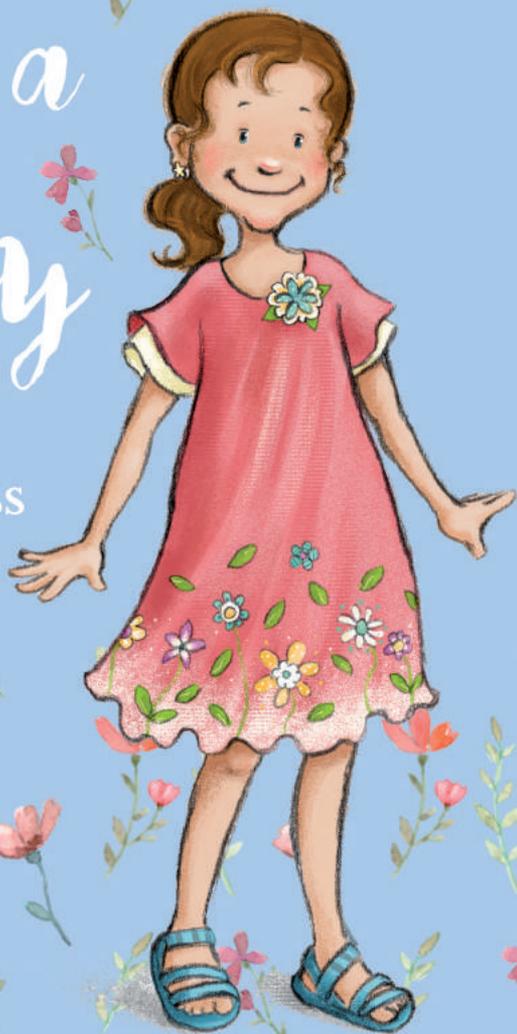


Written by Gabriele Krämer-Kost

Anna Goes to a Party

...and Learns
about the Mass



Illustrated by Tanja Husmann

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Nihil Obstat:

Reverend Thomas W. Buckley, S.T.D., S.S.L.

Imprimatur:

✠ Seán Cardinal O'Malley, O.F.M. Cap.

Archbishop of Boston

December 14, 2018

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018962194

CIP data is available.

ISBN-10: 0-8198-0862-8

ISBN-13: 978-0-8198-0862-2

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Translated by Verena Godde (novice, Daughters of St. Paul) and Mary Leonora Wilson, FSP

Originally published in German as *Anna feiert ein Fest ...und lernt etwas über den Gottesdienst*, written by Gabriele Krämer-Kost, illustrated by Tanja Husmann © 2017, Verlag Herder GmbH, Freiburg im Breisgau.

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First English edition. Copyright © 2019, Daughters of St. Paul

Published by Pauline Books & Media, 50 Saint Pauls Avenue, Boston, MA 02130-3491

Printed in the U.S.A.

AGTAP VSAUSAPEOILL12-1810138 0862-8

www.pauline.org

Pauline Books & Media is the publishing house of the Daughters of St. Paul, an international congregation of women religious serving the Church with the communications media.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

23 22 21 20 19

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Party Preparations!

Anna twirls excitedly in front of the mirror.

“This is the dress! It’s perfect!” squeals Anna. “It’s so soft and such a pretty color! It’s beautiful, Mom!” Anna looks at her mom pleadingly.

Anna’s mom looks at the price tag and frowns, “For that price, I could get a dress in my size,” she mutters. But she sees how happy Anna is. “Okay, okay, we’ll buy this one.”

Anna jumps up and down happily.

“Now can we go?” complains Florian. “I hate all this girly stuff! I want to buy a toy. Can I have a toy, Mom?”

Florian is six, only two years younger than Anna. He acts so young sometimes! Anna thinks.

“Oh be quiet, Flea,” says Anna.

“Stop calling me Flea,” growls Florian.

Anna grins widely. She calls her brother Flea because a flea is tiny and jumps around all the time. Just like Florian. The nickname fits her little brother perfectly. Also, Florian gets upset when Anna calls him Flea. So that is another plus.

“Just a minute, Florian,” says Mom, ignoring Anna and Flea’s arguing. “Anna is all set. But we still need to find you a nice shirt and a pair of pants for school!”

