

## The Holy and Immaculate Conception of Mary

Anne had the assurance, the firm belief that the coming of the Messiah was very near, and that she herself would be of the number of His relatives according to the flesh. Her prayer was continuous and she constantly aimed at greater purity. It had been revealed to her that she was

to bring forth a child of benediction. Her firstborn daughter, who had remained with her grandfather Eliud, Anne recognized and loved as her own and Joachim's child; but she felt certain that she was not the child whom, by interior enlightenment, she knew that she was to bear.

For nineteen years and five months after the birth of this first child, Joachim and Anne were childless. They lived in continued prayer and sacrifice, in mortification and continency. I frequently saw them dividing their herds, which

rapidly multiplied again. Joachim often

remained far away with his flocks in humble supplication to God. The anxiety of both and their longing after the promised blessing had reached their height. Many of their acquaintances upbraided them because of their sterility, which they attributed to some wickedness. They said that the child living with Eliud was not really Anne's daughter, otherwise she would have it with her. When Joachim, absent with the herds, went again to the Temple to offer sacrifice, Anne used to send servants out to the fields to him with numbers of things, doves, and other birds in baskets and cages. Joachim loaded two asses from the meadow with them, also with three little long-necked animals, white and nimble, and lambs and kids in wicker baskets. He carried a lantern at the end of a stick; it looked like a light in a scooped-out gourd. I saw him with his offerings journeying over a beautiful green field between Bethania and Jerusalem. I often saw Jesus in the same spot. Toward evening, Joachim reached the Temple. The asses were stabled in the same place as subsequently at Mary's Presentation, and the offerings were carried up the steps of the Mount that led to the Temple. When they had been received by the attendants, Joachim's servants returned while he himself went on into the hall in which were the water basins for the cleansing of the gifts. Thence he passed through a long corridor to a hall upon the left of the Sanctuary where were the altar of incense, the table of show



bread, and the seven-branched candlestick. The hall was filled with those that had brought offerings. Joachim was received in a very contemptuous manner by a priest named Reuben, who would scarcely admit him. He was shoved into a corner behind a grating, and his offerings were not, like those of others, conspicuously placed behind the gratings to the right of the courtyard, but indifferently set on one side. The priests were around the altar of incense, upon which an offering was being made. Lamps were burning, and lights were lit on the seven branched candlestick, but not all seven at once. I have often noticed that different arms of the candlestick were lighted on different occasions.

I saw Joachim leaving the Temple in great trouble. He went from Jerusalem through Bethania, and into the country of Machaerus, where he sought consolation in the house of an Essenian. The Prophet Manahem had once dwelt here, and also in the family of an Essenian at Bethania. This Prophet had foretold to Herod while still a child his future kingdom and wickedness. From this place, Joachim went to his most distant herds on Mount Hermon. The way led through the wilderness of Gaddi and over the Jordan. Hermon is a long, narrow, unbroken mountain whose sunny side is green and blooming when the other is still covered with snow. Joachim was so dejected, so mortified that he would not allow his people to inform Anne where he was staying, while the trouble of the latter when she heard how things had gone at the Temple and saw that Joachim did not return home, was indescribable.

For five months Joachim thus remained in concealment on Hermon. I saw him praying and weeping. When he went to look after his flocks and his lambs, he was often so overcome by sadness that he cast himself with covered face prostrate on the ground. His servants questioned him upon the cause of his grief. But he did not tell them that it was because he was childless. Again he divided his magnificent herds into three parts. The best he sent to the Temple, the second to the Essenians, and the least he kept for himself.

