



THE VISITATION

THE PUBLICATION OF THE NATIVITY HOUSE

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Dignity of Fatherhood

by Nick Baier

Fatherhood is the ultimate call of all men. This statement is true regardless of whether one is a biological father or not. This is true because the definition of fatherhood is not simply having a child. That simple definition is too narrow to apply to all cases where fathers are needed and passively understates the sheer importance of being a father. Instead, *fatherhood is the acceptance of, and ultimate success with, the responsibilities bestowed upon a man.*

While this definition is not radical

in any specific way, the meaning of it is counter to the modern society. In today's "you do you" culture, eschewing your responsibilities for self-serving ends is in vogue. This is simply not how God designed us to live, how he created us and molded us in the image and likeness of himself, and ultimately how men can find dignity.

Fatherhood is not limited to just the home, or as Pope St. John Paul II called it, the Domestic Church. To demonstrate what I mean, I am going to explore fatherhood four

continued on page 3

Created, Called, Cared-For

by Nicole Olson

In my early 20s, just after graduating from college, I spent 5 years working as a foster care case manager. My duties included visiting foster children in their foster homes, supervising visits between foster children and their biological parents, guiding and advising biological parents on how to regain custody of their children, and testifying in court on the biological parents' progress. It was heart breaking work. The children were often bounced around among foster homes, displayed attachment and trust issues, and had a multitude of challenging behaviors in school and in their foster homes. The biological parents were often very broken individuals. While some of

the parents were capable of committing truly horrendous deeds to their children, many were drug addicts, or depressed, or simply incapable of providing for their children's needs or keeping them safe.

These parents were steeped in poverty. Not just monetary poverty. The parents who had children removed from their care had a poverty of mind, of spirit, of discipline and of dignity. How was I – a twenty-three-year old, single white lady who'd never had to parent children – supposed to guide these parents on a path to reunification with their children,

continued on page 4



2nd Annual
RESTORING DIGNITY
Campaign

The lack of dignity in our society affects men, women, born, unborn, immigrants, refugees, the poor, all races and ethnicities, and all of creation.

When you become and advocate of this campaign your donation will not only go to the direct support of our guest moms but will also give you some tools to help restore dignity where ever you go.

For more information
on how to become a
DIGNITY ADVOCATE
scan here:



<https://bit.ly/restoredignity2024>



-GEMSSK26-27

Dignitas Infinita / With such an eye, look

by Tom Tipton

The rank is just the guinea's stamp,

The man's the gold, for all that.

-- Robert Burns, "For a' that"

The term "dignity" appears nowhere in the Gospels, yet the message of human dignity suffuses them. Through the Gospels we can receive the assurance that God loves each of us as His own beloved child. Nor is our God the kind to play "favorites." So what are we as Catholic Workers to do with such a radically equalizing truth?

Pope Francis made it clear in April 2024 that our inherent

human dignity and equality as beloved children of God is not a mere "guinea stamp." The newest Vatican declaration, Dignitas Infinita, challenges us to reckon with the deep truth of the Gospels, to "do the math" on human dignity. If "every human person possesses an infinite dignity, inalienably grounded in his or her very being" then by the identity principle, each soul is of equal worth in the eyes of God.

In a sense, the Vatican is asking us to go back to the etymological meaning of human dignity in order to focus on that dignity which is uniquely applied to

continued on page 6

Letter from the Directors

Dear Friends of Nativity House,

We are in the thick of mid-summer. Warm summer breezes rustle the leaves in the forest that surrounds Nativity House making the sights of the grazing goat herd, buzzing pollinator bees, and singing chickens quite soul nourishing.

This spring Nativity House was asked to help with the St. Procopius Abbey farm garden in Lisle, IL. We have been organizing volunteers and working in Abbot Hughs' Garden since April. It has been a blessing and an honor to be part of the monastic tradition of working the land. We have met many new friends and found the soil to be quite fertile. Our friends at Sacred Tent Catholic Worker in Downers Grove have also installed 5 beehives at the abbey. We gather every Wednesday evening at 5pm to work in the garden and finish up in time for 7pm Vespers.

