

## 17. The Life of Christ and The Virgin panels – Birth of the Virgin

The stories of the Birth of the Virgin and of Mary's parents, Joachim and Anne, do not appear in the bible and there is no historical evidence for them. They appear first in the apocryphal Gospel of James and in 'The Golden Legend', and were popular subjects in Christian art up to the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century. As mentioned in an earlier blog, the Virgin Mary had a special significance for the Carmelites, and this is reflected in two of the panels in the Burrell Collection from the window at Boppard that show stories from the life of the Virgin; her birth and the annunciation.

The Birth of the Virgin panel shows Saint Anne, Mary's mother, sitting up in a magnificent curtained bed under a canopy, indicating her high status, holding a remarkably grown-up newly born Mary whom she has been given by, presumably, the midwife. Below, a maid washes clothes, etc., used during the birth. Marie, in her blog 'Old Lead Repairs' discussed the damage to this panel and issues related to its restoration. Below is a quick computer generated idea of how the panel might look if it was restored:



PRE-DIGITAL RESTORATION



DIGITAL RESTORATION - NOT TECHNICALLY ACCURATE







The story of Mary and her parents appears on the Burrell Collection's Dalmatic from Whalley Abbey, dated to about the 15<sup>th</sup> century and currently on display. It is made of cloth that includes gold thread - a file thread of silver gilt wrapped around a yellow silk core. An applied band of embroidered orpherys (a form of highly detailed embroidery) run down the centre on both the front and back and depict scenes from the life of the Virgin Mary. Orphrey bands were a tradition that began in the 12th century Roman Catholic Church.

ACCORDING TO LEGEND, JOACHIM WAS AN ELDERLY, WEALTHY AND PIOUS MAN, WHO WAS OF THE HOUSE OF DAVID. HE REGULARLY GAVE TO THE POOR AND TO THE TEMPLE AT SEPPHORIS. THE HIGH PRIEST REJECTED JOACHIM'S SACRIFICE AS HIS WIFE, ANNE, WAS WITHOUT CHILD, WHICH WAS REGARDED AS A SIGN OF DIVINE DISPLEASURE AND THEY WERE CAST OUT OF THE TEMPLE:



JOACHIM WENT INTO THE DESERT WHERE HE FASTED AND DID PENANCE FOR 40 DAYS, AFTER WHICH AN ANGEL APPEARED BEFORE HIM WHILE HE WAS TENDING HIS SHEEP PROMISING THEM A CHILD:



JOACHIM RETURNED TO THE CITY WHERE HE GREETED ANNE AT THE GOLDEN GATE:



THE BIRTH OF MARY:



MARY LEARNING TO WALK USING A FRAME (MOTHERCARE DIDN'T INVENT THE BABY WALKER!). YOUNGSTERS WERE ENCOURAGED TO WALK AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE AS IT DIFFERENTIATED HUMANS FROM THE BEASTS WHO WALK ON ALL FOURS:



MARY IS PRESENTED AT THE TEMPLE:





# The Virgin and Child and 9th Commandment Window

