

Anne, and kneeling down asked their blessing, kissing their hands and requesting the favor of their prayers. The two saints blessed her with many tears, and she walked all alone up the steps without turning her head or giving any further indication of sorrow on parting from her parents.

St. Joachim and St. Anne returned to Nazareth much poorer than they came, and penetrated with sorrow for being deprived of their treasure; but the Lord indemnified them for her absence by many signal consolations.

Little more is known with certainty concerning the illustrious parents of our blessed Lady. Some writers affirm that they were still in the flesh at the time of her betrothal to St. Joseph, but others of as great celebrity and as great authority in the Church hold the contrary opinion. Those who maintain that the blessed Joachim and Anne lived till after the birth of the Messiah, base their opinion on the fact that the Church, according to St. Bernard, celebrated the feast of no saint (with the single exception of the Machabees) who had departed this life before the commencement of the Christian Era. St. Joachim died on the 9th of March, it is generally supposed, and St. Anne on the 26th of July. But even these dates are by no means certain.

It so happened, that, by the mysterious decrees of God, the feast of the blessed St. Anne was celebrated in the Church many years before that of St. Joachim her holy spouse. In fact, the primitive Christians cherished a special devotion to the mother of Mary, which devotion has ever since been perpetuated and greatly encouraged among the children of the Church who love and honor her august daughter. Various cities and countries glory in possessing portions of her sacred body. The ring with which St. Joachim espoused her is preserved in a church in the Eternal City dedicated to the blessed mother of Mary. Innumerable miracles have been wrought by the intercession of St. Anne in every part of Christendom, and shrines and pilgrimages established in her honor both in Eastern and Western countries. In all the Christianized countries of America, the name of St. Anne is held in honor, not by Catholics alone, but even by some sects of Protestants. The Episcopalians have churches bearing her name in many of the principal cities