The Nativity House Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) community has 7 families this year. The garden has been very prolific: asparagus, radishes, cabbage, strawberries, raspberries, kale, turnips. We are eagerly awaiting the harvest of beets, tomatoes, apples, popcorn, butternut squash and more! In mid June we celebrated the birth of 4 kid goats. They keep us highly entertained with their frolicking in and all around the chicken yard - their temporary home until they are weaned. With our dear friend, Abbot Austin Murphy, being on sabbatical, we have also taken in some of his ducks. The animal projects at Nativity House are truly blossoming!

We are currently taking applications to fill our guest mom room. Please pray for us and all moms experiencing extreme need during their pregnancy. The discernment process for moms vulnerable to abortion is a tender time. We look forward to welcoming a new guest mom in the coming months.

We are gearing up for our annual Farm to Table Celebration on September 1. It is hard to believe that this is our 10th year for this awesome community event. We are very excited to celebrate with a great menu, live music, games for the kids, and a silent auction.

As always we are grateful for your prayerful support. We are blessed to call each of you members of our mothering community. The work of Nativity House could not be done without a loving and prayerful community. To God be the Glory!

Peace in Christ,
Venus & Justin Wozniak
Founders & Directors
Nativity House

About The Visitation

This newspaper, The Visitation, is a publication on topics of social justice, spirituality, and theology. It is published four times a year by Nativity House. Submissions are accepted from readers everywhere.

To contact us, email us at:

newspaper@nativity-house.org

Past issues are online at:

<http://www.nativity-house.org>

About Nativity House

Nativity House serves as a house of hospitality for first-time mothers in need of residence in the southwest Chicago suburbs. Nativity House operates an on-site community supported farm (CSA) that provides nourishment for the Nativity House and the greater community. Overall, we envision a healing environment focused on the dignity of each person, the dignity of work, and stewardship of the earth.

Nativity House is administered by a board of directors and an advisory committee of individuals with a broad range of experience. Nativity House has formed positive relationships with relevant local organizations that are extremely helpful in carrying out the mission of the house. Nativity House was recognized as a public charity in August, 2011.

To connect with us, please email Venus Wozniak at:

venusad@nativity-house.org

Postal mail should be addressed to:

Nativity House
17141 W. 143rd St.
Lockport, IL 60441

Donations may be made at [paypal.me/nativityhouse](https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/nativityhouse)

We extend the sincerest thanks to all.

Dignity of Fatherhood

continued from page 1

different ways; in the home, in the workplace, in religious life, and to other people. In each example, I will use some examples from my life and some examples from the lives of the Saints to illustrate how fatherhood is the ultimate goal in each field and the call of every man in that arena.

Fatherhood in the Home – St. Joseph

My wife, Toni, and I are beyond blessed. We have five beautiful children under 8 years old. Our days are filled with laughter, prayer, scrapped knees, wrestling matches, dirty diapers, cuddles, markers and crayons, dressing up as Saints, and firsts happening all the time... simply put our life is pure joy. As the father of these five kids, fatherhood is my life's identity and ultimately where I have dignity. It is because God bestowed on me the reasonability to be a father by giving my wife and I the ability to create life. As our good friends at Jerusalem Farm in Kansas City say, "If you have the ability then you have the responsibility." Taking a broader

look at all men, a vast majority of us have the ability to create life, meaning we have the responsibility to be a father to the life we create. That is universal, it does not matter if you feel you are "ready" to be a father or "fit" to be a father or simply "want" to be a father. If you create life, you are now responsible for that life.

This goes beyond the 40% of births to unmarried parents, where the father has an unobjectively weaker bond to the children and family unit. In those circumstances, to achieve fatherhood is to embrace the responsibility now thrust upon you. This is to commit to that child, which should also mean a commitment to the mother of that child. It is not okay that 40% of children grow up without a father figure in their home. While I have not directly experienced having a child out of wedlock, I see the effects of it all the time. In our ministry, Sacred Tent, the number one underlying theme is that those experiencing homelessness do not have a good relationship with their biological father. If you are

in this situation, the way to truly live a dignified life is to embrace the relationship with your child and begin a committed relationship to their mother. There is no substitute for this, no shortcut, no secret recipe for success outside of the nuclear family unit, and no excuse is good enough to justify the bad outcome you are creating for your child.

