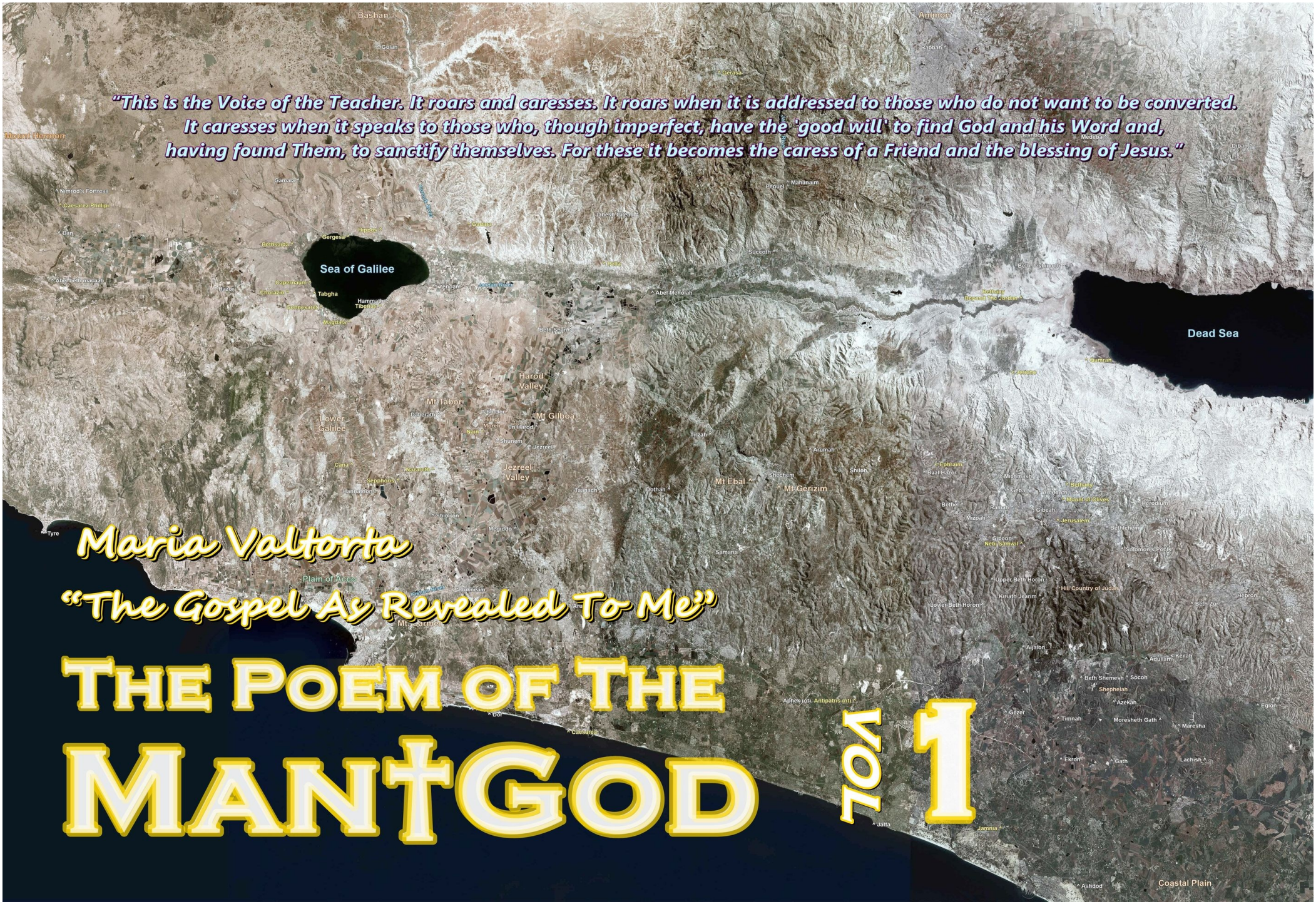
"This is the Voice of the Teacher. It roars and caresses. It roars when it is addressed to those who do not want to be converted.
It caresses when it speaks to those who, though imperfect, have the 'good will' to find God and his Word and,
having found Them, to sanctify themselves. For these it becomes the caress of a Friend and the blessing of Jesus."
Bashan
Ammon
Mount Hermon
Sea of Galilee
Dead Sea
Harod Valley
Mt Tabor
Mt Gilboa
Lower Galilee
Jezreel Valley
Mt Ebal
Mt Gerizim
Plain of Acco
Coastal Plain
Maria Valtorta
"The Gospel As Revealed To Me"
THE POEM OF THE MAN†GOD
VOL 1

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« God created Me when His purpose first unfolded ».

(Prov. 8, 22.)

1. Introduction.

22nd August 1944.

Jesus orders me: « Take a completely new notebook. Write down on the first page what I dictated on August the 16th. She will be spoken of in this book. »

I obey and I write.

16th August 1944.

Jesus says:
« Today write only this. Purity has such a value, that the womb of a creature can contain the Uncontainable One, because She possessed the greatest purity that a creature of God could have.

The Most Holy Trinity descended with Its perfections, inhabited with Its Three Persons, enclosed Its infinity in a small space. But It did not debase Itself by doing so, because the love of the Virgin and the will of God widened this space until they rendered it a Heaven. And the Most Holy Trinity made Itself known by Its characteristics:

The Father, being once again the Creator of the creature, as on the sixth day of Creation, had a real, worthy daughter fashioned to His perfect image. The mark of God was impressed so completely and exactly on Mary, that only in the First-born was it greater. Mary can be called the Second-born of the Father because, owing to the perfection granted to Her and preserved by Her, and to Her dignity of Spouse and Mother of God and Queen of Heaven, She comes second after the Son of the Father and second in His eternal thought, which ab aeterno took delight in Her.

The Son, being also “Her Son”, did teach Her, by the mystery of Grace, His truth and wisdom, when He was but an Embryo, growing in Her womb.

The Holy Spirit appeared amongst men, for an anticipated prolonged Pentecost:

Love for “Her Whom He loved”, Consolation to men because of the Fruit of Her Womb, Sanctification on account of the Maternity of the Holy One.

God, to reveal Himself to men in the new and complete form, which starts the Redemption era, did not select for His throne a star in the sky, nor the palace of a powerful man. Neither did He want the wings of angels as the base of His feet. He wanted a spotless womb.

Also Eve had been created spotless. But she wanted to become corrupt of her own free will. Mary, Who lived in a corrupt world – Eve was in a pure world – did not wish to violate Her purity, not even with one thought remotely connected with sin. She knew that sin exists. She saw its various and horrible forms and implications. She saw them all, including the most hideous one: deicide. But She knew them solely to expiate them and to be, forever, the Woman who has mercy on sinners and prays for their redemption.

This thought will be the introduction to other holy things that I will give for your benefit and the welfare of many people. »

2. Joachim and Anne Make a Vow to the Lord.

22nd August 1944.

I see the inside of a house. In it there is an elderly woman sitting at a loom. I would say, noting that her hair, which formerly was certainly jet black, is now quite grey and her face, though not wrinkled, has the gravity that comes with age, that she must be fifty-five years old. Not more .In estimating a woman's age, I found my calculations upon my mother's face, whose image is more than ever present to me in these times which remind me of her final days at my bedside... The day after tomorrow it will be a year since I had my last look at her... My mother had a very youthful face, but was prematurely grey. When she was fifty she was as grey as at the end of her life. But, apart from the maturity of her appearance, nothing betrayed her age. I could therefore be mistaken in estimating the age of an elderly woman.

The woman I see weaving in a room, bright with the light coming from a door wide open on to a large garden – a small holding I would call it because it smoothly extends up and down a green slope- the woman is beautiful in her definite Jewish features. Her eyes are black and deep and while I do not know why, they remind me of the Baptist's. But, although they are as proud as the eyes of a queen, they are also sweet, as if a veil of blue had been laid on the flash of an eagle: sweet and somewhat sad, as of a person who thinks of and regrets lost things. Her skin is brown, but not excessively so. Her mouth, slightly large, is well formed and is motionless in an austere setting, which, however, is not a hard one. Her nose is long and thin, slightly drooping, an aquiline nose, which suits her eyes. She is well built, but not fat, well proportioned and I think tall, judging her in a sitting position.

I think she is weaving a curtain or a carpet. The many-coloured shuttles move fast on the brown coloured weft, and what has already been woven shows a pretty plaited work of Greek frets and rosettes in which green, yellow, red and deep blue interweave and blend as in a mosaic.

The woman is wearing a very plain dark dress, a red violet colour, the hue of a special species of pansy.

She stands up when she hears someone knocking at the door. She is really tall. She opens the door.

A woman asks her: « Anne, will you give me your amphora? (1). I will fill it for you. »

The woman has a lovely five year old child with her, who at once clings to Anne's dress, and she caresses him while going into another room, and returns with a beautiful copper amphora which she hands to the woman saying: « You are always good to old Anne, indeed you are. May God reward you with this son and the other children you will have, you fortunate one! » Anne sighs.

The woman looks at her and does not know what to say in the circumstances. To divert attention from the distressing situation of which she is aware, she remarks: « I am leaving Alphaeus with you, if you do not mind, so that I will be quicker and I will fill many jars and jugs for you. »

Alphaeus is very pleased to stay and the reason is clear. As soon as his mother is gone, Anne picks him up and takes him into the orchard, lifts him up to a pergola (2) of grapes as golden as a topaz and says to him: « Eat, eat, because they are good », and she kisses him on his little face soiled with the juice of the grapes which the child eats avidly. Then she laughs heartily and at once looks

younger on account of the lovely set of teeth she displays, and the joy that shines on her face, dispelling her years, as the child asks: « And what are you going to give me now? » and he gazes at her with large wide open eyes of a deep grey-blue colour. She laughs and plays with him bending on her knees and goes on: « What will you give me if I give you?... if I give you?... guess! » And the child, clapping his little hands, with a big smile responds: « Kisses, kisses I will give you, nice Anne, good Anne, mamma Anne!... »

Anne, when she hears him say: « mamma Anne », gives out a real cry of joyful love and cuddles the little one declaring: « My darling! Dear! Dear! Dear!» At each « dear » a kiss descends upon the rosy cheeks.

Then they go to a cupboard and from a plate she takes some honey cakes. « I made them for you, darling of poor Anne, because you love me. But tell me, how much do you love me? » And the child, thinking of what has impressed him most, says: « As much as the Temple of the Lord. » Anne kisses him again on his lively little eyes, his little red lips and the child cuddles against her like a kitten.

His mother goes back and forth with a full jar and smiles without saying anything. She leaves them to their effusiveness.

An elderly man comes in from the orchard. He is a little smaller than Anne, and his thick hair is completely white. His face is of a clear complexion with a squarely cut beard; his eyes are like blue turquoises and his eyelashes are light brown, almost fair. His robe is dark brown.

Anne does not see him because her back is turned to the door and he approaches her from behind questioning: « And nothing for me? » Anne turns round and says: « O Joachim! Have you finished your work? » At the same time little Alphaeus runs to the elderly man's knees exclaiming: « Also to you, also to you. » And when the man bends down to kiss him, the child clings to his neck, ruffling his beard with his little hands and his kisses.

Joachim also has his gift. He brings his left hand from behind his back and offers the child such a beautiful apple, that it seems made of the finest porcelain. Smiling he says to the child who is holding his hands out eagerly: « Wait, I will cut it for you! You cannot take it as it is. It is bigger than you! » With a small pruning knife, which he carries on his belt, he cuts the fruit into small slices. He seems to be feeding a nestling, such is the care with which he puts the morsels into the little wide open mouth that munches and chews.

« Look at his eyes, Joachim! Don't they look like two little wavelets of the Sea of Galilee when the evening wind draws a veil of cloud over the sky? » Anne is speaking, resting one hand on her husband's shoulder, and she is leaning slightly on him, too: an attitude revealing the deep love of a wife, a love still perfect after many years of marriage.

And Joachim looks at her lovingly and agrees, saying: « Most beautiful! And His curls? Aren't they the colour of crops dried in the sun? Look: in them there is a mixture of gold and copper. »

« Ah! If we had had a child, I would have liked him thus: with these eyes and this hair... » Anne has bent down, in fact she is on her knees and with a deep sigh she kisses the two large grey-blue eyes.

Joachim, too, sighs. But he wishes to comfort her. He puts his hand on her thick curly grey hair and whispers to her: « We must continue to hope. God can do everything. While we are alive, the miracle may happen, particularly when we love Him and we love each other. » Joachim stresses the final phrase.

But Anne is silent, dejected, and she is standing, her head bowed, to conceal two tears streaming down her face. Only little Alphaeus sees them and he is confounded and grieved that his great friend is crying, as he sometimes does. He lifts his hands and wipes the tears.

« Don't cry, Anne! We are happy just the same. At least I am, because I have you. »

« Also I have you. But I have not given you a child... I think I have distressed the Lord, because He has made my womb barren... »

« O my wife! How can you have distressed Him, you holy woman? Listen. Let us go once more to the Temple. For this reason. Not only for the Tabernacles! Let us say a long prayer... Perhaps it will happen to you as it did to Sarah... as it happened to Anne of Elkanah. They waited for a long time and they considered themselves dejected because they were barren. Instead a holy son was maturing for them in the Heavens of God. Smile, my wife. Your crying is a greater sorrow to me than being without offspring... We shall take Alphaeus with us. We shall make him pray, since he is innocent... and God will hear his prayer and ours together and will grant it. »

« Yes, let us make a vow to the Lord. The offspring will be His. As long as He grants it. Oh to hear me being called “mamma”! »

And Alphaeus, an astonished and innocent spectator, exclaims: « I will call you so! »

« Yes, my darling... but you have your mummy, and I have no baby... »

The vision ceases here.

