service the child she was to bear.

And Mary, the loveliest infant that the world had ever seen until that day, was born. Anne smiled into the happy eyes of Joachim. Together they loved the little Mary, their gift from God.

To the happy mother of Mary we pray:

The Prayer of Saint Anne

(recite the prayer on page 1)

SIXTH DAY:

Who can describe the joy that came to the house of Anne and Joachim with the coming of Mary?

Never had a sweeter baby smiled into a mother's face.

Never had a more obedient child grown up to bring happiness to a household.

Her first spoken words were music in their ears.

Her first conscious kiss was a blessing and the sweet mark of her gratitude to her parents.

She listened avidly to Anne's telling of the story of God's dealings with His people. From Anne she heard for the first time about the Saviour who was to be born.

From Anne she learned the gentle arts that she was later to use as Mother of the Son of God. It was from Anne she learned the dignity of a woman's work.

Now there was laughter in the house, the happy young laughter of a sinless child. The hearts of Anne and Joachim echoed to that laughter in delight and with a sense of gracious fulfillment.

God had been slow to answer their prayers; His answer had come in measure far beyond their fondest hopes. In God's Providence did they put their trust and their trust was not in vain.

To this model set before the child Mary we pray:

The Prayer of Saint Anne

(recite the prayer on page 1)

SEVENTH DAY:

Was Anne still alive when Mary became the Mother of the Saviour?

Was it ever Anne's grandmotherly privilege to hold the Infant king in her arms?

We do not know. The silence of the Scriptures leads us to think that perhaps she had already gone home to God, that she had left her daughter to the gracious care of Joseph, that she was never to see her divine Grandson until as liberator He entered limbo.

But whether she lived or not to see that happy day, the spirit of her devotedness, her calm serenity, her patience, her kindness lived on in the life of Mary.

It was from Anne that Mary learned the art of motherhood.

What Anne had done for her, Mary did for her little Son.

Food like the food she had eaten at her mother's table Mary prepared for her growing Boy.

The prayers, the lovely story of the Jewish people, the strong words of the law and the prophet's hope-bearing words that she had learned from Anne, her mother, Mary passed on to her Son as He grew in age and wisdom and grace.

The imprint of Anne's training could be seen on the Son of God Himself through Mary, His Blessed Mother.

To this model of motherhood we pray:

The Prayer of Saint Anne

(recite the prayer on page 1)

EIGHTH DAY:

Next to Mary, Anne is the favourite name for all the world.

It is the symbol of her motherly virtues. It is so intimately associated with Mary and with Jesus that it commands our affection.

Thousands of girl babies each year are named for the mother of Mary.

Time was when the highest honour that could be conferred upon a baby girl was to call her Mary Anne, linking in a double name the virtue and intercession of the world's two most powerful women.

Today that name remains the symbol of strength and power.

We call upon Anne, knowing that the Saviour will listen to the prayers of His devoted grandmother.

In her name we ask favours and blessings, sure that the God who chose her daughter to be His Mother will be generous to the woman who shaped His Mother to her high career.

Fortunate the women whose name is Anne.

Blessed the millions across the world who pray to the great Saint Anne, knowing that her name is dear to God and that prayer to her is prayer that the Saviour, her Grandson, will willingly heed.

To her whose name and fame we love, we pray:

The Prayer of Saint Anne

(recite the prayer on page 1)

NINTH DAY:

All her life Anne lived in the obscure town of Nazareth.

All her days were spent in a tiny house, a home of common people.

Her ancestors might have lived in the royal palaces of David and of his descendants. It was Anne's destiny to know no palaces, to be content with a cottage that was made beautiful chiefly by the love that filled it. But Anne was great.

A thousand, thousand churches are built to her name.

A thousand schools and hospitals are erected under her patronage.

Pilgrims by the millions pour every year into her shrines, kneeling before her altars and begging her to remember them to God.

Unknown in her own day, she is now known across the world.

Having lived during her lifetime in a little cottage, she is now honoured by great buildings of the world.

From her mansion in heaven she looks down to see once more how the buildings that bear her name shelter the Son of God, house the shrines of Mary His Mother, and serve for the peace and strength of God's sons and daughters of every generation.

To her who was honoured on earth and is enthroned in heaven we pray:

The Prayer of Saint Anne

(recite the prayer on page 1)

Nihil Obstat:

John M. Fearn, S.T.D.

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* Francis Cardinal Spellman,
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