For the other 60% who have children in wedlock, this call to embrace the responsibilities of fatherhood includes you too. I see it all the time around me with fathers who do not take on the responsibility that fatherhood requires, even though they are in committed marriages and by the "American standard" are good dads. These dads are those that want to have only a couple children and instead of wanting more, he instead wants his children to age so he can return to his hobbies. They treat children as a temporary break from their true "identity" of hobbies and activities. These fathers come up with all sorts of excuses on why they are saying no to life, and

none of them frankly are good enough. These are the dads that are golfing every weekend during the summer, the dads that spend countless hours training for marathons instead of spending family time on the weekends, the dads that spend too much time fixing up their classic car, the dads that get really into woodworking, or whatever other hobby that is being chosen over having more children. These are dads that have not accepted the responsibility of fatherhood but instead want to offload that responsibility as soon as possible to return to the world where they are responsible for just themselves. Instead, if you make the decision to embrace fatherhood, to transition from single life to fatherhood, to leave the identity you had when you were a single individual to the identity gained in fatherhood, then that is where dignity lies. That is where the example of St. Joseph lies. A man bestowed with more responsibility than any man in the history of humanity. Taking care of God's only Son, sent to save the human race. Because he accepted this responsibility,

continued on page 5

10TH ANNUAL

Nativity House
FARM TO TABLE CELEBRATION

September 1, 2024
4PM - Mass
5PM - Cocktails & Mingling on the Farm, Silent Auction, Kid's Activities
6PM - 5 Course Farm to Table Feast
7PM - Live Music

@ Nativity House
17141 W 143rd
Lockport, Illinois

All proceeds go toward the direct service of mothers in need. Nativity House is a non-profit; all donations are tax deductible.

Nativity House is an intentional Catholic community and house of hospitality rooted in Catholic Social Teaching and the Catholic Worker Farm Movement.

Created, Called, Cared-For

continued from page 1

all while treating them with dignity and respect? Even 17 years later, it is still a daunting question.

During that time of my life, I feel that I relied on God more fully to answer this difficult question and navigate through the wreckage of utterly broken families. I prayed more, journaled more, and asked God for His eyesight. It was in this prayer time that I was able to be guided by the Holy Spirit to recall that not only were the children on my caseload a beautiful and delightful creation of God, but their parents were as well. They were both the poor. They all needed to be gently reminded of God's love for them. This is a difficult thing to do in a system that is supposed to be separated from any church affiliations.

Now, years later, as I reflect on my time working in the foster care system, I am deeply aware that while all of my fellow social workers were trying their best to treat these biological parents and children with dignity, very few of them felt dignified. Rather, I suspect that most felt critiqued, belittled, put down, unloved, helpless, and downtrodden. Regardless of how their family became involved with DCFS, most could not change or improve themselves or their situation. They were trapped.

In hindsight, I know that it is because our government system lacked the very catalyst many people need for change. Because it is only when we are aware of our Christian dignity – the dignity that we can only receive or acknowledge through the truth that we are created, called, desired, and intensely sought-after

by a God who endlessly loves us – that we have the freedom to change. We cannot make amends, reconcile, or alter our behavior without the deepest knowledge that we have a creator-God who has made us in his own image.

Pope John Paul's Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church makes this abundantly clear.

“Discovering that they are loved by God, people come to understand their own transcendent dignity, they learn not to be satisfied with only themselves but to encounter their neighbor in a network of relationships that are ever more authentically human. Men and women who are made “new” by the love of God are able to change the rules and the quality of relationships, transforming even social structures.”

(Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, no. 4).

This is the call we have, to be made “new” by the love of God, change our relationships, and transform social structures. We do so by recalling our own God-instilled-dignity and by confirming the dignity of each person we encounter every day. We, as the church, cannot restore dignity without reminding people of who they are, reminding them that they belong to God. Without being able to talk to our fellow man about our Creator and modeling our Father's love for us, the concept of restoring dignity is incongruous.

