

## **Sts. Anne and Joachim on Monday week 17 of Ordinary Time**

### **Exodus 32:15-24, 30-34,**

The names, Anne and Joachim, have traditionally been given to the parents of Our Lady, and whilst there are many fanciful tales about them, some repeating Old Testament stories of barrenness, we have no firm facts about who they were. Scripture does not tell us and so we are left to legend and supposition.

However, for Mary to be able to become the person she was, and to accept the most important commission a human being has ever been given – to bring the Son of God into the world, must mean that her upbringing was one of faithfulness and obedience to God's word. We see this in the fact that Mary and Joseph presented the infant Jesus in the Temple, according to the Law (Lk. 2:22-38). We can wonder how her parents felt when Mary told them that she was pregnant, and unwed. Did they feel betrayed and let down? Again, we are left to supposition. How did they feel when Mary and Joseph disappeared with their Grandson and went to Egypt? They must have had to trust that God would keep them safe.

Trusting God is both very easy and very hard. It's easy to say that we trust God, but when times are challenging, we can quickly think that we have been abandoned by Him. In the first reading, the people feel abandoned and with Moses gone, they decide to take things into their hands. Effectively, they did not trust God! However, this reading also shows us the value of intercessory prayer, as Moses prays for the people, despite their sin and disobedience. In the section of text that we don't read (verses 11-14) Moses pleads with God not to wipe out the people, and then what we read, is where God relents and agrees to "let the punishment fit the crime," so to speak.

Like Sts. Anne and Joachim, we need to learn to trust in God's protection for our friends and family as we don't know what His plans are for our loved ones. Those of us who are parents



and grandparents know that we cannot control every moment of our children's lives and that as they grow up, we have to hand them over to the care and protection of God.

The attached picture gives us a visual image of this motion. We are used to the idea of Our Lady interceding for us, and we often invoke her prayers for our loved ones. Here she is seated at the feet of her mother, St. Anne, whose hand is laid on her head. In turn, Jesus is in Mary's lap, but He reaches up to His grandmother, completing the circle of prayer. Note also that the position of His arm makes a kind of cross in the middle of the picture. Sometimes just making the Sign of the Cross is the only prayer that is needed, putting all our concerns into the care of God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.