

## Birth of Mary

Several days previously, Anne informed Joachim that the time of her delivery was at hand. She

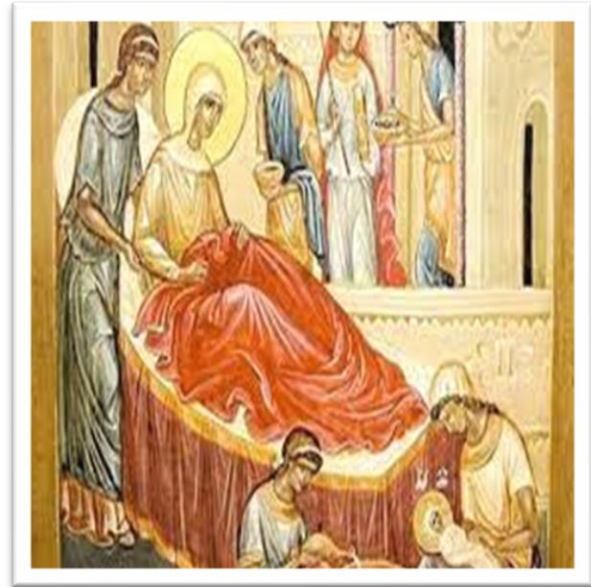
sent messengers to her sister Maraha, at Sephoris, also to the widow Enue, Elizabeth's sister, in the valley of Zabulon, and to her sister Sobe's daughter Salome, the wife of Zebedee, of Bethsaida. The sons of Sobe and Zebedee, James the Greater and John, were not yet born.

Anne sent for these three women to come to her. I saw them on their journey. Two of them were accompanied by their husbands, who returned, however, when they had reached the neighborhood of Nazareth. Joachim had sent the men servants off to the herds, and had

otherwise disposed of the domestics not absolutely needed in the house. On the evening before the birth of the child, Joachim himself went to his herds in the field nearest his home. I saw him with some of his servants who were related to him. He called them brothers, but they were only his brother's children. The pasture grounds were beautifully divided off and hedged in. In the corners were huts wherein the servants were provided with food supplied from Anne's house. There was also a stone altar before which they prayed. Steps led down to it, and the space around it was neatly paved with triangular stones. Behind the altar was a wall with steps at the sides. The whole place was surrounded by trees.

Joachim, after praying here awhile, selected the finest lambs, kids, and bullocks from his herds, and sent them by his servants to the Temple as offerings. He did not return to his home before night.

I saw the three women approaching Anne's abode toward evening. When they arrived, they went straight to her apartment back of the fireplace. Anne embraced them, told them that her time drew near, and standing intoned with them a Psalm. "Praise God, the Lord. He has had pity on His people and has freed Israel. Truly, He has fulfilled the promise that He made to Adam in Paradise: "The seed of the woman shall crush the serpent's head." I do not remember all, verse for verse, but Anne rehearsed the different types of Mary, and said: "The germ that God gave to Abraham has ripened in me. The promise made to Sara and the blossom of Aaron's rod are fulfilled in me." During all this time, Anne was shining with light. The room was full of glory, and over Anne hovered Jacob's ladder. The women around her were amazed,



entranced. I think they too saw the ladder.

And now a slight refreshment was placed before the visitors. They ate and drank standing and toward midnight lay down to rest. But Anne remained up in prayer. After awhile, she went and roused the women. She felt that her time was near, and she desired them to pray with her. They all withdrew behind a curtain that concealed an oratory. Anne opened the doors of a little closet built in the wall. In it was a box containing sacred treasures, and on either side lights so contrived that they could be raised in their sockets at pleasure, and rested on upright supports. These lamps were now lighted. At the foot of the little altar was a cushioned stool. The box contained some of Sara's hair, which Anne held in great reverence; some of the bones of Joseph, which Moses had brought with him out of Egypt; something belonging to Tobias, relics of clothing, I think; and the little, white, shining, pear-shaped cup from which Abraham drank when he received the Blessing from the angel, and which was later on taken from the Ark of the Covenant and given to Joachim along with the Blessing. This Blessing was like wine and bread, like a sacrament, like a supernatural, invigorating food. Anne knelt before the shrine, one of the women on either side, and the third behind her. Again I heard them reciting a Psalm. I think that the burning bush on Horeb was mentioned in it. And now a supernatural light began to fill the chamber and to hover around Anne. The three women fell prostrate as if stunned. Around Anne the light took the exact form of the thornbush on Horeb, so that I could no longer see her. The flame streamed inward, and all at once I saw Anne receiving into her arms the shining child Mary. She wrapped it in her mantle, pressed it to her heart, laid it on the stool before the relics, and went on with her prayer.