Through my volunteer work in my church's St Vincent DePaul Society, I feel that I have a chance now to invite others into this vision of dignity. Being attached

to the church and not a government agency provides me the freedom to interact with the poor such that I can offer them both spiritual and material signs of God's love for them. I can pray with them, call them to check in on them, or simply let them tell me their story. Through the Society, I can also provide for their material needs and fulfill the call to physically care for my neighbor. This emphasis on both charity and affirmation of God's love is how to bring dignity to the poor.

We need more organizations like the St. Vincent DePaul Society

and Catholic Worker houses to truly affect our culture and social structures. We cannot get there through government incentive, paying more social workers, or offering more psychotherapy to people. We must remind people who they are. We, the Church, have to reiterate what makes us dignified – that we are Created, Called, and Cared-For by our amazing God.



Nicole Olson is a former foster care case manager turned Occupational Therapist, wife to an amazing gardener husband, and mother to 3 exuberant boys.



Dignity of Fatherhood

continued from page 3

salvation history is written. St. Joseph lived a dignified life and is the example of fatherhood in the home.

Fatherhood in the Workplace – St. Homobonus

I have been working in secular workplaces for the past 21 years, ever since I was 14 years old as a little league umpire. Most people will work in a secular workplace like me, if everyone worked for the Church there would be no one to support the Church with time, talent, and treasure. This is just the reality of the world. This is especially true of men, where majority do have to consider their income to support their family; especially Catholic men who choose to have big families. What does it look like to embrace fatherhood in the workplace then? It is the call to be fatherly to those around you, to be responsible for their success as if they are your children. It is to instill virtues in them through mentorship and patience. It is to care about their outcome, their career, their health, and their soul. It is to work with integrity, to work hard, to build up those around you before you build up yourself. As a manager of teams as large as 12 people, I have always viewed the success of the individuals under myself as more important than my own. It is the willingness to sacrifice your reputation by taking the blame when someone under you makes a mistake but quick to give credit when they do a good job.

More than just treating those around you, it is the acceptance of responsibility bestowed upon you. As people advance in their career,

they are typically given the opportunity to manage people. This is a calling to fatherhood. In today's career there is an opportunity to take the route of an "individual contributor," i.e. someone who does not manage anyone. I may be alone, but I view this route as less dignified. Someone is choosing to be selfish in the moment, to not take the opportunity to be fatherly to those in the workplace, to abdicate your responsibility in the name of what is easier for you. If you are given the opportunity to lead people, as a man, take that call to fatherhood. It is an opportunity to provide those that work for you with dignity which will ultimately give you dignity.

A great example of this is St. Homobonus, a cloth merchant from 12th century Italy. He was a rare early saint that was not clergy, but he worked his trade with dignity and was ultimately canonized for it. In the papal bull released upon his canonization, he was called a man "good in work and deed." All men should strive to be good in work, to embrace fatherhood in work.

Fatherhood in Religious Life – St. Peter

I will admit, this will be the shortest section of the article. I am not a member of clergy and cannot speak to fatherhood in religious. That being said, I know it when I see it. There is a reason we call priests Fathers and the Pope the Holy Father. Fatherhood IS their lives' devotion. It is the ultimate call of a priest, to be a father to his congregation and those he serves. The most

Easy Essays:

by Peter Maurin
(1877-1949)

What Makes Man Human

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. To give and not to take
that is what makes man human. | 6. Ideals and not deals
that is what makes man human. |
| 2. To serve and not to rule
that is what makes man human. | 7. Creed and not greed
that is what makes man human. |
| 3. To help and not to crush
that is what makes man human. | |
| 4. To nourish and not to devour
that is what makes man human. | |
| 5. And if need be
to die and not to live
that is what makes man human. | |



influential priests I know take this call very seriously and embrace it.

For an example I like to look back to the first Catholic Priest, St. Peter. On St. Peter the Church was built. He took this responsibility like a father would. My favorite example of this is in Acts 3:

"Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord."

