

cannot, in a word, forget those whose existence was made coordinate to His own, whose virtues, modelled in advance according to His teachings, deserved for us such a Redeemer, such a Jesus. This exceptional position, these privileges, reward of their holiness, place them so high in the esteem, the veneration and love of Heaven and earth, that human speech becomes powerless to praise them worthily. Such is perhaps one reason of the silence of Holy Scripture; the Holy Ghost would have preferred leaving to our filial piety the loving task of seeking what they were in the eyes of God. No, indeed, St. Anne and St. Joachim are not, in the Gospel-Scene, entirely cast into the shade, since they share in the glories of Christ, since their justice has attracted the eye of the Father of Mercy, since the immaculate Lily springs up in their heart and is begotten of their blood. Is not the fact of having merited such a favor, for St. Anne particularly, a proof that she has greatly surpassed the limits of ordinary holiness? "Who shall find a valiant woman? Far, and from the uttermost coasts is the price of her." (\*)

According to the Blessed Thomas of Villanova, the glory and holiness of St. Anne and St. Joachim were altogether hidden in God; like Mary, their most holy daughter, and Joseph, her chaste husband, they contrived, with profound humility, to hide the splendor of their merits from the eyes of men. It was therefore well-nigh useless to expose to the gaze of the vulgar a picture of virtues beyond their reach, of marvels accessible only to the meditation of interior souls. Besides, if the unbelieving Jews were shocked at the abasement of the Incarnate Word and scandalized by His teachings; if, despite so many miracles, they would not acknowledge His divine mission, what respect would they have shown for lives stamped with the same abnegation, the same spirit of sacrifice?

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(\*) Prov. XXXI.