

Ste. Anne Salem 120th Anniversary

At his 25th wedding anniversary, my oldest brother said many people have asked me what have I learned in 25 years of marriage? I've answered, I learned I have a choice, I can be right or I can be happy. I've chosen to be happy!

An anniversary offers us a time to reflect upon our past, where we have been. However, more importantly, an anniversary offers us a time to reflect upon where we are going. Our look back at 120 years of the life of this beautiful parish gives us courage and hope towards the next 120 years.

Who are we as a parish of Ste. Anne? Where have we been? As I read the history of Ste. Anne, I'm inspired by the dedication and faithfulness of the leaders and families of this community. The priests who have served here, the men and women who have volunteered here, the Sisters of St. Chretienne who have ministered in so many ways to this parish and the community of Salem. These men and women have sacrificed a great deal to share the most important story ever told, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ! With the help of the Grace of God, they lit the light in the beacon of hope and peace and made sure that anyone who needed to find refuge and shelter under that light would find it. They are a gift. We owe who we are to the past, but the most important function of the past is to point to our future.

Today, the parish of Ste. Anne brings comfort to the French-Canadian community, the Filipino community, the community from Cameroon, and most recently the Congolese community. The past has shaped the future of this parish. When once the beacon of hope and peace shed its light to guide the French-Canadian community, now it burns ever more brightly to draw these new communities together to hear the story of love, peace, and hope. And as a parish of such diversity, its beauty is found in being family.

At the last supper Jesus held the bread and wine and said do this remembrance of me but he also taught his disciples to go forth and preach, tell the powerful story to every corner of the world, and baptize them in the name of the father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit. The purpose of a disciple of Christ was not to be found in where they had been but more importantly where they were going!

As a church today, your anniversary celebration naturally turns your gaze back on your history. But you must let that history be part of your movement into the future. Jesus has commissioned you and sent you into the world with a mission: how will you fulfill it? You have a responsibility to your young people, to prepare them for what they will face in life. You have a responsibility to your old people, to help meet their needs in a changing world. You have a responsibility to the community around you, to proclaim the good news of salvation and to be examples of Christ's love. Let the stories of faith, commitment, and service that are told today as we celebrate the history of this parish strengthen you, prepare you, and propel you into the next century of your mission as disciples of Christ.

The Church is the first fruits of the Kingdom of God, the first dawning of God's presence in the world in our day. Its purpose is both to remember God's faithfulness, kindness, mercy, and providence through our history up to now, and to move us and our world toward the goal God has given us. Eternal Life!

The challenge my dear brothers and sisters is to take this powerful history of Ste. Anne Parish and ask ourselves how can I, myself, continue the powerful, life changing, story today? As Fr. B said and prayed in 1986 at the dedication of this beautiful church, this stone structure cannot heal. However, we as family come to our new temple to be healed and be healers. My brothers and sisters of Ste. Anne parish, We are family, diverse as we are, united in one common mission, preach the Gospel, the good news, the story of Jesus, and as St. Francis of Assisi taught, when necessary use words! Celebrate these past 120 years, only to gain the courage and hope to look forward to writing the history of the next 120 years. May God's abundant blessing, through the intercession of St. Anne, the grandmother of our Lord Jesus, and mother to Mary, come upon you and fill you with the Grace necessary to share the Good News of Jesus Christ! Happy Anniversary!