Joachim & Anna

Born: 1st C . BCE
Died: 1st C. BCE
Feast Day: 26 July

DERRY DIOCESAN CATECHETICAL CENTRE

An ancient tradition, already known in the 2nd century, gives the names Joachim and Anna to the parents of the Virgin Mary. The cult of Saint Anna became popular in the 6th century in the East, and in the 10th century in the West, Joachim was added a long time later.

Joachim was of the tribe of Judah, and a descendant of King David. Anna was the daughter of Matthan the priest, of the tribe of Levi. Anna was married in Nazareth to Joachim and in old age gave birth to the Theotokos (Mother of God). Joachim and Anna had been married for fifty years, and were barren. They lived devoutly and quietly, using only a third of their income for themselves and giving a third to the poor and a third to the Temple.

God sent the Archangel Gabriel to each of them, who gave them tidings of the birth of *"a daughter most blessed, by whom all the nations of the earth will be blessed, and through whom will come the salvation of the world."*

Each promised to have their child raised in the Temple as a holy vessel of God. The archangel told Joachim to return home, where he would find his wife waiting for him in the city gate. Anna he told to wait at the gate. When they saw one another, they embraced, and this image is the traditional icon of their feast.

Joachim and Anna took Mary, at the age of three, to the temple to be dedicated to the service of the Lord, and presented her to the priest Zechariahs.

Joachim and Anna are not mentioned in the Bible or Gospels. What we know comes from Catholic legend and the Gospel of James, which is an unsanctioned, apocryphal writing form the second century AD.

The pair serve as role models for parents and both deserve to be honoured and emulated for their devotion to God and Our Lady Mary, the Mother of God. Anna is one of the patron saints of Brittany and Canada and of women in labour.