Anne, in the midst of her anxiety, had much to endure also from an insolent maid servant who bit-terly taunted her with her sterility. She bore with her a long time, but at last she sent her from the house. The maid had requested permission to go to a feast. This was not in accordance with the strict discipline of the Essenians. Anne refused the permission, and then the maid reproached her, telling her that she deserved to be sterile and abandoned by her husband on account of her harsh and unreasonable temper. Then Anne sent her, with gifts and accompanied by two servants, back to her parents, that they might receive her safe and sound as she had come to her. She sent them also the message that she could no longer take charge of their

daughter. After the girl's departure, Anne went in sadness to her chamber and prayed. When evening closed, she threw a long scarf over her head and enveloped herself entirely in it, took a covered light beneath her mantle, went out under a spreading tree that stood in the courtyard, lit the lamp and prayed. This tree was one of those whose branches strike root again and again, and thus form a whole tract of covered walk under their foliage. Its leaves are very large. I think it was with such that Adam and Eve clothed themselves in Paradise. The whole tree had the characteristics of that of the forbidden fruit. The pear shaped fruit hung usually in fives at the end of the branches. It was fleshy inside with blood-colored veins; in its center was a hollow space in which reposed the kernel. The Jews made use of the large leaves chiefly at the Feast of Tabernacles. They adorned the walls with them, laying them like the scales of a fish, so that their edges closely fitted together. The tree was surrounded by groves and seats.

When Anne had long besought God not to separate her from Joachim, her pious husband, although He had been pleased to deprive her of children, an angel appeared to her. He hovered above her in the air. He told her to set her heart at rest, for the Lord had heard her prayer; that she should on the following morning go with two of her maid servants to the Temple of Jerusalem; that there under the Golden Gate, entering by the side of the valley of Josaphat, she should meet Joachim, who was even now on his way thither, that Joachim's offering would be accepted, that his prayer would be heard, that he (the angel) had appeared also to him. The angel likewise directed Anne to take some doves with her as an offering, and promised that the name of the child she was soon to conceive should be made known to her.

Anne thanked the Lord and returned to the house. When, after her lengthy prayer, she lay on her couch asleep I saw light descending upon her. It surrounded her, yes, even penetrated her. I saw her, upon an interior perception, tremblingly awake and sit upright. Near her, to the right, she saw a luminous figure writing on the wall in large, shining Hebrew characters. I read and understood the writing word for word. It was to this effect: that she should conceive, that the fruit of her womb should be altogether special, and that the Blessing received by Abraham was to be the source of this conception. I saw Anne's anxiety as to how she should communicate all that to Joachim; but the angel reassured her by telling her of Joachim's vision. I received then a clear explanation of Mary's Immaculate Conception. I saw that, in the Ark of the Covenant, a sacrament of the Incarnation, of the Immaculate Conception, a Mystery for the restoration of fallen humanity was contained. I saw Anne, with surprise and joy, reading the red and golden

letters of this luminous writing. Her gladness increased to such a degree that, when she arose to set out for Jerusalem, she looked far younger than before.

I saw on Anne's person at the instant the angel appeared to her a beam of light and in her a shining vessel. I cannot better describe it than by saying that it was like a cradle, or a tabernacle which had been closed but was now opened, and made ready to receive a holy thing. How wonderfully I saw this, is not to be expressed; for I saw it as if it were the cradle of salvation for the whole human race, and also as a kind of sacred vessel now opened, and the veil withdrawn. I saw it quite naturally as if one and the same holy thing.

I saw, too, the apparition of the angel to Joachim. The angel commanded him to take his offering up to the Temple, promised that his prayer should be heard, and told him that he should pass under the Golden Gate. At this announcement, Joachim was troubled. He felt very timid about going again to the Temple. But the angel assured him that the priests had already been enlightened with regard to him. It was the time of the Feast of Tabernacles.

Joachim and his shepherds had already erected their tabernacles. With a large herd of cattle as an offering, Joachim reached Jerusalem on the fourth day of the feast, and put up near the Temple. Anne arrived in Jerusalem also on the fourth day of the feast. She stopped with the family of Zacharias near the fish market, and met Joachim for the first time only at the end of the feast.

When Joachim approached the Temple, two of the priests came out to meet him. They did this acting upon a divine inspiration. Joachim had brought with him two lambs and three kids. His offering was accepted, slaughtered, and burned at the customary place in the Temple. But a part of it was taken and burned at another place to the right of the entrance porch, in the center of which stood the large teacher's desk.