I understand that Mary's birth cycle has begun. And I am very happy because I wanted it so much. And I think that you (3) will be happy, too.

Before I began to write I heard Mother say to me: « So, My dear daughter, write about Me. All your grief will be comforted. » And while saying so She laid Her hand on my head caressing me kindly. Then the vision began. But at first, that is, until I heard the fifty-year-old woman being called by name, I did not realise that I was in the presence of mother's Mother and consequently of the grace of Her birth.

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(1) Amphora: a two-handled jar commonly used by the Greeks and Romans.

(2) Pergola: grape vines supported by poles and forming a kind of roof with their leaves.

(3) It is to be noted that Maria Valtorta often addresses her spiritual Father in the course of her work.

3. Anne, Praying in the Temple, Has Her Wish Fulfilled.

23rd August 1944.

Before writing the following, I wish to make a note.

The house did not seem to me the well known one of Nazareth. The location, at least, is quite different. Also the orchard garden is larger and beyond it fields can be seen, not many, but they are there. Later, when Mary is married, there is only the orchard, large, but not more than an orchard: and I have never seen in other visions the room that I saw. I do not know whether for financial reasons Mary's parents disposed of part of their property or whether Mary, when she left the Temple, moved into another house given to her perhaps by Joseph. I do not remember whether in past visions and instructions I had a clear sign that the house of Nazareth was the house where she was born.

My head is very heavy with fatigue. And then, particularly with dictations, I forget the words at once, although the commands remain recorded in my mind and illuminate my soul. But details fade away immediately . If after one hour I had to repeat what I heard, with the exception of one or two main sentences, I would not know anything else. Visions, on the contrary, remain clear in my mind because I had to watch them myself . I hear dictations but I see visions. Therefore they remain clear in my mind which functioned in following them through their various phases.

I was hoping there would be a declaration on yesterday's vision. Instead nothing.

I am beginning to see and I write.

Outside the walls of Jerusalem, on the hills and among the olive-trees, there is a large crowd. It looks like a large market. But there are no booths. There are no shouting charlatans or pedlars. No games. There are coarse wool tents, certainly proof against water, hanging on posts fixed to the ground, and tied to the posts there are green branches, providing both ornamental decoration and practical coolness. Other tents, instead, are made entirely of branches fixed to the ground and tied in ridge fashion, thus forming small green tunnels. Under each tent there are people of every age and condition, speaking quietly and earnestly, with the cry of a child breaking the quietness now and again.

It is nightfall and the lights of small oil lamps are glittering here and there throughout the odd camp. Around the lights some families are taking their supper on the ground, the mothers holding the little ones in their laps. Many of these tired infants fall asleep holding pieces of bread in their tiny pink fingers while their small heads fall on their mothers' breasts, like little chicks under hens. The mothers finish their meals, as best they can, each with only one hand free, while the other hand is holding the child against her heart. Meanwhile other families are not yet supping and are talking in the dimness of twilight, waiting for the food to be ready for eating. Small fires are lit here and there and women are busy around them. Slow somewhat plaintive lullabies soothe children who

are having difficulty in going to sleep.

High above is a beautiful clear sky, which is becoming a deeper and deeper blue until it looks like an enormous black-bluish soft velvet velarium. On this cloth, a little at a time, invisible craftsmen and decorators fix gems and night lights, some isolated, some in odd geometrical patterns, amongst which stand out the Great Bear and the Little Bear, in the shape of a cart, with its shaft resting on the ground after the oxen have been freed from the yoke. The Pole Star is smiling in all its brightness.

I realise it is October because the loud voice of a man says so: « This month of October is beautiful as very rarely in past years! »

Here is Anne coming from a fire with something in her hands, spread over a loaf of bread which is large and flat like a cake and serves also as a tray. Little Alphaeus is holding on to her skirt and is prattling in his little voice. Joachim, when he sees Anne approaching, hastens to light his lamp; he is at the entrance of his little hut made of branches and is speaking to a man about thirty years old, whom Alphaeus greets from a distance in his shrill voice saying: « Daddy. »

Anne in her stately walk passes along the rows of huts. She is stately, yet humble. She is not haughty with anyone. She picks up the child of a very poor woman, as the urchin had fallen at her feet while running like a little scamp. Since he has dirtied his face and is crying, Anne cleans him, comforts him and hands him to his mother who has run towards them and is apologising. Anne says to her: « Oh! It's nothing. I am glad he did not hurt himself . He is a lovely child. What age is he? »

« Three years. He is my second youngest and I am expecting another one shortly. I have six boys. Now I would like to have a girl... A girl is a lot for her mother ... »

« The Most High has consoled you very much, woman! » sighs Anne.

And the woman goes on: « Yes. I am poor, but the children are our joy and the bigger ones already help with the work. And, Madam, (it is very obvious that Anne is of a higher social standing and the woman realises it), how many children have you got? »

« None. »

« None? Isn't this one yours? »

« No, he is the son of a very good neighbour. He is my consolation ... »

« Did yours die or...? »

« I never had any. »

« Oh! » The poor woman looks at her pitifully.

Anne says goodbye to her, sighing very heavily, and goes to her hut.

« I have kept you waiting, Joachim. I was held up by a poor woman, the mother of six boys. Fancy that! And she is expecting another child shortly. »

Joachim sighs.

Alphaeus' father calls him, but he answers: « I am staying with Anne. I will help her. » Everybody laughs.

« Leave him. He does not disturb us. He is not bound by the Law yet. Here or there he is but a little bird eating » states Anne. And she sits down with the child in her lap and gives him some cake and, I think, some roasted fish. I can see that she does something before giving it to him; perhaps she removes a fishbone. She has served her husband first. She eats last.

The night is more and more crowded with stars and the camp with lights. Then little by little many lights go out. They are the lamps of those who were the first to have supper and who now go to sleep. Also the buzzing slowly decreases. No more children's voices are heard. Only some babies still unweaned raise their lamb-like little voices seeking their mothers' milk. The night blows her breath over places and people and obliterates pains and memories, hopes and ill-feelings. Nay, perhaps these last two survive in dreams, although alleviated by sleep.

Anne says so to her husband while lulling Alphaeus who is falling asleep in her arms: « Last night I dreamt that next year I will be coming to the Holy City for two feasts, instead of one only. And one will be the offering of my creature to the Temple... Oh! Joachim!... »

« Do hope, Anne. Did you not perceive anything else? Did the Lord not whisper anything to your heart? »

« Nothing. Only a dream... »

« Tomorrow is the last day of prayer. All the offerings have already been made. But we will renew them again tomorrow, solemnly. We shall gain our favour from God by our faithful love. I always think that it will happen to you as it did to Anne of Elkanah. »

« May God grant it... and I wish I had someone say to me now: “Go in peace. The God of Israel has granted the grace you asked for!”»

« If the grace comes, your child will tell you turning over for the first time in your womb; and it will be the voice of an innocent, therefore the voice of God. »

The camp is now silent in darkness. Anne also takes Alphaeus to the adjoining hut, and puts him on the bed near his little brothers, who are already asleep. Then she lies down beside Joachim and their lamp also goes out: one of the little stars on earth. More beautiful, the stars in the vault of heaven remain watching over mankind asleep.

Jesus says:

« The just are always wise, because, as friends of God, they live in His company and are taught by Him, yes, by Him, Infinite Wisdom.

My grandparents were just and therefore they possessed wisdom. They could quote accurately from the Book, singing the praises of Wisdom from its context: “She it was I loved and searched for from my youth: I resolved to have her as my bride.”

Anne of Aaron was the strong woman of whom our Ancestor speaks. And Joachim, a descendant of king David, had not sought so much charm and wealth as virtue. Anne possessed a great virtue. All holy attributes joined together like a sweet-smelling bunch of flowers to become one beautiful thing that was: this exceptional Virtue. A real virtue, worthy of being set before the throne of God.

Joachim had therefore married wisdom twice, “loving her more than any other woman”: the Wisdom of God enshrined in the heart of a just woman. Anne of Aaron had not sought anything else but to join her life to that of an upright man, certain that family joy lies in uprighteousness. And to be the embodiment of the “strong woman” she lacked only the crown of children, the glory of the married woman, the justification of marriage, the one of which Solomon speaks, as for her happiness she lacked children, the flowers of a tree that has become one thing with the adjoining tree and obtains thereof abundance of new fruit, in which the two good qualities blend into one, because she had never experienced any disappointment on account of her husband.

Although she was now approaching old age and had been Joachim's wife for many years, she was always for him “the spouse of his youth, his joy, the most dear hind, the graceful fawn”, whose caresses always had the fresh charm of the first nuptial evening and sweetly fascinated his love, keeping it as fresh as a flower sprinkled with dew, and as ardent as a fire continuously kept burning. Therefore, in their affliction, their childless state, they spoke to each other “words of consolation in their thoughts and troubles”.

And eternal Wisdom, when the time came, besides teaching them in waking consciousness, enlightened them with dreams at night, visions of the poem of glory that was to come from them and was Most Holy Mary, My Mother. If their humility made them hesitant, their hearts trembled in hope at the first hint of God's promise. There was already certainty in Joachim's words: “Do hope... We shall gain our favour from God by our faithful love.” They were dreaming of a child: they got the Mother of God.

The words of the book of Wisdom appear to be written for them: “By means of her I shall acquire glory before the people... by means of her, immortality shall be mine and I shall leave an everlasting memory to my successors.” But to obtain all this they had to become masters of a true and lasting virtue which no event marred. Virtue of faith. Virtue of charity. Virtue of hope. Virtue of chastity. The chastity of a married couple! They possessed it, because it is not necessary to be virgins to be chaste. And chaste nuptial beds are guarded by angels and from them descend good children who make the virtue of their parents the rule of their lives.

But where are they now? Now children are not wanted, neither is chastity. I therefore say that love and marriage are desecrated. »

4. With a Canticle, Anne Announces that She Is a Mother.

24th August 1944.

I see Joachim and Anne's house once again. Nothing is changed inside, with the exception that there are many branches full of flowers, placed in amphoras here and there, certainly the fruit of the pruning of the trees in the orchard, all in bloom: a cloud varying from snow-white to the red of certain corals.

Also Anne's work is different. On the smaller of two looms she is weaving some lovely linen cloth and is singing, moving her feet to the rhythm of the song. She is singing and smiling. At whom? At herself, at something she is aware of in her inside.

I have written separately the slow and yet gay song, so that I might follow it, for she repeats it several times as if she rejoices in it. She sings it more and more loudly and with certainty, like someone who found a melody in her heart and at first whispers it softly and then, being sure, proceeds faster and in a higher tone. The slow and yet gay song (which I am transcribing because it is so sweet in its simplicity) says:

« Glory to the Almighty Lord
Who had love for the children of David. Glory to the Lord!
His supreme grace has visited me from Heaven

The old tree has borne a new branch and I am blessed.
At the Feast of Lights hope scattered the seed;
Now the fragrance of Nisan sees it germinating.

Like an almond-tree my flesh is adorned with flowers in spring.
In the evening she perceives she is bearing her fruit.
On that branch there is a rose, there is a most sweet apple.

There is a bright star, an innocent little child.
There is the joy of the house, of the husband and wife.
Praise be to God, to my Lord, Who had mercy on me.

His light said to me: “A star will come to you.”
Glory, glory! Yours shall be the fruit of this tree.
The first and last, holy and pure as a gift of the Lord.

Yours it shall be and may joy and peace come upon the earth.
Fly, shuttle. Fasten the yarn for the infant's cloth.
The infant is about to be born.

May the song of my heart rise to God singing hosannas. »

Joachim comes in when she is about to repeat her song for the fourth time. « Are you happy, Anne? You look like a bird in spring. What song is that? I have never heard anyone sing it. Where does it come from? »

« From my heart, Joachim. » Anne has got up and is now moving towards her husband, smiling happily. She looks younger and lovelier than ever.

« I did not know you were a poet » declares her husband looking at her with obvious admiration. They do not look like an elderly couple. In their glances there is the fondness of young couples. « I came from the other end of the orchard when I heard you singing. For years I had not heard your voice, that of a turtle-dove in love. Do you mind repeating that song for me? »

« I would repeat it even if you did not ask me. The children of Israel have always entrusted to songs the sincere cries of their hopes, joys and pains. I have entrusted to a song the task of telling myself and you a great joy. Yes, also of telling myself because it is such a great thing that although I am sure of it now, it does not yet seem to me to be true...», and she begins the song over again. But when she comes to the point: « On that branch there is a rose, there is a most sweet apple, a star...», her well tuned contralto voice at first trembles, then it breaks, and with a sob of joy she looks at Joachim and raising her arms she cries: « I am a mother, my darling! » And she takes refuge on his heart, between the arms that he has held out and has now clasped around his happy wife. This is the most chaste and happy embrace that I have ever seen in my life, chaste and ardent in its chastity.

