

but in flocks. They divided all they received into three portions: one for widows, orphans, poor and travellers; the second was for the Temple and the last for themselves and their servants and for the maintenance of their house.

« They add that St. Joachim always faithfully performed his devotional exercises; redoubling them on festival days; giving on those days twice as many presents to the Temple as on other days. This, without his knowing it, earned him the esteem and friendship of the good but excited the envy and jealousy of the wicked? »

« Why had these two spouses, so holy and so just, to undergo trials? »

« Many are the tribulations of the just, » says the psalmist. For the just of the old Testament there could be no greater tribulation than to be deprived of posterity. Such, for many years, was the trial that St. Joachim and St. Anne had to endure. According to tradition twenty years passed before their union was blessed by the birth of a child. This sorrow was all the greater for these descendants of David that they had a right to hope that the promised Saviour would be born of their race. At last God granted the prayers of the two spouses by giving them Mary.»

« What was the reason of this long waiting? »

« There were many reasons all of which were glorious for their blessed daughter and for themselves. It was proper that the birth of a child such as Mary should be of a miraculous character, as well as those of Isaac, Jacob, Samuel and John the Baptist. Holy as Joachim and St. Anne already were at the time of their marriage, they were still not holy enough to give to the world such a daughter as Mary. By multiplying their prayers, their vigils, their fasts, their alms during so many years, with the intention of obtaining this gift from the divine goodness, they made rapid progress in perfection and in the love of God and finally attained the degree of purity, of sanctity required by the Holy Ghost. Moreover, by granting this blessed child to their prayers and good work; God made them appreciate the value of the gift. He granted them, and, at the same time, compelled the entire