That is how a father would talk to his children if they did something wrong. Give them the ability to make it right, to offer forgiveness, but to also be firm and pursue instilling the right virtues in them. Peter took the responsibility to be the first Holy Father and the dignity that comes with it.

Fatherhood to All Children – St. John Bosco

All men, regardless of whether they are biological fathers are meant to be fathers to children. This is true to Uncles and Godfathers obviously, but true to everyone. To be a father figure is what is desperately needed for the 40% of children born without a father in the home. Let that sink in, 2 out of every 5 children born in the US today will not have a father growing up in their home. The outcome for these children is worse, they are more likely to commit crimes, be less educated, be addicted to drugs, die younger, and go to jail. It is, simply put, the responsibility of every man reading this article to be a father to those children. To eschew this responsibility for self-serving ends is not living with dignity.

In our ministry one example comes to mind. We housed an

continued on page 7

Dignitas Infinita / With such an eye, look

continued from page 1

human beings. Certainly rocks, and plants, and animals are all part of God’s creation, but humanity is uniquely dignified because we are each – not just all – made in the image of God, and adopted as God’s children.

Perhaps there is a problem with the word “dignity” itself. Words retain earlier meanings more powerfully than your kitchen sponge keeps last week’s marinara. The Romans used the term dignitas to indicate “rank.” If the medieval Spanish encyclopedist, St. Isidore of Seville, had created one of his etymologies for the Latin word, he would have pointed out that it seems to be a compression of de [from] and ignis [fire].

Dignity is the rank that purified gold attains after it is tested in fire. And that’s where we can go wrong with the theological meaning of human dignity.

We do not – cannot – attain a “rank” for our souls as beloved children of God. Only God can grant us that “rank.” The infinite dignity of each human soul that the Vatican proclaims is a gift beyond human understanding that can only be granted by God.

Our church, so crowded with its ranks, and titles, and honors, and orders, struggles with the ancient Roman idea of dignity while our Creator freely infuses each of us individually with equality through infinite dignity. (Here’s the math: $x=x$, infinity=infinity, thus all souls are of equal dignity.) Nothing can be earned, where an infinitude is freely bestowed. The state of the soul? Oh, yes, evil works alone can send that beloved

child of God, that soul, despite its infinite dignity, to hell, but only through their own choosing and their own free will. On the other hand, no soul can send itself to heaven. You can’t crash that party by yourself. Honoring human dignity points us back to our Creator who has dignified us, and wants us to join Him.

Dignitas Infinita states that the “greatest imaginable difference” is the one between genders. Perhaps the document should have posed the opposite question, What is the greatest imaginable sameness [within humanity]? There’s an easier answer. We are all, each individually and collectively, beloved children of God. “Jew or Greek,” “woman or man,” (Galatians 3:28) or any other human category imposed upon the inherent, infinite dignity of human soul is irrelevant to our Creator, in whose image we are each formed, in whom we alone find the source of our infinite dignity as humans.

With such an eye, look

With such an eye, look and you may see, as one creature sees in another the glory of creation.

Look upon the hair of your fellows, in all its infinite varieties, and see such hair, long, or short, and all ways in between, brown, black, blonde, or red, dull, shining, gray, or gone all white, dry and coarse, split and frizzed, crimped and curled, wavy, braided, and flattened, balding to mere wisps,

matted in oil or sweat, flaked with dandruff, or crawling with lice, miscut, misshapen, falling out in patches, colored gaudy hues, or hidden under hats, yet, can you call such creatures with such hair anything but glorious?

Look upon your fellow’s brows, in all their infinite varieties, and see lines and pimples, such blotches and scars, taut sunburned skin, with sweat, ever upon the brow. Eyebrows plucked or singed away, eyebrows drawn in, unintentionally comically, eyebrows, bushy and wild, graying, dark, and furrowed, yet ever with such expression, how can you call the creatures who bear them anything but glorious?