And the sweet reproach is whispered over Anne's grey hair: « And you were not telling me? »

« Because I wanted to be sure. Old as I am... to know that I am a mother... I could not believe it was true... I did not want to give you the most bitter disappointment of all. Since the end of December I have perceived that my womb was becoming new and bearing, as I say, a new branch. But now on that branch the fruit is certain... See? That linen is for the one that is coming. »

« Is it not the linen that you bought in Jerusalem in October? »

« Yes, it is. I spun it while I was waiting... and hoping. I was hoping because the last day while I was praying in the Temple, as close as possible for a woman to be to the House of God, and it was already evening... remember that I was saying: “A little longer, a little more.” I could not withdraw from the place without receiving the grace! Well, in the growing darkness, from inside the sacred place, where I was watching from the depth of my soul, to obtain assent from the everpresent God, I saw a light, a spark of beautiful light depart. It was as white as the moon and yet it had in itself all the brightness of all the pearls and gems that are in the world. It seemed that one of the precious stars of the Veil, the stars placed under the feet of the Cherubim had become detached and bright with a supernatural light... it seemed that beyond the sacred Veil, from the Glory itself, a fire started which came quickly towards me and while cutting through the air, it sang with a heavenly voice chanting: “May what you asked for, come to you.” That is why I sing: “A star will come to you.”

What child will ours ever be, since it reveals itself as the light of a star in the Temple and in the Feast of Lights says: “I am”? Did you perhaps foresee rightly when you thought I would be a new Anne of Elkanah? How shall we name our creature, whom I perceive talking to me in my womb as sweetly as the melody of waters, with its little heart beating repeatedly like the heart of a pretty turtle-dove held in one's hands? »

« If it is a boy we shall call him Samuel... If a girl, Star. The word that stopped your song to give me the joy of learning that I am a father. The form it took to reveal itself in the holy shade of the Temple. »

« Star. Our Star, because, I don't know why, but I think it is a girl. I think that such sweet caresses can only come from a most sweet daughter. Because I do not bear her, I have no pain. It is she who takes me on a blue flowery path, as if I were supported by holy angels and the earth was already far away... I have always heard women say that it is painful to conceive and to bear. But I have no pain. I feel strong, young, fresher than when I presented you with my virginity in my far away youth. Daughter of God – because this creature born of a barren stump, is more of God than ours – she gives no pain to her mother. She only brings her peace and blessings: the fruits of God, her true Father. »

« Mary, then, we shall call her! Star of our sea, pearl, happiness. The name of the first great woman in Israel. But she will never sin against the Lord and to Him only she will give her songs, because she is offered to Him: a victim before being born. »

« Yes, she is offered to Him. Male or female, as it may be, after rejoicing for three years over our creature, we shall give it to the Lord. Victims ourselves with her, for the glory of God. »

I do not see or hear anything else.

Jesus says:

« Wisdom, after enlightening them with dreams at night, descended “breath of the power of God, pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty”, and became Word for the barren one. He, who already saw His time for redemption close at hand: I, Christ, Anne's grandson, almost fifty years later, by means of the Word, will work miracles on barren, diseased, possessed, desolate women and on all the miseries of the world.

But in the meantime, for the joy of having a Mother I whisper a mysterious word in the shade of the Temple that contained the hopes of Israel, of the Temple now at the end of its life, because a new and real Temple is about to come on earth, no longer containing the hopes of one people, but the certainty of Paradise for the people of the whole world, and for centuries and centuries until the end of the world. And this Word works the miracle of making fertile what was barren. And also the miracle of giving me a Mother, Who not only had the best disposition, as was natural She should have, being born of two saints, but, unique creature, had not only a good soul as many others still have, not only a continuous increase of goodness because of Her good will, not only an immaculate body, but had an immaculate soul.

You have seen the continuous generation of souls from God. Now think what must have been the beauty of this soul which the Father looked fondly on before time existed, which formed the delight of the Trinity, which Trinity longed to adorn it with its gifts, to present it to Itself. Oh! Most Holy Mary that God created for Himself and then for the salvation of men! Bearer of the Saviour, You were the first salvation. Living Paradise, with Your smile You began to sanctify the world.

The soul created to be soul of the Mother of God! When this vital spark derived from the more lively throb of the Threefold Love of the Trinity, the angels rejoiced because Paradise had never seen a brighter light. Like a petal of a

heavenly rose, a mystical and precious petal, that was a gem and a flame, the breath of God descended to give life to a body quite differently than for others. It descended so powerful in its ardour that Guilt could not contaminate it, it came through the heavens and enclosed itself in a holy womb.

The world had its Flower, but did not yet know, the true, unique Flower, that blooms eternally: lily and rose, sweet-smelling violet and jasmine, helianthus and cyclamen blended together and with them all the flowers on earth in one Flower only: Mary, in Whom every grace and virtue is gathered together.

In April the land of Palestine looked like a huge garden and the fragrance and colours delighted the hearts of men. But the most beautiful Rose was still unknown. She was already flowering to God in the secrecy of Her mother's womb, because my Mother loved since She was conceived. But only when the vine gives its blood to make wine and the sweet strong smells fill the yards and the nostrils, She would smile to God first and then to the world, saying with Her most innocent smile: “Here, the Vine that will give you the Bunch of grapes to be squeezed in the winepress, so that it will become eternal Medicine for your disease, is amongst you.”

I said: “Mary loved since She was conceived!” What is it that gives light and knowledge to the soul? Grace. What is it that removes Grace? Original sin and the mortal one. Mary, the Immaculate, was never deprived of the remembrance of God, of His closeness, His love, His light, His wisdom. She was therefore able to understand and love when She was but flesh forming around an immaculate soul that continued to love.

Later, I will let you contemplate mentally the depth of Mary's virginity. You will have a spell of heavenly ecstasy, as when I allowed you to consider our eternity. In the meantime consider how to bear a creature free from the Stain that deprives one of God, gives the mother a superior intelligence and makes a prophetess of her, although she has conceived in a natural and human way. The prophetess of her daughter, whom she calls: “Daughter of God”. And consider what would have happened if innocent children had been born of innocent First Parents, as God wanted.

Man, you state that you are setting out to be “superman”, and with your vices are only setting out to be “superdemon”. The possibility of existing and living without the contamination of Satan, leaving to God the administration of life, knowledge, and goodness, would have been the means to make you “superman”, not wishing more than what God had given you and which was little less than infinite. And thus, in an evolution towards perfection, you would have been able to generate children, who should be men in their bodies and sons of the Intelligence in their souls: victors, strong, giants over Satan, who would have been vanquished so many thousand centuries before the hour, when he will be humiliated, and all his evil with him. »

5. Birth of the Virgin Mary.

26th August 1944.

I see Anne coming out of the garden. She is leaning on the arm of a relative, who is like her. She is obviously several months pregnant and she looks tired and her fatigue is not alleviated by the sultriness, just as this present heat is exhausting me.

Although the garden is shady, it is very hot and close. The air can be cut like a soft warm dough, it is so heavy. The sun's rays descend from a merciless blue sky and there is some dust making the atmosphere slightly dull. The weather must have been dry for a long time, because where there is no irrigation, the land is literally reduced to a very fine, almost white dust. Out in the open this shade of white is slightly pink, whereas it is a dark red-brown under the trees, where the soil is damp. Likewise the ground is moist along the small flower-beds, where rows of vegetables are growing, and around the rose bushes, the jasmines and other flowers, and particularly in the front of and along the beautiful pergola, which divides the orchard in two, up to the beginning of the fields, now stripped of their crops. The grass of the meadow, which marks the boundary of the property, is parched and thin. Only at its border, where there is a hedge of wild hawthorn, already completely studded with the rubies of its little fruits, is the grass greener and thicker. There are some sheep thereabouts with a young shepherd seeking pasture and shade.

Joachim is working around the rows of vines and olive-trees. There are two men with him, helping him. Although an elderly man he is quick and works eagerly. They are opening little channels at the end of a field to give water to the dry plants, and this water makes its way gurgling between the grass and the dry

land. The flow forms circles that for one moment resemble a yellowish crystal and seconds later are only rings of wet soil, around the overloaded vine branches and the olive-trees.

Along the shady pergola, under which golden bees are buzzing, greedy for the sugar of the golden grapes, Anne moves slowly towards Joachim, who hastens towards her as soon as he sees her.

« You came so far? »

« The house is as hot as an oven. »

« And you suffer from it. »

« The only suffering of this last hour is that of a pregnant woman. The natural suffering of everybody: man and beast. Don't get too warm, Joachim. »

« The water we have been hoping for, for such a long time, and that for fully three days seemed so close, has not yet come and the country is parched. We are lucky to have a spring so near and so rich in water. I have opened the channels. It is a measure of relief for the plants which have withering leaves and are covered with dust: just enough to keep them alive. If it would only rain...» Joachim, with the eagerness of all farmers, looks at the sky, while Anne, tired, cools herself with a fan that seems to be made of the dry leaf of a palm interwoven with many-coloured threads keeping it firm.

Anne's companion interrupts: « Over there, beyond the Great Hermon, fast clouds are arising. There is a northern wind. It will refreshen and perhaps bring rain. »

« The breeze has risen for three days and then it sets when the moon rises. It will do the same again. » Joachim is discouraged.

« Let us go back home. Even here one can hardly breathe, and in any case I think it is better to go back...» says Anne, who looks more olive-hued than usual, owing to a paleness which has come over her face.

« Are you in pain? »

« No. But I can feel the great peace that I experienced in the Temple when I was granted the grace, and which I felt once again when I knew I was pregnant. It is like an ecstasy, a sweet sleep of the body while the soul rejoices and calms itself in a peace that has no bodily parallel. I have loved and still do love you, Joachim, and when I entered your house and I said to myself: “I am the wife of a just man”, I had peace: and I felt the same every time your provident love took care of your Anne. But this peace is different. Understand: I think that the soul of our father Jacob was invaded by a similar peace, like the soothing given by oil that spreads and appeases, after he dreamt of the angels. And, possibly more accurately, it is like the joyful peace of the Tobiahs after Raphael appeared to them. If I absorb myself in this feeling, it grows more and more in strength while I enjoy it. It is as if I were ascending into the blue spaces of the sky... And furthermore, I don't know the reason for it, but since I have had this peaceful joy in me, I have a song in my heart: old Tobiah's song. I think it was written for this hour... for this joy... for the land of Israel that receives it... for Jerusalem-sinner and now forgiven... But do not laugh at the frenzy of a mother... but when I say: “Thank the Lord for your wealth and bless the God of centuries, that He may rebuild His Tabernacle in you”, I think that He Who will rebuild the Tabernacle of the true God in Jerusalem will be This One who is about to be born... And I also think that the destiny of my creature was prophesied and not the fate of the Holy City, when the song says: “You shall shine with a bright light: all the peoples of the world will prostrate themselves before you: the nations will come bringing gifts: they will worship the Lord in you and will hold your land as sacred, because within you they invoke the Great Name. You will be happy on account of your children, because they will all be blessed and they will gather near the Lord. Blessed are those who love you and rejoice in your peace...” And I am the first to rejoice, her happy mother... » Anne changes colour, when saying these words and she lights up like something brought from the paleness of moonlight to the brightness of a great fire and vice versa. Sweet tears, of which she is unaware, run down her cheeks and she smiles in her joy. And in the meantime she moves towards the house, walking between her husband and her relative, who listen and, deeply moved, are silent.

They make haste because clouds driven by a strong wind, rush across and gather in the sky, while the plain darkens and shudders at the warning of a storm. When they reach the threshold of the dwelling, a first livid flash of lightning crosses the sky and the rumble of the first peal of thunder sounds like the roll of a huge drum that mingles with the arpeggio (1) of the first drops on the parched leaves.

They all go in and Anne withdraws, while Joachim, standing at the door, talks with the workers, who have in the meantime joined him: the conversation is about the longed for water which is a blessing for the parched land. But their joy

turns into fear because a very violent storm is approaching with lightening and clouds threatening hail. « If the cloud bursts, it will crush the grapes and the olives like a millstone. Poor me! »

Joachim is also anxious for his wife, whose time has come to give birth to her child. His relative reassures him that Anne is not suffering at all. But he is agitated, and every time his relative or any other woman, amongst whom is Alphaeus' mother, comes out of Anne's room and goes back in again with hot water and basins and linens dried near the blazing fireplace in the large kitchen, he goes and makes enquiries, but he does not calm down despite their reassurances. Also the lack of cries from Anne worries him. He says: « I am a man and I have never seen a child being born. But I remember hearing that the absence of throes is fatal. »

It is growing dark and the evening is preceded by a furious and very violent storm: it brings torrential rain, wind, lightning, everything, except hail, which has fallen elsewhere.

One of the workers notices the ferocity of the gale: « It looks as if Satan has come out of Gehenna with his demons. Look at those black clouds! You can smell sulphur in the air and you can hear whistling and hisses, and wailing and cursing voices. If it is him , he is furious this evening! »

The other worker laughs and scoffs: « A great prey must have escaped him, or Michael has struck him with a new thunderbolt from God, and he has had his horns and tail clipped and burnt. »

A woman passes by and shouts: « Joachim! It is coming. And it is happening quickly and well!» and she disappears with a small amphora in her hands.

The storm drops suddenly, after one last thunderbolt that is so violent that it throws the three men against the side wall; and in front of the house, in the garden, a black smoky cavity remains as its memory! Meanwhile a cry, one resembling the tiny plea of a little turtle-dove that for the very first time no longer peeps but cooes, is heard from beyond Anne's door. And at the same time a huge rainbow stretches its semicircle across the sky. It rises, or seems to rise, from the top of Hermon, which kissed by the sun, looks like a most delicate pinkish alabaster: it rises up in the clear September sky and through an atmosphere cleaned of all impurities, it crosses over the hills of Galilee and the plain to the south, and over another mountain, and seems to rest the other end on the distant horizon, where it drops from view behind a chain of high mountains.

« We have never seen anything like this! »

« Look, look! »

« It seems to enclose in a circle the whole of the land of Israel. And look! there is already a star in the sky while the sun has not yet set. What a star! It is shining like a huge diamond!...»

