

Saint Lioba of Bischoffsheim

Born 710, Wessex, England

Died 28 September 782, Schornsheim, German

Lioba's parents had been childless for years when her mother dreamed she gave birth to a church bell that rang when she held it. A nurse told her that it means she would bear a daughter, whom she must give to God, just as Hannah had consecrated the infant Samuel to serve God in the temple.

When Lioba was born, her parents entrusted her to Tetta, the abbess of Wimborne, and Lioba later took the veil there. One night, Lioba dreamed that she pulled a purple thread from her mouth, but the more she pulled the more there was, until the thread filled her hand. She wound it into a ball, but more thread kept coming until she woke up. An elderly nun explained that the purple thread signified the wise counsels Lioba would speak from her heart. It filled her hands because Lioba's words would become actions. And it formed a ball because her words and actions would affect far-off lands. This prophecy was fulfilled when Boniface, the great missionary, asked Tetta to send nuns to the northern frontier of Europe. Tetta dispatched a group that included Lioba and Walburga. Boniface assigned Lioba to a large monastery at Bischoffsheim where she instructed new nuns in the Benedictine Rule, then dispatched them to convents throughout Germany. After Boniface was martyred, Lioba often prayed at his tomb in the abbey at Fulda. She was the only woman the monks allowed to enter the church, and they later buried her on the high altar.

The Genius of Lioba:

A contemporary wrote: "Lioba was always careful not to try to teach others anything she did not follow herself. Her speech was pleasing, her spirit bright, and her energy great. Her faith was all-powerful, her hope was full of great patience and her love was directed to her neighbour."

Reflection:

"He will guard the footsteps of his faithful ones, / but the wicked shall perish in the darkness. / For not by strength does man prevail."

1 Samuel 2.9

Gallick, Sarah The Big Book of Women Saints p. 291