When the smoke arose, I saw a beam of light descend upon Joachim and the officiating priest. There was a pause, the beholders looked on in amazement, and I saw two priests go out to Joachim and lead him through the side apartments into the Sanctuary before the altar of incense. Then the priests laid incense upon the altar, not in grains but in the lump; it kindled of itself. The priests immediately retired to a distance and left Joachim alone before the altar. I saw him on his knees, his arms extended, while the incense offering slowly consumed itself. He remained shut up in the Temple all night, praying with great and ardent desires. I saw that he was in ecstasy. A luminous figure appeared to him in the same manner as to Zachary, and gave him a roll written in shining letters. On it were the three names: Helia, Hanna, Mirjam, and near the last one the picture of a little Ark of the Covenant, or a tabernacle. Joachim laid the roll on his breast under his

garment. The angel spoke: "Anne will conceive an immaculate child from whom the Redeemer of the world will be born." The angel told him moreover not to grieve over his sterility which was not a disgrace to him, but a glory, for that what his spouse would conceive should not be from him but through him, a fruit from God, the culminating point of the Blessing given to Abraham. I saw that Joachim could not comprehend these words. Then the angel led him behind the curtain that concealed the grating before the Holy of Holies. The space between the curtain and the grating afforded standing room. Then the angel held up before Joachim's face a shining ball that reflected like a mirror. Joachim breathed upon it and gazed into it. When I saw the angel holding the ball so close to Joachim's face, I thought of a custom in use at our country weddings, where one kisses a painted head and gives fourteen pennies to the sexton. And now, as if called up by the breath of Joachim, appeared all kinds of pictures in the globe. He saw them clearly, for his breath did not dim them. It seemed to me that the angel then said to him that Anne should conceive although remaining just as unsullied by him as this ball. The angel then took it from Joachim and raised it on high. I saw it hovering in the air and, as if through an opening, innumerable and wonderful pictures went into it. They were like a whole world, one picture growing out of another. Up in the highest point appeared the Most Holy Trinity, and below, to one side, were Paradise, Adam and Eve, the Fall, the Promise of a Redeemer, Noe, the Ark, scenes connected with Abraham and Moses, the Ark of the Covenant, and numerous symbols of Mary. I saw cities, towers, gateways, flowers, all wonderfully connected together by beams of light like bridges. They were all assaulted and combated by beasts and spirits, which, however, were everywhere beaten back by the streams of light that burst upon them.

I saw also a garden enclosed by a dense thorn hedge. All kinds of horrible animals were trying to enter, but could not. I saw a tower stormed by numerous warriors who were, however, always repulsed.

And in this way I saw innumerable pictures all bearing some reference to Mary. They were bound together by passages or bridges. In them I saw obstacles, hindrances, struggles, all of which were overcome, and the pictures disappeared successively on the opposite side of the globe, as if they had entered into the Heavenly Jerusalem. But as I gazed at them dissolving in the interior of the globe, the globe itself mounted on high and I saw it no more.

The angel now removed something from the Ark of the Covenant, though without opening the door. It was the Mystery of the Ark, the Sacrament of the Incarnation, the Immaculate Conception, the Consummation of the

**Blessing of Abraham. I beheld it under the appearance of a luminous body. The angel blessed or anointed Joachim's forehead with the tip of his thumb and forefinger; then he slipped the shining body under Joachim's garment and it entered into him, how I cannot say. He also gave him something to drink out of a glittering chalice which he held supported by two fingers. The chalice was of the same shape as that used at the Last Supper, but without a foot. Joachim was directed to take it with him and keep it at his home.**

**I understood that the angel forbade Joachim to reveal anything about this Holy Mystery; and then, too, I understood why Zacharias, the father of the Baptist, was struck dumb after receiving the blessing and the promise of Elizabeth's fruitfulness through the Mystery of the Ark of the Covenant. Not till later was this Mystery missed from the Ark by the priests. Then were they at first confounded; afterward they became altogether pharisaical. The angel now led Joachim out of the Holy of Holies and vanished. Joachim lay on the ground like one stupefied.**