« And the moon, over there, is a full moon, three days early. But look how she is shining! »

The women arrive jubilant with a plump little baby wrapped in plain linens.

It is Mary, the Mother. A very tiny Mary, who could sleep in the arms of a child, a Mary as long, at most, as an arm, with a little head of ivory dyed pale pink. Her tiny car mine lips no longer cry but are set in the instinctive act of sucking: they are so small that one cannot understand how they will be able to take a teat. Her pretty little nose is between two tiny round cheeks, and when they get Her to open Her eyes, by teasing Her, they see two small parts of the sky, two innocent blue points that look but cannot see, between thin fair eyelashes. Also Her hair on Her little round head is a pinkish blond, like the colour of certain honeys which are almost white.

Her ears are two small shells, transparent, perfect. Her tiny hands... what are those two little things groping in the air and ending up in Her mouth? Closed, as they are now, they are two rose buds that split the green of their sepals and show their silk within. When they are open, as now, they are two ivory jewels, made of pink ivory and alabaster with five pale garnets as nails. How will those two tiny hands be able to dry so many tears?

And Her little feet? Where are they? For the time being they are just kicking, hidden in the linens. But now the relative sits down and uncovers Her... Oh, the little feet! They are about four centimetres long. Each sole is a coral shell, with a snow white top veined in blue. Her toes are masterpieces of Lilliputian sculpture: they, too, are crowned with small scales of pale garnet. But where will they find small sandals, when those little feet of a doll will take their first steps, sandals small enough to fit such tiny feet? And how will those little feet be able to go such a long way and bear so much pain under the cross?

But that for the time being is not known, and the onlookers smile and laugh at her kicking, at Her well shaped legs, at Her minute plumpish thighs that form dimples and rings, at Her little tummy, a cup turned upside-down, at Her tiny perfect chest. Under the skin of Her breast, as soft as fine silk, the movement of Her breathing can be seen and the beating of Her little heart can be heard, if, as Her happy father is doing now, one lays one's lips there for a kiss... This is the most beautiful little heart the world will ever know: the only immaculate heart of a human being.

And Her back? They are now turning Her over and they can see the curve of Her kidneys and then the plump shoulders and the pink nape of Her neck, which is so strong that the little head lifts itself up on the arch of the minute vertebrae. It looks like the little head of a bird that scans the new world that it views. She, the Pure and Chaste One, protests with a little cry at being thus exposed to the eyes of so many, She, Entirely Virgin, the Holy and Immaculate, Whom no man will ever see nude again, protests.

Cover, do cover this bud of a lily which will never be opened on earth and which, still remaining a bud, will bear its Flower, even more beautiful than Herself. Only in Heaven the Lily of the Trine Lord will open all its petals. Because up there, there is no particle of fault that may unwillingly profane its spotlessness. Because up there the Trine God is to be received, in the presence of the whole Empyrean, the Trine God that within a few years, hidden in a faultless heart, will be in Her: Father, Son, Spouse.

Here She is again, in Her linens, in the arms of Her earthly father, whom She resembles. Not at the moment. Now She is just a little human baby. I mean that She will be like him when She has grown into a woman. She has nothing of Her mother. She has Her father's colour of complexion and eyes and certainly also his hair. His hair is now white, but when he was young it was certainly fair, as one can tell from his eyebrows. She has Her father's features, made more perfect and gentle, being a woman, but that special Woman. She has also the smile, the glance, the way of moving and height of Her father. Thinking of Jesus, as I see Him, I find Anne has given her height to her Grandson and her deep ivory colour to His skin. Mary, instead, has not the stateliness of Her mother: a tall and supple palm-tree, but She has the kindness of Her father.

Also the women are speaking of the storm and the unusual state of the moon, of the presence of the star and the rainbow. Along with Joachim they enter the happy mother's room and give her her baby.

Anne smiles at one of her thoughts: « She is the Star » she says. « Her sign is in Heaven. Mary, arch of peace! Mary, my Star! Mary, pure moon! Mary, our pearl! »

« Are you calling Her Mary? »

« Yes. Mary, star and pearl and light and peace... »

« But it means also bitterness... Are you not afraid of bringing Her misfortune? »

« God is with Her. She belongs to Him before She existed. He will lead Her along His ways and all bitterness will turn into heavenly honey. Now be of Your mummy... for a little longer, before being all of God ...»

And the vision ends on the first sleep of Anne, a mother, and Mary, an infant.

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(1) Arpeggio: the sounding of notes in rapid succession.

27th August 1944.

Jesus says:

« Rise and make haste, My little friend. I am longing to take you with Me on the heavenly contemplation of Mary's Virginity. You will emerge from this experience with your soul as fresh as if you too were created at the moment by the Father, a little Eve not yet aware of the flesh. You will emerge with your soul filled with light, because you will plunge into God's masterpiece. You will emerge with your whole being saturated in love, because you will, have understood the degree to which God can love. To speak of the conception of Mary, the Immaculate, means to penetrate the sky, light, love.

Come and read Her glories in the Book of the Ancestor. “God possessed me at the beginning of His works, from the beginning, before the Creation. From everlasting I was firmly set, in the beginning, before earth came into being, the deep did not yet exist and I was already conceived. The springs did not yet gush with water and the mountains had not yet risen in their huge masses, neither were the hills jewels in the sun, when I came to birth. God had not yet made the

earth, the rivers and the foundation of the world, and I was there. When He prepared the Heavens I was present, when with immutable laws He enclosed the deep under the surface, when He fixed the Heavens firm and He suspended there the springs of water, when He assigned the sea its boundaries and gave laws to the waters, when He ordered the waters not to invade the shore, when He laid down the foundations of the earth, I was with Him arranging everything. I always played joyfully in His presence, I played in the universe...” You applied these words to Wisdom, but they speak of Her: the beautiful Mother, the holy Mother, the Virgin Mother of Wisdom that I am, Who am now speaking to you.

I wanted you to write the first line of the song at the top of the book that speaks of Her, that She might be contemplated and the consolation and joy of God might be known; the reason for the constant, perfect, intimate delight of this God One and Trine, Who rules and loves you and Who received from man so many reasons for being sad; the reason why He perpetuated the human race, even when, at the first test, humanity deserved to be destroyed; the reason for the forgiveness you have received.

To have Mary that loved Him! Oh! It was well worth while creating Man and allowing him to exist and decreeing to forgive him, to have the Beautiful Virgin, the Holy Virgin, the Immaculate Virgin, the Loving Virgin, the Beloved Daughter, the Most Pure Mother, the Loving Spouse! God has given you so much and would have given you even more to possess the Creature of His delight, the Sun of His sun, the Flower of His garden. And He continues to give you so much on account of Her, at Her request, for Her joy, because Her joy flows into the joy of God and increases it with flashes that fill the light, the great light of Paradise with brilliant sparkles and every sparkle is a grace to the universe, to mankind, to the blessed souls who reply with a jubilant cry of alleluia to each generation of divine miracle, created by the desire of the Blessed Trinity to see the sparkling smile of joy of the Virgin.

God desired to put a king in the universe that He had created out of nothing. A king, who by the nature of matter should be the first amongst all the creatures created with matter and endowed with matter. A king, who by nature of the spirit should be little less than divine, united to Grace as he was in his first innocent day. But the Supreme Mind, to Whom all the most remote events in centuries are known, incessantly sees what was, is and will be ; and while It contemplates the past, and observes the present, It penetrates deeply with Its foresight into the most distant future and knows in every detail how the last man will die. Without confusion or discontinuity the Supreme Mind has always known that the king created to be demigod at Its side in Heaven, heir of the Father, would arrive adult in His Kingdom, after living in the house of his mother-the earth, with which he was made-during his childhood, as child of the Eternal Father for his day on earth. The Supreme Mind has always known that man would have committed against himself the crime of killing Grace in himself and the theft of robbing himself of Heaven.

Why then did He create him? Certainly many ask themselves why. Would you have preferred not to exist? Does this day not deserve, in itself, to be lived, although so poor and bare, and rendered harsh by your wickedness, so that you may know and admire the infinite Beauty that the hand of God has sown in the universe?

For whom would He have created the stars and planets that fly like thunderbolts and arrows, furrowing the vault of Heaven, or dash majestically in their rush of meteors, and yet seem slow, presenting you with light and seasons, eternally immutable and yet always mutable. They give you a new page to read on the sky, every evening, every month, every year, as if they wished to say: “Forget your restriction, forsake your printed matter which is full of obscure, putrid, dirty, poisonous, false, swearing, corrupting material and rise, at least with your eyes, to the unlimited freedom of the firmament, make your souls bright looking at so clear a sky. Build up a supply of light to take to your dark prison. Read the word that we write singing our sidereal chorus, which is more harmonious than the one drawn from a cathedral organ. The word that we write while shining, the word that we write while loving, because we always bear in mind Him Who gave us the joy of existing. And we love Him for giving us our existence, our brightness, our movement, our freedom, our beauty in the midst of the gentle azure, beyond which we can see an even more sublime blue: Paradise. And we fulfill the second part of His commandment of love, by loving you, our universal neighbours, loving you by giving you guidance and light, warmth and beauty. Read the word we say, the one on which we modulate our singing, our brightness, our smile: God!”

For whom would He have made the blue sea, the mirror of the sky, the way to the land, the smile of waters, the voice of waves? The sea itself is a word that with the rustling of silk, with the smiles of happy girls, with the sighs of old people who remember and weep, with the clamour of violence, with clashes and roars always speaks and says: “God”. The sea is for you, as the sky and the stars

are. And with the sea, the lakes and the rivers, the ponds and the streams, the pure springs, all of which serve to nourish you, to quench your thirst, to clean you: and they serve you serving their Creator, without submerging you, as you deserve.

For whom would He have made the countless families of animals, the beautifully coloured birds, that fly singing, and other animals that like servants, run, work, nourish you and succour you, their kings?

For whom would He have created the countless families of plants and flowers that look like butterflies, like gems and motionless birds, and the families of fruits that are like jewels or jewels cases and are a carpet for your feet and the trees that form shelters for your heads, a welcome relaxation and joy to your minds, your limbs, your sight and smell?

For whom would He have made the minerals in the bowels of the earth and the salts dissolved in cold and boiling springs, the iodines and the bromines, unless one should enjoy them, one who was not God, but the son of God? One: man .

The joy of God lacked nothing: God had no need. He is sufficient in Himself. He has only to contemplate Himself to rejoice, to nourish Himself, to live, to rest. The whole creation has not increased by one atom His infinite joy, beauty, life, power. He made everything for the creature that He wanted to place as king in the work made by Him: that creature is man.

It is worth while living to see such a work of God and to be grateful to His power that gives you the opportunity. And you must be grateful to be alive. You should have been grateful even if you had to wait till Doomsday to be redeemed, because you have been prevaricators, proud, lascivious and murderers in your First Parents and you are still so individually. Yet God allows you to enjoy the beauty of the universe, the goodness of the universe: and He treats you as if you were good children, who are taught and granted everything so that their lives might be happier and more pleasant. What you know, you know by the light of God. What you discover, you discover through the guidance of God. In Goodness. Other knowledge and discoveries that bear the mark of evil, come from the Supreme Evil: Satan.

The Supreme Mind, that knows everything, before man existed, knew that man would be a thief and self murderer. And as the Eternal Goodness has no limits in being good, before Guilt existed, He thought of the means to obliterate Guilt. The means: I , the Word. The instrument to render the means an efficient instrument: Mary . And the Virgin was created in the sublime mind of God.

Everything was created for Me, beloved Son of the Father. I-King should have had under my Divine Royal feet carpets and jewels such as no royal palace had, and songs and voices and servants and ministers around me as no sovereign ever possessed, and flowers and gems, all the sublime, the greatness, the kindness that may derive from the thought of a God.

But I was to be Flesh as well as Spirit. Flesh to save the flesh. Flesh to sublime the flesh, taking it to Heaven many centuries before its time. Because the flesh inhabited by the spirit is God's masterpiece and Heaven had already been made for it. In order to become flesh I needed a Mother. To be God it was necessary that the Father was God.

Then God created His Spouse and said to Her: “Come with Me. At My side see what I am doing for our Son. Look and rejoice, eternal Virgin, eternal Maiden and may Your smile fill this Empyrean and give the angels their starting note and teach Paradise celestial harmony. I am looking at You. And I see You as You will be, Immaculate Woman, Who are now only a spirit: the spirit in which I rejoice. I am looking at You and I give the sea and the firmament the blue of Your eyes, the holy corn the colour of Your hair, whiteness to the lily and a rosy colour to the rose, like Your silky skin. I copy the pearls from Your minute teeth, I make the sweet strawberries watching Your mouth and I give the nightingale Your notes and the turtle-doves Your weeping. And reading Your future thoughts and listening to the throbs of Your heart, I have the motive of guidance in creating. Come, My joy, have the worlds as a plaything as long as You will be the dancing light of My thought; have the worlds for Your smile, have wreaths and necklaces of stars; place the moon under Your gentle feet; make Galatea Your stellar scarf. The stars and planets are for You. Come and enjoy looking at the flowers that will be a childish joy for Your Baby and a pillow for the Son of Your womb. Come and see sheep and lambs, eagles and doves being created. Stay beside Me when I make the hollows of the seas and grooves of the rivers and I raise the mountains and I adorn them with snow and forests. Stay here while I sow fudders and trees and vines, and I make the olive-tree for You, My Peaceful One, and the vine for You, My Vine branch who will bear the Eucharistic Bunch of grapes. Run, fly, rejoice, My Beauty. And may the universe which is created hour by hour learn from You to love Me, My Love, and may it become more beautiful owing to Your smile, Mother of My

Son, Queen of My Paradise, Love of Your God." And again, seeing the Fault and admiring the Faultless One: "Come to Me, You Who wipe out the bitterness of human disobedience, of human fornication with Satan and of human ingratitude. I will take with You My revenge over Satan."

