

Bl. Virgin, the Mother of God, took place. We can easily understand with what attention the inhabitants of Mount Carmel watched the family of Emmeretiana, with what delight they saw S. Ann married to S. Joachim, and how they rejoiced when the Saints, though springing from the tribe of Juda, made Nazareth their abode, where, in all probability, the Bl. Virgin was born in the same house, which at a later date was to be the home of the Holy Family. Nine hundred years they had venerated the future mother of God. For that length of time they had preserved sacredly the traditions about her immaculate conception; they had sighed for the redemption of Israel, and now they beheld the Mother of the Redeemer with their own eyes. Such ecstatic joy had never before filled their hearts.

Year 13.—The Blessed Virgin presented herself in the temple, where she was educated for 12 years, and where she made a vow of perpetual chastity.

Years 2-1.—The espousals of the Blessed Virgin with S. Joseph took place by Divine command. The Bl. Virgin lived at Nazareth, where the Angel saluted her, and where the incarnation of the Saviour of the world took place. She assisted Elizabeth for 3 months, and after the birth of John the Baptist, returned with S. Joseph for Nazareth, whence the time of her delivery approaching, she set out with S. Joseph for Bethlehem, in obedience to the decree of Caesar, and in exact accord with the prophecies announcing that out of Bethlehem the leader should go forth, that was to redeem his people.

There our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was born in the fulness of time, and his mother was virgin before and after His birth.

Year 1-34.—During the lifetime of our Lord the Blessed Virgin repeatedly honored Mount Carmel with her presence, bringing untold joy to the hearts of the community there. There are several names mentioned of members of the Order, but as quotations are not clear we prefer to pass them over.

Regarding the attitude of the Carmelites towards the Christian religion, Joseph of Antioch, who lived in the year 130 and wrote the annals of the primitive

church, says, "As helpers of the perfect soldiers of Christ, the Apostles, there arose very strong men, solitaires, given to meditation, the followers of the holy prophets Elias and Eliseus. They descended from Mount Carmel, spread the faith of Christ constantly through Galilee, Samaria and Palestine. They also erected on the slopes of Mount Carmel an oratory in honor of the Virgin Mary, where they specially served the Mother of the Saviour."

Philo, a Jew of Alexandria in Egypt, and Josephus Flavius, the historian of the Jewish nation, give us a detailed description of the life which these "Essenians" led in their time. As they agree in all the substantial points, it is enough to let Philo speak. In his Apology he says: "None of them can bear it, to have any private property, neither house, field, servants, animals, nor anything which is generally supplied by wealth, but they put everything together and use it in common. What they receive in wages for their work, they deliver to the appointed procurator, and not only the table, but the dress they have in common. Money, honors and pleasures they despise. They refuse to marry, and all practise constant continency."

"They study philosophy (i.e. religion) handed down to them by their forefathers. They also have commentaries of the ancients, as the founder of this sect left them many monuments of such allegories, which the younger accept for imitation. Whom they elected Prelate, had to swear that he would deliver only such doctrines as he himself had received." They have sacred little buildings which they call Semmea, or monasteries, where they practise a holy, solitary life, nor do they bring there food or drink for the use of the body, but only the law and the divinely given sayings of the prophets, constantly in their mind in such a way that even in their sleep they observe nothing but the picture of divine beauty."

Philo also praises their abstemiousness and declares that they never ate or drank to satisfy, considering this inimical to the soul, and asserts that on account of the simplicity of their living they are long lived, so that a great many centenarians are found amongst