Look upon the eyes of your fellows, and the scope of creation pours out in its radiant diversity, in blue and black and gray, brown and green, light and dark, and every shade in between. Encircled in lashes, curled, mascaraed, missing, or fake. rimmed in fleshy red channels, caked in dust, nodules of puss, or tight and pink, washing out specks. Sclerae glistening white, or blurry pink, or yellow, red veined, or crystal clear, sunk deep, or bulging out, whole eyeballs missing, covered with patches, blocked by glasses, or forever closed in blindness,

yet expressive in their very lids, thin sheets of skin that crinkle and roll, and tear, and blink, and wink, infinite information beyond any calculation.

Can creatures bearing such miracles be called anything but glorious?

Look upon the noses of your fellows, and you may see, with such an eye, mountainous oily gobs of flesh, porous red pincushions, hooked, or bulbous, straight, severe, or bent bony ridges, gaping nostrils, hair boiling out, dripping, running, crusted with snot; whole noses gone to cancer, leaving only a gash in the face, perhaps covered with a prothesis, or not; resonant, nasal, adenoidal chambers that draw in the air that voices life, a symphony of instruments beyond number. Can any creature behind such a miracle be called anything but glorious?

And the lips of your fellows may be seen by eyes that look. thin to puffy, rounded or straight, pursed or spread wide in a smile. these lips, ever moving, ever speaking, quivering, cracked, caked in lipstick, bleeding, chapped, glistening with food. Such mouths need not sing

continued on page 7

Dignitas Infinita

continued from page 6

to tell their own glory,
the glory of their Creator.



Have we such eyes
that can see?
That can piece together
beauty and truth,
that can see through the glory of
creation,
the Creator?

Tom Tipton is a member of St. John Vianney parish in Lockport and is a volunteer with the community garden at Nativity House. He has taught English at the College of DuPage since 1993.

Dignity of Fatherhood

continued from page 5

individual who was 26 years old. He never grew up knowing his father, he was also diagnosed with autism and learning disabilities and had frayed relationships with family throughout his life; he had a harder life than most reading this article will ever experience. This person was only 7 years younger than me when he moved in, not the range of biological children. The relationship that God decided for us was that of a father and son. Demonstrating fatherhood to him for the first time in his life was now my responsibility. It was a hard responsibility, because it meant taking ownership over his actions as a father would over their children's despite not being the one who was responsible for the man he was at that point. In this acceptance of responsibility was a call to fatherhood. To hear the words "I love you" and to get the occasional slip-up where he calls me "dad," gives me dignity. We see him all the time, as we would a 28 year old son, and he tells me when he has good news and asks for my help when he needs it. I have heard countless stories like this, where men take in nieces or nephews or troubled neighbors and treat them like their own

children. The life these men live is a dignified one.

Like St. John Bosco, helping the fatherless youth of 19th century Italy, it is the responsibility of men to be fathers to the fatherless.

No matter if a child calls you dad, all men should strive to be fathers. To embrace fatherhood is to embrace responsibility when it presents itself. The men who do lead a dignified life, a truly Christian life in the mold of the saints, live a life of dignified fatherhood.



Nick Baier is putting the cradle back in Cradle Catholic, as a husband to an amazing woman and father expecting his sixth baby. He and his wife are also the founders of Sacred Tent, a Catholic Worker House of Hospitality hosting individuals experiencing homelessness in the western suburbs of Chicago. Additionally, he is a part time coach, beekeeper, chicken farmer, gardener, consultant, F3 Q, reader, camper, and organizer of men.

St. Anne

continued from page 8

immense hope and faith in God's plan for her life as a mother, and trusted that He would be her guide as she raised Mary with her husband, Saint Joachim. As many women face uncertainties like unplanned pregnancies, pregnancy complications, struggles with infertility, and raising a child with special needs, they can turn to Saint Anne as a model of holiness who constantly persevered, was humble, and had hope in a life that was full of suffering and anguish.

As we celebrate her feast day on July 26th, let us pray for all people to work to uphold the dignity of life through the realization and understanding that ALL life is sacred and a GIFT from God. Saint Anne, patroness of grandparents, mothers, married

couples, and those suffering from infertility, pray for us! Blessed Virgin and Mother, Mary, graciously lead us to your son, Jesus Christ!