God, the Father Creator, had created man and woman with such a perfect law of love that you cannot even understand its perfection any longer. And you become lost in wondering how the human species would have come to be, if man had not been taught by Satan how to obtain it.

Look at the fruit and seed plants. Do they produce seed and fruit by means of fornication, by means of one fecundation out of one hundred copulations? No. The pollen emerges from the male flower and driven by a complex of meteoric and magnetic laws it proceeds to the ovary of the female flower. The latter opens, receives it and produces. It does not pollute itself and then refuse it, as you do, to enjoy the same sensation the following day. It produces and until the new season, it does not get pollinated and when it does, it is only to produce.

Look at the animals. All of them. Have you ever seen a male animal and a female one approach each other for a sterile embrace and lascivious dealings? No. From near or far, they fly, crawl, jump or run, they go, when it is time, to the fecundation rite. Neither do they evade stopping at the pleasure, but they go further, to the serious and holy consequences of the offspring, the only reason that should cause a man, a demigod by his origin of Grace which I have made complete, to accept the animality of the act, necessary since you descended by one degree towards animals.

You do not act as plants and animals do. You had as your teacher Satan. You wanted him as your teacher and you still want him. And the works you do are what one would expect of the teacher you wanted. Had you been faithful to God, you would have had the joy of children, in a holy way, without pain, without exhausting yourselves in obscene and shameful intercourses, which even beasts are unacquainted with, although beasts are without a reasoning and spiritual soul.

To man and woman, corrupted by Satan, God decided to oppose the Man born of a Woman, Whom God had super-sublimed to such an extent that She generated without knowing man: a Flower that generates a Flower, without the need of seed, by a unique kiss of the Sun on the inviolated chalice of the Lily-Mary.

The revenge of God!

Hiss, O Satan, your hatred while She comes into the world! This Child has beaten you! Before you were the Rebel, the Twister, the Corruptor, you were already beaten and She was your Conqueror. One thousand assembled armies are of no avail against your power, the arms of men fall before your scales, o Perennial One, and there is no wind capable of dispersing the stench of your breath. And yet, the heel of this Child, which is so rosy as to look like the inside of a rosy camellia, and is so smooth and soft that silk seems coarse in comparison, and is so small that it could enter the chalice of a tulip and make itself a tiny shoe with that vegetable satin, that heel is crushing your head without any fear and relegates you to your den. And Her cry causes you to flee away, although you are not afraid of armies. And Her breath purifies the world of your foul smell. You are defeated. Her name, Her look, Her purity are a lance, a thunderbolt that pierces you and demolishes you and imprisons you in your den in Hell, o Cursed One, who deprived God of the joy of being the Father of all men created!

In vain you have corrupted them, who had been created innocent, leading them to knowledge and conception by means of the sensuousness of lust, depriving God, in His beloved creature, of being the benefactor of the children according to rules, which, had they been respected, would have kept a balance on earth between sexes and races, a balance capable of averting wars between peoples and calamities between families.

By obeying, they would have also known love. Nay, only by obeying they would have known love and possessed it. A complete and peaceful possession of this gift from God, Who from the supernatural descends to the inferior, so that also the flesh may rejoice devoutly, since it is united to the spirit and created by Him Who created the spirit.

Now, men, what is your love, what are your loves? Either lewdness disguised as love or an incurable fear of losing the love of your partner through her or other people's lewdness. You are never sure of possessing the heart of your husband or wife, since lust entered the world. And you tremble and cry and become overwrought with jealousy, sometimes you kill to avenge a betrayal, sometimes you despair, and sometimes you lack will or even become insane.

This is what you have done, Satan, to the children of God. Those whom you have corrupted, would have known the joy of having children without suffering

any pain and would have experienced the joy of being born without fear of dying. But now you are beaten in a Woman and by a Woman. From now on, whoever loves Her will become once again God's own, overcoming your temptations, to be able to look at Her immaculate purity. From now on mothers, though not able to conceive without pain, will find comfort in her. From now on She will be the guide of married women and the Mother of dying people, so that it will be sweet to die resting on that breast which is a shield against you, you Cursed One, and against the wrath of God.

Mary, little voice, you have seen the birth of the Virgin's Son and the assumption of the Virgin to Heaven. You have therefore seen that the faultless ones are unaware of the pain in giving birth as well as of the pain in dying. But if the Most Innocent Mother of God was granted the perfection of celestial gifts, all those who in the First Parents had remained innocent and sons of God, would have generated without throes as it was fair, having conceived without lust, and they would have died without anxiety.

The sublime victory of God over Satan's revenge was to raise the perfection of the beloved creature to a super-perfection that should annul at least in one person all recollection of humanity, liable to Satan's poison, so that the Son should be generated not by a man's chaste embrace, but by a divine embrace that causes the spirit to change colour in the ecstasy of the Fire.

The Virgin's Virginity!...

Come. Contemplate this deep virginity that gives ecstatic dizziness in its contemplation! What is the poor enforced virginity of a woman that no man married? Less than nothing. What is the virginity of a woman who wanted to be a virgin to belong to God, but is so in her body and not in her spirit, where she allows alien thoughts to enter and entertains allurements of human thoughts? It is a sham virginity. But still very little. What is the virginity of a cloistered nun who lives only for God? Very much. But it is never the perfect virginity when compared with My Mother's.

There has always been an association, also in the most holy one. The original association between spirit and fault. The one that only Baptism dissolves. It dissolves it, but as in the case of a woman separated from her husband by his death, it does not render virginity complete such as it was in the First Parents before Sin. A scar remains and hurts causing one to remember it, and it is always ready to become a sore like certain diseases that periodically are made worse by their virus. In the Virgin there is no sign of this dissolved association with the Fault. Her soul appears beautiful and intact as when the Father conceived Her, gathering all graces in Her.

She is the Virgin. She is the Only One. She is the Perfect One. The Complete One. Conceived as such. Generated as such. Remained such. Crowned such. Eternally such. She is the Virgin. She is the acme of intangibility, of purity, of grace that is lost in the Abyss from which it emerged: in God: most perfect Intangibility, Purity, Grace.

That is the revenge of the God Trine and One. Against creatures desecrated He raises this Star to perfection. Against pernicious curiosity He raises this Coy Virgin, contented only with loving God. Against the science of evil, this sublime Innocent Virgin. In Her there is not only no knowledge of dejected love: there is not only non-acquaintance with the love that God had given to married people. Much more. In Her there is the absence of incentives, the inheritance of Sin. In Her there is only the icy and white-hot wisdom of divine love. A fire that strengthens the flesh with ice, so that it may be a transparent mirror at the altar where God married a Virgin and does not lower Himself because His perfection embraces Her perfection, which, as it becomes a bride, is only inferior to His by one point, subject to Him as a Woman, but without fault as He is. »

6. The Purification of Anne and the Offering of Mary.

28th August 1944.

In Jerusalem I see Joachim and Anne, together with Zacharias and Elizabeth, coming out from a house, which must belong to friends or relatives, and they are turning their steps towards the Temple for the ceremony of the Purification.

Anne is carrying the Baby, all wrapped up in swaddling clothes, nay, all tied up in a wide garment of light wool, which, however, must be soft and warm. It is impossible to describe how carefully and lovingly she carries and watches her little creature, lifting the edge of the fine warm cloth to see if Mary is breathing freely, and then she readjusts it to protect Her from the sharp air of a clear but cold winter day.

Elizabeth is holding some parcels in her hands. Joachim is pulling with a rope two big and very white lambs, that are more like rams than lambs. Zacharias has nothing in his hands. He is handsome in his linen garment, which can be seen under a white heavy woolen mantle. Zacharias, much younger than the one already seen at the birth of the Baptist, in his full manhood, as Elizabeth is a mature woman, but still fresh in her appearance, and she bends in ecstasy over the tiny sleeping face every time Anne looks at the Baby. She also looks beautiful in her blue almost dark violet dress and in her veil that covers her head and then falls on her shoulders, and on the mantle which is darker than her dress.

But Joachim and Anne are certainly solemn in their best clothes. Unexpectedly, he is not wearing his dark brown tunic. Instead he has on a long garment of a very deep red, which we would now call St. Joseph's red, and the fringes attached to his mantle are new and beautiful. He, too, is wearing a kind of a rectangular veil on his head and it is secured with a leather band. Everything is new and of excellent quality. Anne, oh! She is not wearing dark clothes today! Her dress is a very pale yellow, almost the colour of old ivory, tied at her waist, neck and wrists with a large belt that seems of silver and gold. Her head is covered by a very light damask veil, held at her forehead by a thin but precious plate. She has a filigree necklace round her neck and bracelets at her wrists. She is like a queen, also because of the dignity with which she wears her dress, and particularly her cape, which is of a light yellow colour hemmed with a Greek fret beautifully embroidered in the same shade.

« You look exactly as the day you got married. I was just a little older than a girl, then, but I still remember how beautiful and happy you were » says Elizabeth.

« But now I am even more so... and I decided to wear the same dress for this rite. I had kept it for this... and I was no longer expecting to put it on for this . »

« The Lord has loved you very much...» says Elizabeth sighing.

« And that is why I am giving Him the thing I love most. This flower of mine. »

« How will you be able to tear it from your heart when the time comes? »

« Remembering that I did not have it and that God gave it to me. I shall always be happier now than then. When I know She is in the Temple I will say to myself: “She is praying near the Tabernacle, She is praying the God of Israel also for Her mummy” and I will have peace. And a greater peace I will have in saying: “She belongs entirely to Him. When these two old but happy parents, who received Her from Heaven, are no longer alive, He, the Eternal, will still be Her Father.” Believe me, I am fully convinced, this little creature is not ours. I was not able to do anything more... He put Her in my bosom, a divine gift to wipe away my tears and fulfill our hopes and our prayers. That is why She belongs to Him. We are the happy guardians... and may He be blessed for this! »

They have now reached the walls of the Temple.

« While you go to Nicanor's Gate, I will go and inform the priest. And then I will come, too » Zacharias says. And he disappears behind an arch leading into a large yard surrounded by porches.

The group continues to proceed along the ensuing terraces. I do not know whether I have said this before: the enclosure wall of the Temple is not on level ground but it rises up higher and higher by means of successive terraces. Each terrace is reached by means of a flight of steps and on each terrace there are yards and porches and beautiful portals wrought in marble, bronze and gold.

Before reaching their destination they stop to take out the contents of the parcels: cakes, I think, which are wide and flat and very greasy, some white flour, two doves in a small wicker cage and some big silver coins: they are quite heavy but fortunately garments did not have pockets in those days. They would have made holes in them.

Here is the beautiful Gate of Nicanor, all chiselled in heavy bronze silver plating. Zacharias is already there beside a stately priest dressed in linen.

Anne is sprinkled with what I suppose is lustral water and then she is instructed to move towards the altar of the sacrifice. The Child is no longer in her arms. Elizabeth, who has stopped at this side of the Gate, has taken Her.

Joachim, instead, enters behind his wife, dragging a miserable bleating lamb. And I... I do exactly what I did on the occasion of Mary's purification: I close my eyes not to see any slaughter.

Now Anne is purified.

Zacharias whispers something to his colleague, who nods smiling. He then approaches the group which has reassembled and congratulating the mother and father on their joy and their loyalty to the promises, he is given the second lamb,

the flour and the cakes.

« So this daughter is sacred to the Lord? May His blessing be with Her and with you. Here Anna is coming. She will be one of Her teachers. Anna of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher. Come here, woman. This little one is offered to the Temple as a victim of praise. You will be Her teacher and She will grow holy under your guidance. »

Anna, already completely grey, fondles the Child, who has awakened and is looking with Her innocent and surprised eyes at all the white and gold lit up by the sun.

The ceremony must be over. I did not see any special rite for the offering of Mary. Perhaps it was sufficient to tell the priest, and above all God, at the sacred place.

« I would like to give the offering to the Temple and go over there where I saw the light last year. »

They go accompanied by Anna of Phanuel. They do not enter the actual Temple; since they are women and it is the case of a little girl, it is understandable that they do not even go where Mary went to offer Her Son. But very close to the wide open door, they look into the half-dark inside from which sweet songs of girls can be heard and where precious lamps are lit and spread a golden light on two flower beds of white veiled heads: two real flowerbeds of lilies.

« In three years' time You will be there too, my Lily » promises Anne to Mary, Who looks fascinated at the inside and smiles at the slow song.

« You would say that She understands » says Anna of Phanuel. « She is a beautiful child! She will be as dear to me as if She were my own. I promise you, mother. If I shall be granted to be so. »

« You shall, woman » Zacharias says. « You will receive Her amongst the sacred girls. I also shall be there. I want to be there that day to tell Her to pray for us from the very first moment...» and he looks at his wife who understands and sighs.

The ceremony is over and Anna of Phanuel withdraws, while the others leave the Temple speaking to one another.

I hear Joachim say: « Not only two lambs and the best, but I would have given all my lambs for this joy and to praise God! »

I do not see anything else.