Flea rolls his eyes. “This is getting worse and worse! Now you want me to try on clothes! It’s so boring!”

Mom does not say a thing, but the look on her face is very clear: there is no point resisting.

“Fine, fine,” grumbles Flea.

As Flea tries on his clothes, Anna says to her mom, “When we’re done shopping, can we please play outside?”

“I’m afraid not, dear,” Mom replies. “It is too hot and there’s too much ozone in the air.”

“But every day it isn’t too hot it rains. I just want to go outside,” pleads Anna. She sighs and continues,

“And the thunderstorms wake me up at night!”

Anna’s mom laughs and says, “Well, you and Florian sleep quite soundly in bed next to your father and me.”

Anna smiles and says, “I just hope the weather doesn’t ruin the big celebration! I can’t wait!”

Anna’s mom smiles, “I’m glad you’re looking forward to Grandpa Martin’s party too!”

“I love eating delicious food and staying up late,” says Anna cheerfully. “I hope people bring me presents.”

“Anna, the party is for your grandfather, not for you!” says Anna’s mom, laughing.

“Oh, I know!” replies Anna, shrugging.

Anna has been looking forward to Grandpa Martin’s party. It will be a really special party. Dad told her that it is what is called a round birthday. He explained that a round birthday is when there is a zero in the birthday number. Like when someone turns thirty, fifty, or eighty years old.

“Grandpa is turning sixty. I can’t imagine being that old!” says Anna. “One year seems so long. It’s the time between one summer break and the next, or

one Christmas and the next, or . . . or one birthday and the next. So, sixty years is almost forever!”

“Well, it certainly is a reason to celebrate,” replies Anna’s mom, “and you know that lots of our relatives are coming too, right?”

“Oh, I know. I can’t wait,” says Anna.

Just then, Flea pulls on his mom’s purse.

“Okay, this shirt is good, Mom,” says Flea. “Can we please go now?”

Anna’s mom sighs and smiles down at Flea, “Okay, let’s go home. I have a lot to do to get ready for the party!”

As they drive home, Anna thinks, *I can’t wait to see the other kids who will be at the party. The older kids always have great ideas for pranks.* Anna remembers how at the last family party some of the kids filled a sugar bowl with salt! It was so much fun watching the adults mixing it into their coffee and then making faces when they drank it. *Well, it was fun until their parents discovered what we did,* thinks Anna.

“Mom!” yells Anna from the backseat.

“Yes, Anna. No need to yell,” says Anna’s mom.

“I’m wondering. When is the party again?”

“In just a couple days, Anna,” says Anna’s mom.

“I hate waiting,” says Anna, pouting. “Remember when I asked for that doll last year? It took forever and ever to get that doll.”

Anna’s mom laughs and then says, “Yes, I remember.”

“And I still want that red electric convertible, Mom,” says Anna. “Don’t forget!”

“Oooh,” adds Flea, “yeah, I want that too.”

Anna’s mom smiles. “I’ve told you both, those toy cars are too expensive. And who knows if you would even play with it.”

“I would use it!” responds Anna loudly.

“Anna, we have discussed this many times. I am not going to argue with you,” says Mom sternly.

After a few seconds of silence, Anna says softly, “I wonder what Grandpa will get for his birthday.”

“Who knows,” Mom murmurs.

Anna can see that her Mom is busy thinking about something. She is probably thinking about all the things she has to do when she gets home, thinks Anna.

Lots of relatives and friends are coming from all over Germany for the party. Some are staying

with Anna's family. Others will stay with her grandparents. Grandma and Grandpa live in the same big house as Anna's family, but on a separate floor. But there will not be enough room for everyone. Some guests will have to stay in a hotel. On Saturday, they will all drive to a winery for the celebration. It will be a real feast!

When Anna, Flea, and Mom arrive home, Anna sees a car in the driveway.

"Whose car is that?" asks Anna.

"Maybe your Aunt Eva's," responds Anna's mom. "She is supposed to arrive today."

As Anna walks into the house, she hears a voice.

"Yooohooooo!"

