



St. Anne, Mother of Mary

The fourth commandment reminds us to honor our parents. Yet, how often we forget this amidst the busyness of our daily lives! It's easy to take the sacrifices of our parents for granted—in fact, we may hardly realize the scope of those sacrifices until we have children of our own.

And yet, in reflecting on our parents—our mothers, our fathers, perhaps even our grandparents or other guardians and mentors—what comes to mind? Were we given opportunities to succeed, even if our parents came from humble backgrounds? Were we provided with life's essentials, even when times were tough? Were we taught right from wrong, even in moments of hardship?

All families encounter challenges. Tradition tells us that St. Anne, the mother of Mary and grandmother of Jesus, struggled to conceive a child. She and her husband, Joachim, thought they were destined to be childless. So, they devoted themselves to intense prayer and fasting, hoping that God would intervene. And God responded in ways they could never have imagined.

An angel visited Anne one night with this news: “The Lord has heard your prayer, and you shall conceive, and shall bring forth, and your [child] shall be spoken of in all the world.” When Mary was born, St. Anne was careful to keep her daughter safe, so she would grow in holiness and virtue.

In a homily given on the feast of St. Anne, Pope Francis offered this reflection: “When I was using the incense, I noticed something very beautiful: The statue of St. Anne does not have a crown, but her daughter Mary is crowned. St. Anne is the woman who prepared her daughter to become queen, to become queen of heaven and earth. This woman did a great job.”

We call to mind the story of Mayra, the CRS Rice Bowl Story of Hope from Honduras. We see in Mayra's grandmother something akin to what we glimpse in St. Anne: a strong, humble woman who is committed to seeing her granddaughter succeed, even if that means hard, thankless work. And this scene is not an uncommon one throughout the world.

This Lent, how might we honor our parents or caretakers while honoring hardworking parents that live all around the world?