Jesus says:

« Solomon in his Wisdom says: “Whoever is a child, let him come to me.” And really from the stronghold, from the walls of her city, Eternal Wisdom said to the Eternal Maiden: “Come to Me”, longing to have Her. Later the Son of the Most Pure Maiden will say: “Let little children come to Me because the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs, and those who do not become like them will not have any part in My Kingdom.” The voices follow one another and while the voice of Heaven cries to little Mary: “Come to Me”, the voice of Man says, and thinks of His Mother in saying so: “Come to Me if you can be like children.”

I give you My Mother as a model.

Here is the perfect Maiden with the pure and simple heart of a dove, here is the One Whom years and worldly contacts do not make defiant in the cruelty of a corrupted, twisted, false spirit. Because She does not want it. Come to Me, looking at Mary.

Since you see Her, tell me: Is Her glance as an infant very different from the one you saw She had at the foot of the Cross or in the delight of Pentecost or when Her eyelids closed upon Her innocent eyes for Her last sleep? No. Here is the uncertain and astonished glance of an infant, then it will be the amazed and modest look of the Annunciation, and then the happy one of the Mother in Bethlehem, then the worshipping glance of My first and sublime Disciple, then the tormented one of the Tortured Mother on Golgotha, then the radiant glance of Resurrection and Pentecost, then the veiled look of the ecstatic sleep of the last vision. But whether it opens at the first sight, or closes tired on the last light, after seeing so much of joy and horror, Her eye is the clear, pure, placid piece of the sky that always shines below Mary's forehead. Wrath, falsehood, pride, lewdness, hatred, curiosity never soil it with their smoky clouds.

It is the eye that looks at God lovingly, whether it cries or laughs, and that for God's sake fondles and forgives and bears everything, and by the love of God is rendered unassailable to the assaults of Evil, that so often makes use of the eye to penetrate the heart. It is the pure, restful, blessing eye that the pure, the saints, the lovers of God possess. I said: “The lamp of the body is the eye. If your eye is

sound, your whole body will be filled with light. But if your eye is diseased, your whole body will be all darkness." Saints possessed this eye which is the light for the soul and salvation for the flesh, because like Mary throughout their lives they looked only at God. Even more: they remembered God.

I will explain to you, My little voice, the meaning of this word of Mine. »

7. The Son Has Put His Wisdom on His Mother's Lips.

29th August 1944.

I see Anne once again: since yesterday evening I see her thus: sitting at the entrance of the shady pergola, busy at her needlework. She is wearing a grey sand coloured dress, a very simple one and very wide, probably because of the great heat.

At the end of the pergola the mowers can be seen cutting the hay. But it cannot be first-crop hay because the grapes are almost golden coloured and the fruits of a large apple-tree are like shiny yellow and red wax. The cornfield is nothing but stubble with poppies waving like tiny flames and stiff and clear cornflowers shaped like stars and as blue as the eastern sky.

A little Mary comes forwards from the shady pergola: She is already quick and independent. Her short step is steady and Her white sandals do not stumble amongst the pebbles. Her graceful gait already resembles the slightly undulating step of a dove, and She is all white – like a little dove – in Her linen dress which reaches down to Her ankles. It is a wide dress curled at the neck by a blue ribbon and the short sleeves show rosy and plump forearms. She looks like a little angel: Her hair is silky and honey-blonde, not very curly but gracefully wavy ending in curls: Her eyes are sky blue, Her sweet little face is rosy and smiling. Also the breeze that through Her wide sleeves inflates the shoulders of Her linen dress helps to give Her the appearance of a little angel having his wings half-open ready to fly.

She has in Her hands poppies, cornflowers and other flowers that grow in cornfields, but I do not know their names. She is walking and when She is near Her mother She starts running, shouting joyfully and, like a little dove, She ends Her flight against Her mother's knees: she has opened them to receive Her. Anne has put her needlework aside so that She would not get pricked and has opened her arms to embrace Her.

So far yesterday evening. This morning She reappears and continues as follows.

« Mummy, Mummy! » The little white dove is completely in the nest of Her mother's knees, touching the short grass with Her little feet and hiding Her face in Her mother's lap, so that only Her golden hair can be seen on the nape of Her neck over which Anne bends to kiss it fondly.

Then She lifts Her head and offers Her mother flowers. They are all for Her mummy and of each one She tells the story She has invented.

This blue and big one, is a star which has come down from Heaven to bring the kiss of the Lord to My mummy. Here: kiss this little celestial flower there, on its heart, and you will see that it tastes of God.

This other one, instead, which is a paler blue, like daddy's eyes, has written on its leaves that the Lord loves daddy very much because he is good.

And this tiny little one, the only one to be found, (it is a myosote), is the one that God made to tell Mary that He loves Her.

And these red ones, does mummy know what they are? They are pieces of king David's dress, stained with the blood of the enemies of Israel and sown on the battlefields and the fields of victory. They originate from those strips of the heroic regal dress torn in the struggle for the Lord.

Instead this white and gentle one, that seems to be made with seven silk cups looking up to the sky, full of perfumes, and that was growing over there, near the spring – daddy picked it for Her amongst the thorns – is made with the dress of Solomon. He wore it, so many many years before, in the same month in which his little granddaughter was born, when he walked in the midst of the multitudes of Israel before the Ark and the Tabernacle, in the splendid majesty of his robes. And he rejoiced because of the cloud which returned to encircle his glory, and he sang the canticle and the prayer of his joy.

« I want to be always like this flower, and like the wise king I want to sing throughout My life canticles and prayers before the Tabemacle » ends Mary.

« How do You know these holy things, my darling? Who told You? Your

father? »

« No. I do not know who it is. I think I have always known them. Perhaps there is one who tells Me and I do not see him. Perhaps one of the angels that God sends to speak to good people. Mummy, will you tell Me another story? »

« Oh, my dear! Which story do You wish to know? »

Mary is thinking, deeply absorbed in Her thoughts. Her expression should be immortalized in a portrait. The shadows of Her thoughts are reflected on Her childish face. There are smiles and sighs, sunshine and clouds, thinking of the history of Israel. Then She makes up Her mind: « Once again the story of Gabriel and Daniel, where Christ is promised. » And She listens, with Her eyes closed, repeating in a low voice the words Her mother says, as if to remember them better. When Anne comes to the end She asks: « How long will it be before we have the Immanuel? »

« About thirty years, my darling. »

« Such a long time! And I shall be in the Temple... Tell Me, if I should pray very hard, so hard, day and night, night and day, and I wanted to belong only to God, for all My life, for this purpose, would the Eternal Father grant Me the grace of sending the Messiah to His people sooner? »

« I do not know, my dear. The Prophet states: “Seventy weeks”. I do not think a prophecy can be wrong. But the Lord is so good » she hastens to add, seeing tears appear on the fair eyelashes of her child, « the Lord is so good that I believe that if You do pray very hard, so hard, He will hear Your prayer. »

A smile appears once again on Her little face, which She has lifted up towards Her mother and the rays of the sun, filtering through the vine branches cause Her tears to shine like dew-drops on very thin stems of alpine moss.

« Then I will pray and I shall be a virgin for this. »

« But do you know what that means? »

« It means that one does not know human love, but only the love of God. It means that one has no other thought but for the Lord. It means to remain children in the flesh and angels in the heart. It means that one has no eyes but to look at God, and ears to listen to Him, and a mouth to praise Him, hands to offer oneself as a victim, feet to follow Him fast, and a heart and a life to be given to Him. »

« May God bless You! But then You will never have any children, and yet You love babies and little lambs and doves so much... Do You know that? A baby is for his mother like a little white and curly lamb, he is like a little dove with silk feathers and coral mouth to be loved and kissed and heard say: “Mummy!” »

« It does not matter. I shall belong to God. I shall pray in the Temple. And perhaps one day I will see the Immanuel. The Virgin who is to be His Mother must be already born, as the great Prophet says, and She is in the Temple... I will be Her companion on... and maidservant. Oh! Yes. If I could only meet Her, by God's light, I would like to serve Her, the Blessed One. And later, She would bring Me Her Son, She would take Me to Her Son, and I would serve Him too... Just think, mummy!... To serve the Messiah!! » Mary is overcome by this thought that exalts Her and makes Her totally humble at the same time. With Her hands crossed over Her breast and Her little head slightly bent forward and flushed with emotion, She is like an infantile reproduction of the Annunciation that I saw. She resumes: « But will the King of Israel, the Lord's Anointed, allow Me to serve Him? » « Have no doubts about that. Does King Solomon not say: “There are sixty queens and eighty concubines and countless maidens?” You can see that in the King's palace there will be countless maidens serving the Lord. »

« Oh! You can see then that I must be a virgin? I must. If He wants a virgin as His Mother, it means that He loves virginity above all things. I want Him to love Me, His maiden, because of the virginity which will make Me somewhat like His beloved Mother... This is what I want... I would also like to be a sinner, a big sinner, if I were not afraid of offending the Lord... Tell Me, mummy, can one be a sinner out of love of God ? »

« But what are You saying, my dear? I don't understand You. »

« I mean: to commit a sin in order to be loved by God, Who becomes the Saviour. Who is lost, is saved. Isn't that so? I would like to be saved by the Saviour to receive His loving look. That is why 1 would like to sin, but not to commit a sin that would disgust Him. How can He save Me if I do not get lost?»

Anne is dumbfounded. She does not know what to say.

Joachim helps her. He has approached them walking noiselessly on the grass, behind the low hedge of vine-shoots. « He has saved You beforehand, because

He knows that You love Him and You want to love Him only. So You are already redeemed and You can be a virgin as You wish » says Joachim.

« Is that true, daddy? » Mary embraces his knees and looks at him with Her clear blue eyes, so like Her father's and so happy because of this hope She gets from Her father.

« It is true, my little darling. Look! I was just bringing You this little sparrow, that at its first flight landed near the spring. I could have left it there but its weak wings did not have enough strength to fly off again, and its tiny legs could not hold it on to the slippery moss stones. It would have fallen into the water. But I did not wait for that. I took it and now I am giving it to You. You will do what you like with it. The fact is that it was saved before it fell into the danger. God has done the same with You. Now, tell me, Mary: have I loved the sparrow more by saving it beforehand, or would I have loved it more saving it afterwards? »

« You have loved it now, because you did not let it get hurt in the cold water. »

« And God has loved You more, because He has loved You before You sinned. »

« And I will love Him wholeheartedly. Wholeheartedly. My beautiful little sparrow, I am like you. The Lord has loved us both equally, by saving us... I will now rear you and then I will let you go. And you in the forest and I in the Temple will sing the praises of God, and we shall say: “Please send the One You promised to those who expect Him.” Oh! Daddy, when are you taking Me to the Temple? »

« Soon, my dear. But are You not sorry to leave Your father? »

« Yes, very much! But you will come... in any case, if it did not hurt, what sacrifice would it be? »

« And will You remember us? »

« I always will. After the prayer for the Immanuel I will pray for you. That God may give you joy and a long life... until the day He becomes the Saviour. Then I will ask Him to take you to the celestial Jerusalem. »

The vision ends with Mary tightly clasped in Her father's arms.

Jesus says:

« I can already hear the comments of the doctors with captious objections: “How can a little girl not yet three years old speak thus? It is an exaggeration.” And they do not consider that they make a monster of Me by ascribing adults' actions to My own childhood.

Intelligence is not given to everybody in the same way and at the same time. The Church has fixed the age of reason at six years of age, because that is the age when even a backward child can tell good from evil, at least in basically important matters. But there are children who long before that age are capable of discerning and understanding and wanting with sufficiently developed discretion. Little Imelde Lambertini, Rosa da Viterbo, Nellie Organ, Nennolina, may give you confirmation, o difficult doctors, to believe that My Mother was able to think and speak like that. I have quoted four names at random amongst the thousands of holy children who populate My Paradise, after reasoning on earth as adults for possibly more or fewer years.

What is reason? A gift of God. God can therefore give it as He wishes, to whom He wishes and when He wishes. Reason in fact is one of the things that make you more like God, the Intelligent and Reasoning Spirit. Reason and intelligence were graces given by God to Man in the Earthly Paradise. How full of life they were, when Grace was alive, still intact and active in the spirit of the first two Parents!

In the Book of Jesus Ben Sirach it is stated: “All wisdom is from the Lord, and it is His own forever.” What wisdom, therefore, would men have had, had they remained children of God?

The gaps in your intelligence are the natural fruits of your fall from Grace and honesty. By losing Grace you banished Wisdom for centuries. As a meteor which is hidden behind masses of clouds, Wisdom no longer reached you with its bright flashes, but through mist which your prevarications have rendered thicker and thicker.

Then Christ came and He restored Grace, the supreme gift of the love of God. But do you know how to keep this gem clear and pure? No, you do not. When you do not crush it with your individual will in sinning, you soil it with your continuous minor faults, your weaknesses, your attachment to vice. Such

attempts, even if they are not a proper marriage with the septiform vice, are a weakening of the light of Grace and of its activity. And then, to weaken the magnificent light of intelligence that God had given the First Parents, you have centuries and centuries of corruption, which exert a harmful influence on the body and on the mind.

But Mary was not only the Pure, the new Eve created for the joy of God: She was the super Eve, the Masterpiece of the Most High, She was the Full of Grace, the Mother of the Word in the mind of God.

Jesus Ben Sirach says: “Source of Wisdom is the Word.” Will the Son therefore not have put His wisdom on His Mother's lips?

If the mouth of a Prophet was purified with embers, because he had to repeat to men the words that the Word, the Wisdom, entrusted to Him, will Love not have cleansed and exalted the speech of his infant Spouse Who was to bear the Word, so that She should no longer speak as a little girl and then as a woman, but only and always as a celestial creature melted in the great light and wisdom of God?

