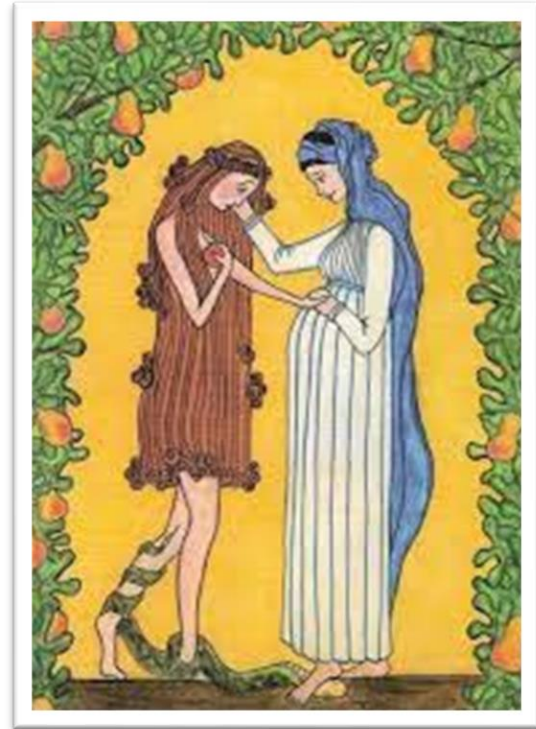


Eve of Mary's Birth

What gladness throughout all nature! Birds are singing, lambs and kids are gamboling, and swarms of doves are fluttering with joy around the spot upon which once stood Anne's abode. I see only a wilderness there at the present day ... But I had a vision of pilgrims in the far-off times who, girded and with long staves in their hands, wended their way through the country to Mount Carmel. On their head they wore a covering wound around like a turban. They, too, participated in the joy of nature. And when in their astonishment they asked the hermits that dwelt in the neighborhood the cause of this remarkable exultation, they received for answer that such manifestations of gladness were customary. They were always observed upon the eve of the anniversary of Mary's birth around that spot where once stood Anne's



house. The hermits told them of a holy man of the early times who had been the first to notice these wonders in nature. His account gave rise to the celebration of the feast of Mary's Nativity which soon became general throughout the Church. And now I, too, beheld how this came to pass.

I saw a pious pilgrim, two hundred and fifty years after Mary's death, traversing the Holy Land, visiting and venerating all places connected with the actions of Jesus while on earth. He was supernaturally guided.

Sometimes he tarried several days together in certain places in which he tasted extraordinary consolation. There he prayed and meditated, and there also he received revelations from on high. For several years he had, from the seventh to the eighth of September, noticed a great jubilation in nature and heard angelic voices singing in the air. He prayed earnestly to know the meaning of all this, and it was made known to him in a vision that that was the birth night of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He was on his way to Mount Sinai when he had this vision. In it he was informed also of the existence of a chapel built in Mary's honor in a cave of the Prophet Elias. He was told to reveal this, as well as the circumstance of Mary's birth night, to the hermits on Mount Sinai.

I saw him again when he arrived at the mount. Where the convent now stands there dwelt, even at that early period, hermits scattered here and there. It was then as inaccessible from the valley as it is now. To reach the

top of the mountain from that side, hoisting machines were used. I saw that in consequence of the pilgrim's communication, the eighth of September was here first celebrated in the year 250, and that later it was introduced into other parts of the Church.

I saw hermits accompanying the pilgrim to the cave of Elias to visit the chapel that had been built therein to Mary's honor. But it was not easy to find, for the mountain was covered with gardens that still produced magnificent fruits, though long allowed to run wild, and there were numerous caves of hermits and Essenians. The pilgrim who had had the vision told them to send a Jew into the different caves, and that the one out of which he should be thrust would be the cave of Elias. He had been thus instructed in vision. I then saw them sending an old Jew into the caves; but, as often as he tried to enter a certain one that had a narrow entrance built up before it, he was repulsed. By this miracle the cave of Elias was recognized. On entering it they found another cave, the entrance to which had been closed by masonry; this was the chapel in which the Prophet Elias had in prayer honored the future Mother of the Saviour. Many holy relics were still preserved in it, bones of the Prophets and Patriarchs, screens and vessels that had once been used in ceremonies of the Old Law. These latter were appropriated to the use of the Church.

The spot upon which the thornbush had stood was called in the language of that country: It was entered only barefoot. The Elias chapel was walled up with beautiful large stones through which ran flowerlike veining. They were afterward employed for the erection of the church. In the vicinity is a mountain entirely of red sand on which, nevertheless, there is very beautiful fruit.

I learned from St. Bridget that if pregnant women fast on the eve of Mary's birth and say fervently nine Hail Marys to honor the nine months she passed in Anne's womb; if they frequently repeat these prayers during their pregnancy, and especially on the eve of their delivery, receiving then the holy Sacraments devoutly, she will offer their prayer to God herself and bring them through even very critical circumstances to a happy delivery.

I saw the Blessed Virgin on the eve of her nativity. She said to me: "Whoever says this evening," (Sept. 7th) "nine times the Hail Mary lovingly and devoutly to honor the nine months spent in my mother's womb as also my birth, and continues the same devotion for nine consecutive days, daily gives to the angels nine flowers for a bouquet. This bouquet they bear to Heaven and offer to the Most Holy Trinity to obtain some favor for the one that prays."

I was transported to a high place between Heaven and earth. I saw the earth

below me gray and somber, and above me Heaven where, among the choirs of angels and the orders of the blessed, was the Blessed Virgin before the throne of God. I saw prepared for her two thrones of honor, two buildings of honor, which finally became churches, yet, whole cities, and they were formed out of the prayers of earth. They were built entirely of flowers, leaves, garlands, the various species typical of the different value and characteristics of the prayers of individuals and of whole congregations. Angels and saints took them from the hands of those that offered them and bore them up to Heaven.