

fathers name was Mathan, a levite of the family of Aaron, whilst her mother, Mary, belonged to the tribe of Juda. Three daughters were born unto them. The first one was called Mary, who became the mother of St James the Less, of the Apostle, St Jude and of St Simeon. The second child's name was, Sobe, mother of St Elizabeth, who gave birth to St John, the Baptist. Their third daughter was named Ann, whom God destined to become the mother of the Virgin Mary, Mother of Jesus Christ. (Cfr. Du Welz.)

Her childhood was passed in solitude, under the watchful care of her parents. These true servants of God, did all in their power to instil into the child's heart the fear of God, the love of virtue and the dread of sin. When of age, St. Ann was given in marriage to Joachim, descendant of the tribe of Juda. The Hand that had formed those two hearts, united them in the sweet chains of the most perfect charity. Their union was the means of their constant progress in virtue. St. Epiphanius tells us that St. Joachim was continually beseeching Heaven to hasten the redemption of Israel; and Ann, in the silence of her home, passed her time in prayer and immolation to God. They had been married twenty years, and day after day saw them imploring God's blessing on their union, but no child came to brighten their home. One day Joachim went to the Temple to make his usual offering, but he was repulsed by the priest Ruben, who refused his oblation to God, saying: « How darest thou mingle with those who sacrifice to the Lord, thou, whose marriage has not been blessed, since thou hast not gladdened Juda with child? » In hearing this reproach, Joachim, humbled and crushed, left the Temple and wept bitterly. Driving his flock before him, he retired into the mountains. Ann had heard nothing about him, for five long months. She spent the time in praying tearfully « O Lord, God of Israel, why hast Thou deprived me of child? why hast Thou driven my husband from me? Behold, five months have gone by, and my eyes have not seen him. Oh! tell me if I must number him among the dead? » O God of my fathers, give ear unto my prayer, and bless me as Thou didst bless Thy servant, Sarah, with a son. Alas! why am I looked upon