The miracle is not in the superior intelligence shown by Mary in Her childhood, as afterwards it was by Me. The miracle is in containing the Infinite Intelligence, that dwelt there, within suitable bounds, so that crowds should not be startled and satanic attention should not be awakened.

I will talk again on this subject which is part of the “remembrance” which saints have of God. »

8. Mary Is Presented in the Temple.

30th August 1944.

I see Mary between Her father and mother walking in the streets in Jerusalem.

Passers-by stop to look at the beautiful Girl all dressed in white and wearing a very light mantle. The mantle, because of its design in branches and flowers, which are a little darker against the soft background, seems to be the same one that Anne was wearing on the day of her Purification. The only difference is that while it reached down to Anne's waist, in the case of Mary, Who is only a little girl, it reaches down to Her ankles and envelops Her in a small light and bright cloud of rare beauty.

Her fair hair, loose on Her shoulders, or rather, on Her gentle neck, shines through the veil where there is no pattern, but only the very light background. The veil is held on Her forehead by a very pale blue ribbon, on which small lilies are embroidered with silver threads, certainly the work of Her mother.

As I said, the snow white dress reaches down to the ground, and Her little feet can just be seen, as She walks, in Her white sandals. Her hands are like two magnolia petals, peeping from the long sleeves. Apart from the blue ribbon, there is no other colour. It is all white. Mary seems to be dressed in snow.

Joachim is wearing the same garment he had on for the Purification. Anne, instead, is wearing a very dark violet dress. Also the mantle, which also covers her head, is dark violet. She is holding it lowered below her eyes. Two poor eyes of a mother, red with tears, that do not wish to weep and above all do not wish to be seen crying, but can but shed tears under the protection of the mantle, a protection that serves its purpose with regard to passers-by and also to Joachim, whose eyes, usually clear, are to-day red and dull, because of the tears he has shed and is still shedding. He is walking with a stoop, his head is covered by a veil worn in the fashion of a turban, with the folds hanging down along his face.

A very old Joachim. Whoever sees him, must think that he is the grandfather or the great grandfather of the little girl he is holding by the hand. The pain of losing Her causes the poor father to drag his feet and he is so weary that he looks twenty years older. He is so sad and tired that he looks like an old sick man. His mouth trembles slightly between the two wrinkles that at the sides of his nose are so deep today.

They are both endeavouring to conceal their tears. But if they are successful with many people, they are not with Mary, Who, because of Her height, sees them from below, and lifting Her head looks at Her father and mother alternately. They make an effort to smile at Her with their trembling mouths and they hold Her tiny hand tighter every time their little daughter looks at them and smiles. They must be thinking: « There. A smile to be seen one time less. » They proceed slowly. Very slowly. They seem to be wishing to protract their journey for as long as possible. Everything serves as a pretext to stop... But a journey must come to an end! And this one is about to end. Up there, at the top of this

last stretch of the road, there are the Temple walls. Anne utters a groan and holds Mary's hand tighter.

« Anne, my dear, I am here with you! » a voice utters, coming out from the shade of a low arch built over a cross-roads. And Elizabeth, who was waiting for them, approaches her and embraces her. And since Anne is crying she says: « Come into this friendly house for a little while. Then we shall go together. Also Zacharias is here. »

They all enter a low dark room where the only light is a big fire. The landlady, obviously a friend of Elizabeth's, but unknown to Anne, kindly withdraws and leaves them alone.

« You must not think that I am repenting or I am giving my treasure to the Lord unwillingly, » explains Anne crying, « but it's my heart... oh! how my heart aches, my old heart that is returning to its childless solitude! If you could only feel... »

« I know, my dear Anne... But you are good and God will console you in your solitude. Mary will pray for the peace of Her mother. Won't you, Mary? »

Mary caresses Her mother's hands and kisses them. She presses them to Her face to be caressed and Anne holds Her little face tightly in her hands and kisses it repeatedly. She is never tired of kissing Her.

Zacharias enters and greets them saying: « May the peace of the Lord be with the just. »

« Yes » replies Joachim, « implore peace for us, because our hearts are trembling in our offer, as Abraham's did, while he was climbing the mountain, but we shall not find another offer to replace this one. Neither do we want it, because we are faithful to the Lord. But we are suffering, Zacharias. Since you are a priest of God, please understand us and do not be perturbed. »

« Never. On the contrary, your sorrow which does not go beyond reasonable limits and does not shake your faith, teaches me how to love the Most High. But take heart. Anna, the prophetess, will take care of this flower of David and Aaron. At present She is the only lily of David's holy issue in the Temple and She will be taken care of as a royal pearl. Although we are approaching the time when the Messiah is to come, and the women belonging to the house of David should be anxious to consecrate their daughters to the Temple, because the Messiah will be born of a virgin of David's issue, yet, because of the general weakening of faith, the places of the virgins in the Temple are empty. They are too few and none of the royal offspring, since Sarah of Elisha left three years ago to get married. It is true that there are still thirty years to the appointed time, but... Well let us hope that Mary will be the first of many virgins of David's offspring before the Sacred Veil. And then... who knows... » Zacharias does not say anything else. But he looks at Mary thoughtfully. Then he resumes: « Also I will watch over Her. I am a priest and I have power in here. I will make use of it for this angel. And Elizabeth will often come to see Her. »

« Oh! Certainly! I am in such need of God that I will come and tell this little Girl, so that She may tell the Eternal One. »

Anne has taken heart again. To relieve her anxiety even more Elizabeth asks her: « Is this not the veil of your wedding? Or have you been weaving new byssus? »

« It is. I am consecrating it to the Lord with Her. My eyes are no longer so good... and also our wealth has been reduced by taxation and misfortunes... I could not afford heavy expenses. I have only seen to Her clothing for the time She will be in the House of the Lord and afterwards... Because I do not think that I shall be there to dress Her for Her wedding... but I want it to be the hands of Her mummy, even if cold and motionless, which prepare Her for the wedding and weave Her linens and dresses. »

« Oh! Why think of that!? »

« I am old, my dear cousin. I have never felt it so much as I do now in my great pain. I have given the last ounce of strength in my life to this flower, to bear Her and to nourish Her, and now the pain of losing Her is drawing my last strength away and dispersing it. »

« Don't say that, for Joachim's sake. »

« Yes, you are quite right. I will try and live for my husband. »

Joachim pretends he has not heard, intent as he is on listening to Zacharias, but he has heard and he sighs deeply, his eyes shining with tears.

« It is between the third and the sixth hour. I think we ought to go » Zacharias says.

They all get up to put on their mantles and set off.

But before going out Mary kneels down on the threshold with Her arms stretched out: a little imploring cherub. « Father! Mother! Your blessing, please. » She is not crying, the little brave girl. But Her lips are trembling and Her voice, broken by a sob, resembles more than ever the trembling cooing of a little dove. Her face is pale, and Her eyes have the look of resigned distress which I will see again on Calvary and in the Sepulchre, where it was so much more intense that it was impossible to look at Her without deep suffering.

Her parents bless Her and kiss Her: once, twice, ten times, they are never satisfied... Elizabeth is weeping silently and Zacharias, notwithstanding his efforts to conceal his tears, is deeply moved.

They go out. Mary is between Her father and mother as before. Zacharias and his wife are in front of them.

They are now inside the walls of the Temple. « I will go to the High Priest. You go to the Great, Terrace. »

They go across three yards and through three halls, set one upon the other. They are now at the foot of the huge marble cube crowned with gold. Every dome, convex like a huge half orange, blazes in the sun, which now, at midday, is shining down directly on to the large yard surrounding the solemn building and is filling with its dazzling light the large square and the wide flight of steps leading up to the Temple. Only the porch facing the steps, along the façade, is in the shade and the very high bronze and gold door is even darker and more solemn looking in so much light.

Mary looks whiter than snow in so much sunshine. She is now at the foot of the steps, between Her father and Her mother. How violently their hearts must be throbbing! Elizabeth is beside Anne, but a little behind her, about half a step.

Upon the blare of silver trumpets the door rotates on its hinges, which seem to be emitting the sound of a cithern, while turning on the bronze balls. The interior appears with its lamps in the far end and a procession is moving towards the door, a stately procession with silver trumpets, clouds of incense and lights.

It is now at the threshold. In front is the High Priest... a stately old man, dressed in very fine linen, and wearing over his linen dress a short linen tunic and on top of it a kind of chasuble, something multicoloured between a chasuble and a deacon's vestment: purple and gold, violet and white alternate and sparkle like gems in the sun: two real gems are shining more brightly at the top of his shoulders. Perhaps they are buckles with their precious settings. On his breast there is a large metal plate shining with gems and held by a gold chain. Pendants and trimmings gleam on the hem of his short tunic and gold shines above his forehead on his mitre, that reminds me of the mitre worn by Orthodox priests, a mitre shaped as a dome instead of being pointed like the Roman Catholic one.

The solemn personage moves forward, alone, as far as the beginning of the steps, in the golden sunshine that makes him look even more splendid. The others stand waiting under the shady porch, in a circle outside the door. On the left there is a group of girls, all dressed in white, with prophetess Anna and other elderly ladies, obviously teachers.

The High Priest looks at the little Girl and smiles. She must look very tiny at the foot of the flight of steps worthy of an Egyptian temple! He lifts his arms to the sky in prayer. They all bow their heads in perfect humility before the priestly majesty communicating with the Eternal Majesty.

Then, he beckons to Mary. And She departs from Her mother and father, and as if fascinated, climbs the steps. And She smiles. She smiles in the shade of the Temple, where the precious Veil is hanging... She is now at the top of the steps, at the feet of the High Priest, who imposes his hand on Her head. The victim has been accepted. Which purer victim had the Temple ever received?

Then he turns round and holding his hand on Her shoulder as if he were leading the immaculate little Lamb to the altar, he takes Her to the Temple door. Before letting Her in, he asks Her: « Mary of David, are You aware of Your vow?» When She replies « Yes » in Her silvery voice, he cries out: « Go in, then. Walk in my presence and be perfect . »

Mary enters and is swallowed up by the darkness. The group of virgins and teachers, then the Levites hide and isolate Her more and more... She can no longer be seen... Also the door is now closing on its sweet-sounding hinges. Through the gap which is becoming narrower and narrower, the procession can be seen advancing towards the Holy of Holies. Now it is only a thread. Now it is no more: it is closed.

The last chord of the harmonious hinges is replied to by a sob from the two old parents and by a joint cry: « Mary! Daughter! » and then two groans, the one

invoking the other: « Anne! » « Joachim! » and they finish whispering: « Let us give glory to the Lord Who is receiving Her in His House and is leading Her along His path. »

It all ends thus.

Jesus says:

« The High Priest had said: "Walk in my presence and be perfect." The High Priest did not know that he was speaking to the Woman Who is inferior in perfection only to God. But he was speaking in the name of God, and therefore his order was a sacred one. It is always sacred, particularly with regard to the Virgin Full of Wisdom.

Mary had deserved that "Wisdom should precede Her and show Itself to Her first," because "from the beginning of Her day She had watched at Its door, and wishing to be taught, out of love, She wanted to be pure to achieve perfect love and deserve to have Wisdom as Her teacher."

In Her humility She did not know that She possessed Wisdom before being born and that the union with Wisdom was but the continuation of the divine pulsations of Paradise. She could not imagine that. And when God whispered sublime words to Her in the depths of Her heart, in Her humility She considered them thoughts of pride and raising Her innocent heart to God, She besought Him: "Lord, have mercy on Thy Servant!"

Oh! It is true that the True Wise Virgin, the Eternal Virgin, has had only one thought from the dawn of Her day: to raise Her heart to God from the morning of life and to watch for the Lord, praying before the Most High, asking forgiveness for the weaknesses of Her heart, as Her humility convinced Her, and She was not aware that She was anticipating the request for forgiveness for sinners, which She would later make at the foot of the Cross, together with Her dying Son.

"When the great Lord will decide, She will be filled with the Spirit of intelligence" and will then understand Her great mission. For the time being She is only a child, who in the sacred peace of the Temple, establishes and re-establishes closer and closer connections, affections and memories with Her God.

This is for everybody.

But for you, My little Mary, has your Teacher nothing special to tell you? "Walk in My presence, be therefore perfect." I am slightly modifying the sacred phrase and I am giving it to you as an order. Be perfect in love, perfect in generosity, perfect in suffering.

Look once again at Mother. And consider what so many ignore or wish to ignore, because sorrow is too irksome to their taste and their spirit. Sorrow. Mary suffered from the very first hour of Her life. To be perfect as She was, implied the possession of a perfect sensitivity. Consequently sacrifice was to be more piercing. And thus more meritorious. He who possesses purity possesses love, who possesses love possesses wisdom, who possesses wisdom possesses generosity and heroism, because he knows why he makes a sacrifice.

Raise your spirit, even if the cross bends you, breaks you and kills you. God is with you. »

9. Death of Joachim and Anne.

31st August 1944.

Jesus says:

« Like a quick winter twilight when an ice-cold wind gathers clouds in the sky, the lives of My grandparents had a quick decline, after the Sun of their lives was placed to shine before the Sacred Veil of the Temple.

But it is said:

"Wisdom brings up her own sons,
and cares for those who seek her.
Whoever loves her loves life,
those who wait on her will enjoy peace.

Those who serve her, minister to the Holy One
and the Lord loves those who love her.
If he trusts himself to her he will inherit her

and his descendants will remain in possession of her
because she accompanies him in his trials.

First of all she selects him,
then she brings fear and faintness on him,
ploughing him with her discipline,
until she has tested him in his thoughts
and she can trust him.