Who could it be? Anna wonders. *I hope it is Aunt Eva!*

Aunt Eva lives far away, so the family hardly ever sees her. She works at her church. Anna thinks her work is very interesting. Anna's family does not really go to church very much. They go just at Christmas and Easter with Grandpa and Grandma. Anna asks her parents about God sometimes. But Anna's parents do not really know what to say. That makes Anna even more curious.

Maybe Aunt Eva can answer some of my questions! thinks Anna as she runs inside. In the living room, her Aunt Eva is standing up to greet everyone.

“Yay! Aunt Eva!” squeals Anna, running over to hug her aunt. “I am so glad you are here! I hardly ever see you. I wish I could come to visit you in Austria. You’re my favorite aunt and godmother you know!”

Aunt Eva laughs, “I am your *only* aunt and godmother! And I don’t live in Austria, dear child. I live in Germany just like you.”

Aunt Eva turns and hugs Mom and Florian.

Then Mom says, “Florian, please help me bring in the rest of the things from the car.” Mom and Florian leave to go outside.

Then Anna remembers something that has been on her mind. She says, “You know, after summer break I will be in the third grade, Aunt Eva!”

“I know, dear Anna,” says Aunt Eva, amused.

“Mom told me that I will receive my First Communion in the spring,” says Anna. Then she pauses and adds sadly, “But I don’t really know what that means. Can I ask you about it?”

“Of course! I will answer your questions, Anna,” says Aunt Eva. “I’m your godmother, so that’s part of my job!”

Anna feels relieved. She has been worried about her First Communion classes for a while. Some of her classmates go to church every Sunday. Anna is afraid she will not understand anything. Anna had asked her mom about things, but she’d just said, “I’m sorry, Anna. I never went to religion classes. And I hardly ever went to church when I was growing up. I don’t know how to answer your questions.” Mom looked a bit sad when she said that. Maybe Anna’s mom wishes she could have gone to religious classes like Anna does.

The next day Anna wakes up feeling excited. Today I am going to ask Aunt Eva some questions about my First Communion! she decides.

Anna finds Aunt Eva sitting on the patio with her laptop on her knees. “What are you writing?” Anna asks.

“I’m almost finished,” says Aunt Eva brightly. “The parish bulletin is due tomorrow. And I forgot

to invite everyone to the children's Mass! I'm just sending a correction to the parish office."

Anna looks confused, "What is a parish bulletin, Aunt Eva? And what is a children's Mass?"

Aunt Eva does not respond immediately. She types something quickly and then hits one key really hard. "There we go!" she says. She turns to Anna and says, "Oh dear, sometimes I forget you don't know these things. Let's sit and talk about it!"

Aunt Eva and Anna go into the living room and sit on the couch. Aunt Eva brushes Anna's hair out of her eyes and begins, "So, a children's Mass is like a regular Mass. But the children sing and read the readings from the Bible."

"Oh that sounds like fun!" says Anna.

"It is! And the parish bulletin is a piece of paper that tells everyone what is happening at church that week."

"So, it's like an invitation. Like Grandpa Martin's birthday invitation?" asks Anna holding up a card that was on the coffee table. On the front of the card is a huge golden 60 and two pictures. One picture is of Grandpa. The other is a black-and-white picture



of a little baby smiling. Dad had told Anna that the baby is Grandpa.

“Yes, Anna, they are very similar. You are so smart!” praises Aunt Eva. “We are celebrating Grandpa Martin’s birthday. So we invite others to join us. And when the church celebrates something, we invite others to join us too!”

“But what do you celebrate at church?” asks Anna. “Mass doesn’t seem like a party. When I go, I feel so bored.”

“Oh but the Mass is a celebration,” winks Aunt Eva. “You just have to understand it to see it! I will tell you more about the Mass later so you can understand.”

“Can you just tell me now about why the Mass is a party?” asks Anna.

Aunt Eva chuckles, “Where does this sudden interest in the Mass come from, Anna?”

“Well, our religion teacher said we will be talking about the Mass soon,” responds Anna. “And I’m worried I won’t understand anything.”

“Don’t you worry, Anna,” promises Aunt Eva, “I will tell you all about the Mass soon!”

