



Der Erzbischof von Köln

***Greetings and Message of  
Joachim Cardinal Meisner, archbishop of Cologne,  
on the occasion of the arrival of the relics of Saints Joachim and Anne  
in Sacramento and Roseville, USA, on 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> September 2007***

*Cologne, 6<sup>th</sup> September, 2007*

*My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

*I greet you all with sentiments of fraternal affection and express my gratitude to His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos and to His Excellency Mons. William Weigand for extending their invitation to me to join you in the solemn celebrations marking the arrival of the relics of St. Joachim and St. Anne in the United States of America. Unfortunately due to my extensive schedule I have been unable to accept your kind invitation. I therefore wish to make myself spiritually present through these words of greeting and blessing.*

*The veneration of Saints Joachim and St. Anne is of particular importance and significance in the life of both the Catholic and Orthodox traditions. It is therefore also through the common veneration of these two saints that we are gifted with the opportunity to continue our journey of striving towards Christian unity.*

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*For those who wonder what we can learn from people we know little about and how we can honour them, we must draw our attention to why they are honoured by the Church. It is the mother and father of Mary, Joachim and Anne, who nurtured Mary, who taught her, brought her up to become the humble handmaid of the Lord. It was the teaching of Joachim and Anne that also prepared Mary to respond to the Lord's invitation with faith, "Let it be done to me according to your will." It was in the home of Joachim and Anne where Mary received her "training", so to say, to become the Mother of Our Lord. It was their example of parents that Mary followed as she brought up her son Jesus. It was their faith that laid the foundation of courage and strength, allowing Mary to stand at the foot of the Cross as her Son was crucified and still believe. Our veneration of Saints Joachim and Anne is, therefore, intimately related to the affection and veneration we hold toward our Blessed Mother, the Virgin Mary.*

*What a wonderful example of married love we have in Saints Joachim and Anne! Through them we see not only the love of a man and woman, but of a husband and wife and of a God who loved them. Childless, even into old age, Joachim and Anne continue to faithfully serve God, placing their trust in him that He would make their love fruitful. It is this faithful trust and love in God which is required by the sacrament of marriage. The union of Joachim and Anne, and the union of every married Christian couple "was established by the Creator, (...) and given as the one blessing that was not forfeited by original sin. This sacred bond is not therefore based on a human decision, but on the author of marriage, who willed that it be possessed of special blessings and purposes," (New Order of Marriage). Married couples and families, like bishops and priests, are about carrying out a sacred work, the work of God. Let us not lose sight of this!*

*It is a great joy and blessing that your church should be created as a CENTRE for the family under the patronage of Saints Joachim and Anne, the Protectors of married and family life. For this reason I thank the Lord for your sensitivity toward the sanctification of the Christian family and for the example of these two holy parents.*

*To St. Joachim –also my own patron Saint- let us commend all Christian fathers, that they may be attentive to God's Word and respond to His love through faithfully carrying out the responsibilities entrusted to them. And to*

*St. Anne we commend all Christian mothers, especially those who live obstacles in their faith and in their defence of human life, or who come across unbearable difficulties in the upbringing and formation of their own children. May Saints Joachim and Anne protect you and inspire you all, that you may faithfully live your vocation to holiness!*

*With my very best wishes, I willingly invoke the blessing of the Lord upon you all, and I greet you with gratitude and joy!*

*I remain yours, in Christ,*

*+/fratelli Lud. Vellini*