Margaret Davis is a parishioner at St. Jude Catholic Church in New Lenox. She loves spiritually growing in her relationship with God, as well as dancing, exercising/hiking outdoors, and working at a local therapeutic day school as a speech and language pathologist. She enjoys volunteering with her boyfriend, Brent, at Nativity House on garden Saturdays! It's been such a joy and a blessing to her to be able to work alongside other wonderful service-minded individuals and families at Nativity House!



ABBOT HUGH'S GARDEN

[AHG]

a community farming project
at St. Procopius Abbey in Lisle, IL



Work Dates:

Wednesdays
June-September
5pm - 6:30pm
Followed By
7pm Vespers in the
Abbey's Mary Chapel

WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO...

- Fence Mending
- Installed 5 beehives
- Prepping garden beds and planting potatoes, carrots, tomatoes, peppers & more!

Sign Up Here:
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Growing food for the Abbey and you!
Learning about food preservation & canning, and more!

For more information,
contact Venus Wozniak
venus@nativity-house.org



In this issue:

- Dignity of Fatherhood
- Created, Called, Cared-For
- Dignitas Infinita / With such an eye, look
- Restoring Dignity Campaign
- Farm to Table Celebration 2024
- Abbot Hugh's Garden
- St. Anne

Nativity House
17141 W. 143rd St.
Lockport, IL 60441



St. Anne: A Model for Perseverance, Humility, & Hope

Feast Day: July 26th

Patroness of grandparents, mothers, married couples, and those suffering from infertility

by Margaret Davis

Perseverance. Humility. Hope. These three words epitomize the life of the extraordinary woman who God called to be the grandmother of Jesus Christ and the mother of our Blessed Virgin Mother, Mary. Anne and her husband, Saint Joachim, were childless for many years, suffering greatly while carrying the disheartening burden of infertility. One can only imagine what this holy married couple felt as they cried out to God to grant them children to love and cherish.

The agonizing pain and destitution were likely difficult to bear at times. But, given their strong faith in God, unwavering love for one another, and fervent prayer life, God looked with favor on the couple and blessed them with a daughter: our heavenly Mother Mary. As we work to restore and transform the pervasive culture of sin and death into a hope-filled culture of life and love, let us dive into how Saint Anne truly showed us how

to be faithfully pro-life.

Many couples are faced with the struggle of infertility within their marriage, and Saint Anne was no different. Barren for a plethora of years, it would have been easy for her to lose hope and trust in God and His plan for her life. After all, Saint Anne longed to be a loving and compassionate mother. Instead of turning away from God and towards sinful ways, Saint Anne greatly persevered in faith amidst her and her husband's challenging struggle with infertility, trusting that God's will be done in their lives. And, God blessed Saint Joachim and Saint Anne with a precious daughter: the virgin Mother Mary.

We can turn to Saint Anne to help show us that, even in the midst of unplanned and/or complicated pregnancies, when we do not know where to turn or who to turn to, we need to desperately rely on the grace of God, the presence of the Holy Spirit, and the power of



prayer to pull us through. Like Saint Anne, no matter what circumstances we might be facing in the choosing of life or death, we too can rest in the loving arms of our heavenly Father and be rest assured that He will provide all that we need to make it through anything.

What was it like for Saint Anne to raise Mary? Like parents today, Saint Joachim and Saint Anne likely faced many of the same struggles that parents raising children face today. Saint Anne, just like her beautiful trust in God's plan for Him to make her Mary's mother, humbled herself through steadfast prayer and faith to raise Mary lovingly, compassionately, and patiently.

Like Saint Anne, part of continuing to build up a culture of life and working to protect all human life and dignity from conception to natural death, we too can encourage the importance of parents and parental figures in children's lives to raise them well in the Catholic faith and to encourage them to learn about the Catholic faith, pray regularly, and spread the faith to others. Children are truly a gift and blessing from God to be cherished, valued, and respected.

What does this beautiful and grace-filled saint teach us about the dignity and value of life? Saint Anne was a woman of

continued on page 7