**I saw the priests enter the Sanctuary, lead Joachim out reverently, and place him upon a seat that stood on a raised platform where usually only priests sat. The seat was almost like that used by Magdalen in her grandeur. They bathed his face, held something to his nose, and gave him to drink; in short, they treated him as one in a swoon. Joachim was, by virtue of what he had received from the angel, quite radiant. He looked as if he had returned to the bloom of youth.**

**Joachim was afterward conducted by the priests to the entrance of the subterranean passage that ran under the Temple and under the Golden Gate.**

**This was a passage set aside for special purposes. Under certain circumstances, penitents were conducted by it for purification, reconciliation, and absolution. The priests parted from Joachim at the entrance, and he went alone into the narrow, gradually widening, and almost imperceptibly descending passage. In it stood pillars twined with foliage. They looked like trees and vines, and the green and gold decorations of the walls sparkled in the rosy light that fell from above. Joachim had accomplished a third part of the way when Anne met him in the center of the passage directly under the Golden Gate, where stood a pillar like a palm tree with hanging leaves and fruit. Anne had been conducted into the subterranean passage through an entrance at the opposite end by the priest to whom she and her maid had brought the offering of doves in baskets, and to whom also she had told what the angel had revealed to her. She was also accompanied by some women, among them the Prophetess Anna.**

**I saw Joachim and Anne embrace each other in ecstasy. They were surrounded by hosts of angels, some floating over them carrying a luminous**

tower like that which we see in the pictures of the Litany of Loretto. The tower vanished between Joachim and Anne, both of whom were encompassed by brilliant light and glory. At the same moment the heavens above them opened, and I saw the joy of the Most Holy Trinity and of the angels over the Conception of Mary. Both Joachim and Anne were in a supernatural state. I learned that, at the moment in which they embraced and the light shone around them, the Immaculate Conception of Mary was accomplished. I was also told that Mary was conceived just as conception would have been effected, were it not for the fall of man.

After this, Joachim and Anne, praising God, turned toward the outer gate of the passage. They went under an arch into a space like a chapel where numerous lights were burning. Thence they passed to the gate where they were received by the priests who accompanied them back. The Temple was all thrown open and decorated with garlands of leaves and fruit. Divine service was performed under the open sky. In one place stood eight pillars at some distance from one another, and over them were twined garlands of green.

Joachim and Anne went for awhile to one of the priests' houses in Jerusalem, and then immediately journeyed homeward. I saw them in Nazareth holding an entertainment at which many of the poor were fed and presented with alms. Joachim received numerous congratulations upon the acceptance of his offering.

Upon their arrival home, the holy couple published the mercy of God with feeling, joy, and devotion. From that time they lived in perfect continence and in great fear of God. I received at this time an instruction upon the great influence exerted upon children by the purity, the continence, and the mortification of parents.

Four and one-half months less three days after St. Anne had conceived under the Golden Gate, I saw the soul of Mary, formed by the Most Holy Trinity, in movement. I saw the Divine Persons interpenetrating one another. It became a great shining mountain, and still like the figure of a man. I saw something from the midst of the Three Divine Persons rising toward the mouth and issuing from it like a beam of light. This beam hovered before the face of God and assumed a human shape, or rather it was formed to such. As it took the human form, I saw it, as if by the command of God, most beautifully fashioned. I saw God showing the beauty of this soul to the angels, and from it they experienced unspeakable joy.

I saw that soul united to the living body of Mary in Anne's womb. Anne lay asleep upon her couch. I saw a light hovering over her and from it a beam descending toward the middle of her side. I saw that beam enter into her in

the form of a small, luminous, human figure. At the same instant Anne sat up. She was entirely surrounded by light, and she had a vision. She saw her own person, open as it were and in it, as if in a tabernacle, a holy, luminous virgin from whom proceeded all salvation. I saw, too, that this was the instant that Mary first moved in her mother's womb.

Anne arose and announced to Joachim what had taken place. Then she went out to pray under the tree beneath which a child had been promised to her. I

learned that Mary's soul animated her body five days earlier than is customary with ordinary children, and that she was born twelve days sooner.