Then I heard the child crying, and I saw Anne drawing forth some linen from under the large veil that enveloped her. She swathed the child first in gray and then in red, leaving the breast, arms, and head bare, and then the luminous thornbush vanished. The holy women arose and in glad surprise received the newborn child into their arms. They wept for joy. All intoned a hymn of praise while Anne held the child on high. I saw the chamber again filled with light and myriads of angels. They announced the child's name, singing: "On the twentieth day, this child shall be called Mary." Then they sang and I heard all these words.

Anne went to her chamber, and lay down upon her couch. The women bathed and swathed the child, and laid it by the mother. Next to the bed was a little portable basket-crib furnished with wooden pegs, by means of which it could be stuck into holes on the right or left, or at the foot of the bed as might be desired. One of the women went and called Joachim. He entered,

knelt by Anne's couch, and his tears fell in torrents over the child. Then he took it up, held it aloft, and intoned a canticle of praise like unto that of Zachary. He spoke words expressive of his longing now to die, and he alluded to the germ given by God to Abraham and perfected in himself, also to the root of Jesse. I noticed, though not till afterward, that Mary Heli was not among the first to see the child. She must at this time have been for some years the mother of Mary Cleophas. Still she was not present at Mary's birth, because the Jewish custom does not permit the daughter to be with the mother at such a time.

When Mary was born, I saw her at one and the same time before the Most Holy Trinity in Heaven and on earth in Anne's arms. I saw the joy of the whole heavenly court. I saw all her gifts and graces in a supernatural way revealed to her. I often have such visions, but they are for me inexpressible, for others unintelligible, therefore am I silent with regard to them. Mary was also instructed in innumerable mysteries. As this vision ended, the child cried upon earth.

I saw the news of Mary's birth announced also in Limbo, and I beheld the transports of joy with which it was received by the Patriarchs, especially by Adam and Eve who rejoiced that the Promise made them in Paradise was now fulfilled. I saw also that the Patriarchs increased in grace, their abode became lighter and less constrained, and that they began to exercise a greater influence on earth. It was as if all their good works, all their penance, all the efforts of their life, all their desires and aspirations had at last brought forth fruit.

All nature, animate and inanimate, men and beasts were stirred to joy, and I heard sweet singing. But sinners were filled with anguish and remorse. I saw, especially around Nazareth and in other parts of Palestine, many possessed souls who at the hour of Mary's birth became perfectly furious. They uttered horrible cries, and they were tossed and dashed about. The devils cried out of them: "We must withdraw! We must go out!"

My greatest delight was to see the old priest Simeon in the Temple on this night of Mary's birth. He was aroused by the fearful cries of the possessed confined in one of the streets on the Temple mountain. Simeon with others had charge of them. He went that night to the house in which they were, and asked the cause of those shrieks that roused everyone from sleep. The possessed man nearest to the entrance cried out fiercely that he must get out. Simeon released him, and then the devil cried out: "I must go forth! We must go forth! A virgin is born, and there are upon earth so many angels who torment us. We must go forth, and never again shall we dare possess a human being!" Then I saw the poor creature horribly tossed to and fro by the

devil, who at last went out of him. Simeon was in prayer. I rejoiced greatly at seeing old Simeon then.

I saw, too, Anna, the Prophetess, and another one of Mary's future teachers in the Temple aroused and instructed in vision upon the birth of the child.

They told each other what had happened. I think they knew of Anne.

In the country of the Three Holy Kings, certain prophetesses had visions of the birth of the Blessed Virgin. They told their priests that a Virgin was born, to welcome whom many spirits had come down upon earth, but that other spirits were troubled. The stargazing Kings also saw pictures of it in their stars.

In Egypt, on the night of the birth, an idol was hurled from its temple into the sea, and another fell from its place and was dashed to pieces.

Next morning I saw a great crowd from the neighborhood around the house along with Anne's servants, male and female. The women in charge showed the child to them. Many of them were very much affected, and many wicked hearts were changed. They had gathered around the house because they had seen a light over it during the night and also because the birth of Anne's child was looked upon as a great blessing.

Later on other relatives of Joachim from the valley of Zabulon arrived, also the servants from a distance. The child was shown to all, and a repast was prepared in the house.

On the following days people flocked in numbers to see the child Mary. Her little cradle, which was in the form of a boat, was placed upon a raised pedestal, something like a sawing-jack, in the front apartment. The lower coverlet was red, the upper one white, and on them lay the child swathed up to the armpits in red and transparent white. She had tiny, golden curls. I saw also Mary Cleophas, the child of Mary Heli and Cleophas, the grandchild of Anne. She was then a little girl of only a few years. She was playing with the infant Mary and caressing her. She was a stout, healthy child. She wore a little white, sleeveless dress bordered with red from which hung tiny red balls, like apples. Around her little bare arms were twined rows of white stuff, maybe feathers or silk or wool. The child Mary had also a little transparent scarf around her neck.