

us worthy of greater benefits. Is not Saint Anne a striking proof of this assertion? Had she been heard sooner, she might perhaps not have become the mother of the Virgin holy among all others, because the proper degree of perfection might have been wanting in her. For, indeed, how great was the perfection and dignity of Mary, at the very moment when she was created! Mary knew herself, and none of the heavenly spirits surpassed her in the knowledge of God and His works; all the Doctors of the Church agree on this point. She therefore clearly beheld the soul of her mother, and held with it the most frequent and intimate relations; inasmuch as her captivity allowed of it, she performed towards her mother the duties of the most perfect filial piety. Was it not eminently befitting that she should perceive in her nothing that might sadden her, alter the fullness of her respect, or diminish her veneration? On the other hand, would not Saint Anne have died of confusion and regret, if she had had the least reproach to address herself, if she had seen herself condemned to bear unworthily the Queen of heaven and earth, to recognise in herself even unwillingly a cause of sorrow for her Immaculate Daughter.

So that, not only may we conjecture, but we must hold for certain, that Anne, as soon as she became a mother, had overpassed the limits attained by all other Saints of her sex: *Procul et de ultimis finibus pretium ejus*, "Far, and from the uttermost coasts is the price of her." (1)

She had bid an eternal farewell to the slightest imperfections, inevitable to souls less humble than she, less vigilant, less generous; no cloud could henceforth trouble the serenity of her beautiful soul, nor tarnish the purity of her heart; she had received the gift of confirmation in grace and of the reign of justice.

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(1) Proverbs, XXXI.