In the end she will make him firm,
will lead him back to the straight road
and make him happy.

She will reveal her secrets to him,
She will place in him treasures of science,
and knowledge of justice."

Yes, all this has been said. The books of wisdom may be applied to all men, who will find guidance in them and a light for their behaviour. But happy are those who can be recognised amongst the spiritual lovers of Wisdom.

I surrounded Myself with wise people, in My human kinship. Anne, Joachim, Joseph, Zacharias, and even more Elizabeth, and then the Baptist, are they not real wise people? Not to mention My Mother, the abode of Wisdom.

Wisdom had inspired My grandparents how to live in a way which was agreeable to God, from their youth to their death, and like a tent protecting from the fury of the elements, Wisdom had protected them from the danger of sin. The sacred fear of God is the root of the tree of wisdom, that thrusts its branches far and wide to reach with its top tranquil love in its peace, peaceful love in its security, secure love in its faithfulness, faithful love in its intensity: the total, generous, effective love of saints.

"Who loves her, loves life and will inherit Life" says Ecclesiasticus. This sentence is linked with Mine: "Who loses his life for My sake, will save it." Because we are not referring to the poor life of this world, but to the eternal life, not to the joys of one hour, but to the immortal ones.

Joachim and Anne loved Wisdom thus. And Wisdom was with them in their trials.

How many trials they experienced, whilst you, men, do not want to have to suffer and cry, simply because you think that you are not completely wicked! How many trials these two just people suffered, and they deserved to have Mary as their daughter! Political persecutions had driven them out of the land of David, and made them excessively poor. They had felt sadness in seeing their years fading through without a flower that would say to them: "I shall be your continuation." And afterwards, the anxiety of having a daughter in their old age when they were certain they would never see Her grow into a woman. And then the obligation of tearing Her from their hearts to offer Her on the altar of God. And again: their life became an even more painful silence, now that they were accustomed to the chirping of their little dove, to the noise of Her little steps, to the smiles and kisses of their creature, having to wait for the hour of God, their only company being the memories of the past. And much more... Diseases, calamities of inclement weather, the arrogance of mighty ones of the earth... so many blows of battering rams on the weak castle of their modest possessions. And it is not enough: the pain for their far away creature, who was going to be left lonely and poor and, notwithstanding their cares and sacrif ices, would get only the remains of Her father's property. And how will She find such remains, since they will be left uncultivated for many years, awaiting Her return? Fears, trials, temptations. And yet, loyalty to God forever!

Their strongest temptation: not to deny their declining lives the consolation of their daughter's presence. But children belong first to God and then to their parents. Every son can say what I said to My Mother: "Do you not know that I must be busy with My Father's affairs?" And every father, every mother must learn the attitude to be maintained looking at Mary and Joseph in the Temple, at Anne and Joachim in the house of Nazareth, a house which was becoming more and more forlorn and sad, but where one thing never diminished, but increased continuously: the holiness of two hearts, the holiness of a marriage.

What light is left to Joachim, an invalid, and to his sorrowful wife, in the long and silent nights of two old people who feel they are about to die? Only the little dresses, the first pair of little sandals, the simple toys of their little daughter, now far away, and memories of Her, memories... And peace when they say: "We are suffering, but we have done our duty of love towards God."

And then they were overcome by a supernatural joy shining with a celestial light, a joy unknown to the children of the world, a joy that does not fade away when heavy eyelashes close on two dying eyes: on the contrary, it shines

brighter in the last hour, illuminating the truth that had been hidden within them throughout their lives. Like a butterfly in its cocoon, the truth in them gave faint indications of its presence, just soft flashes, whereas now it opens its wings to the sun and shows its beautiful decorations. And their lives passed away in the certainty of a happy future for themselves and their descendants, their trembling lips murmuring words of praise to God.

Such was the death of my grandparents. Such as their holy lives deserved. Because of their holiness, they deserved to be the first guardians of the Virgin Beloved by God, and only when a greater Sun showed itself at the end of their days, they realized the grace God had granted them.

Because of their holiness, Anne suffered no pain in giving birth to her child: it was the ecstasy of the bearer of the Faultless One. Neither of them suffered the throes of death, but only a weakness that fades away, as a star softly disappears when the sun rises at dawn. And if they did not have the consolation of having Me present, as Wisdom Incarnate, as Joseph had, I was invisibly present, whispering sublime words, bending over their pillows, to send them to sleep, awaiting their triumph.

Someone may ask: “Why did they not have to suffer when generating and dying, since they were children of Adam?” My answer is: “If the Baptist, who was a son of Adam, and had been conceived with the original sin, was presanctified by Me in his mother's womb, simply because I approached her, was no grace to be granted to the mother of the Holy and Faultless One, Who had been preserved by God and bore God in Her almost divine spirit, in Her most pure heart, and was never separated from Him, since She was created by the Father and was conceived in a womb, and then received into Heaven to possess God in glory forever and ever?” I also answer: “An upright conscience gives a peaceful death and the prayers of saints will obtain such a death for you.”

Joachim and Anne had a whole life of upright conscience behind them and such a life rose like a beautiful landscape and led them to Heaven, while their Holy Daughter was praying before the Tabernacle of God for Her parents far away, whom She had postponed to God, Summurn Bonum, and yet She loved them, as the law and Her feeling commanded, with a perfect supernatural love. »

10. Mary's Canticle Imploring the Coming of the Christ.

2nd September 1944.

Only yesterday evening, Friday, I began to see. I saw nothing but a very young Mary, twelve years old at most, Her face no longer roundish, as is typical of children, but already showing the future outlines of a woman in a perfect oval. Also Her hair is no longer falling loose on Her neck in soft curls, but it is plaited and two thick braids fall over Her shoulders down to Her waist. Her hair is a very pale gold colour, so light that it seems to be blended with silver. Her face is more pensive and mature, although it is the face of a young girl, a beautiful and pure girl, all dressed in white. She is sewing in a very small room, which is also completely white, and through the wide open window one can see the imposing central part of the Temple, the flights of steps of the yards and porches.

Beyond the enclosure wall also the town can be seen with its streets, houses, gardens, and in the background the humped green top of the Mount of Olives.

Mary is sewing and singing in a low voice. I do not know whether it is a sacred song or not. It says:

« Like a star in clear water
a light is shining within My heart.
It has been with Me since My childhood
and it guides Me tenderly with love.

In the depths of My heart there is a song.
Where does it come from?
Man, you do not know.
It comes from where the Holy One rests.

I look at My clear star
And I do not want anything,
Not even the sweetest and dearest thing,
Except this sweet light that is all Mine.

You brought Me down from the Heavens above,
O star of Mine, into the womb of a mother,
Now You live in Me, but beyond the veil
I see Your glorious face, Father.

When will You grant Your servant the honour

Of being the humble maid of the Saviour?
Send us the Messiah from Heaven,
Accept, Holy Father, the offer of Mary. »

Mary is now quiet. She smiles and sighs, then She kneels down in prayer. Her little face is shining brightly. She is looking upwards, towards the clear blue summer sky and Her face seems to be absorbing and then radiating all the brightness in the air. Or rather, it looks as if from within Her a hidden sun is radiating its rays and lighting up Her face, colouring Her snow-white flesh with a light rosy hue. And the light from Her face spreads out towards the world and the sun shining on the world: a blessing and a promise of much good.

While Mary is getting up after Her prayer, with ecstatic brightness still on Her face, old Anna of Phanuel enters the room. She stands still, amazed or at least wondering at Mary's attitude and appearance.

Then she calls Her: « Mary! » and the Girl turns round with a smile, a different one but still so beautiful and says: « Peace to you, Anna. »

« Were You praying? Are Your prayers never enough for You? »

« My prayers would be enough. But I speak to God. Anna, you cannot imagine how close I feel Him. More than close, within My heart. May God forgive Me My pride. But I do not feel lonely. See? Over there, in that House of gold and snow, behind the double Curtain, there is the Holy of Holies. Nobody is ever allowed to look at the Propitiatory, on which the glory of the Lord rests, except the High Priest. But My worshipping soul does not need to look at the embroidered Curtain, which quivers at the songs of the virgins and Levites and is scented with precious incense, as if I wanted to pierce its fabric and see the Testimony shine through it. I do look at it! Do not think that I do not look at it with worshipping eyes like every son of Israel. Do not think that pride blinds Me making Me think what I will now tell you. I look at it and there is no humble servant amongst the people of God that looks more humbly at the House of the Lord than I do, because I am convinced that I am the least of all. But what do I see? A veil. What do I think there is behind the Veil? A Tabernacle. What is in it? If I listen to My heart, I see God shining in His loving glory and He says to Me: “I love You” and I reply to Him: “I love You” and I die and I am recreated at each beat of My heart in this reciprocal kiss... I am amongst you, My dear teachers and companions. But a circle of fire isolates Me from you. Within the circle, God and Myself. And I see you through the Fire of God and so I love you... but I cannot love you according to the flesh, neither shall I ever be able to love anyone according to the flesh. I can only love Him Who loves Me, according to the spirit. This is My destiny. The secular Law of Israel wants every girl to be a wife, and every wife to be a mother. But, while obeying the Law, I must obey the Voice that whispers to Me: “I want You”; I am a virgin and a virgin I shall remain, How shall I succeed? This sweet invisible Presence that is with Me will help Me, because it is Its desire. I am not afraid.

I have no longer My father and mother... and only God knows how My love for whatever human being belonged to Me was burnt in that pain. Now I have but God. I therefore obey Him unquestioningly... I would have done so also regardless of My father and mother, because I have been taught by the Voice that whoever wishes to follow It, must go beyond father and mother. Parents are loving patrols watching the hearts of their children, whom they wish to lead to happiness according to their plans... and they are not aware of other plans leading to infinite happiness... I would have left them My dresses and mantles, to follow the Voice that says to Me: “Come, My beloved Spouse.” I would have left them everything, and the pearls of My tears, for I would have cried having to disobey them, and the instincts of My blood, because I would have defied even death to follow the Voice calling Me, would have told them that there is something greater and sweeter than the love of a father and mother and that is the Voice of God. But now, by His will, I am free from this tie of filial love. Nay, it would not have been a tie. My parents were two just people and God certainly spoke to them as He speaks to Me. They would have followed justice and truth. When I think of them, I imagine them in the quiet expectation among the Patriarchs and I hasten with My sacrifice the coming of the Messiah to open for them the gates of Heaven. I am My own guide on earth, or rather God guides His poor servant giving Her His commands and I fulfill them because it is a joy for Me to obey. When the time comes, I will reveal My secret to the spouse... and he will accept it. »

« But, Mary.... which words will You find to persuade him? You will have the love of a man, the Law and life against you. »

« I shall have God with Me... God will enlighten the heart of the spouse... life will lose the incentives of the senses and become a pure flower with the fragrance of charity. The Law... Anna, don't call Me a blasphemer. I think the Law is about to be changed. By whom, do you think, if it is divine? By the Only One Who can change it. By God. The time is nearer than you think, I tell you.

Because when I was reading Daniel, a great light came to Me from the depths of My heart and I understood the meaning of the enigmatic word. The seventy weeks will be shortened because of the prayers of just people. Does this mean that the number of the years is being changed? No. A prophecy is never wrong. But the measure of the prophetic time is the course of the moon, not of the sun. Therefore I say: “Near is the hour when the Baby born of a Virgin will be heard crying.” Oh! Since this Light that loves Me tells Me so many things, I wish it would tell Me where the happy mother is, that will give birth to the Son of God and Messiah of His people! Barefooted I would travel all over the world, neither cold nor frost, neither dust nor heat, nor wild beast nor hunger would prevent Me from reaching Her and I would say to Her: “Grant Your servant and the servant of the servants of Christ to live under Your roof. I will turn Your millstone and Your press, use Me as a slave to work Your millstone and to watch Your herds, make Me wash the napkins of Your Child... I will work in Your kitchen, at Your oven, wherever You wish.... but receive Me. That I may see Him! And hear His voice! And receive His glance!” And if She did not want Me, I would live at Her doorstep like a beggar, in cold and hot weather, just to hear the voice of the Child Messiah and the echo of His laughter, and see Him passing by... And perhaps one day He would offer Me a piece of bread... Oh! If I were dying with hunger and I were fainting because of extensive fasting, I would not eat that bread. I would hold it close to My heart like a bag of precious pearls and I would kiss it to scent the perfume of Christ's hand and I would never be hungry or cold, because its touch would give Me ecstasy and heat, ecstasy and food ... »

« You ought to be the Mother of the Christ, since You love Him so much! Is that why You wish to remain a virgin? »

« Oh! No. I am misery and dust. I dare not lift My eyes towards the Glory. That is why, rather than the double Veil, beyond which I know dwells the invisible Presence of Jehovah, I love looking into My heart. Over there, there is the terrible God of Sinai. Here, within Me, I see our Father, a loving Face that smiles and blesses Me, because I am small like a little bird, that the wind sustains without feeling its weight and I am weak like the stem of a lily of the valley, that can only bloom and smell sweetly and can present no other force to the wind but its scented and pure sweetness. God, My loving wind! Not because of that. But because the Son of God and of a Virgin, the Holy of the Most Holy One, can but like what in Heaven He chose as his Mother and what on the earth speaks to Him of His Heavenly Father: Purity. If the Law pondered that, if the rabbis, who have complicated the Law with all the quibbles of their teaching, turned their minds to higher horizons and aimed at supernatural things, deserting the human and lucrative affairs which cause them to forget the supreme End, they should, above all, make Purity the main subject of their teaching, so that the King of Israel may find it when He comes. With the olive branches of the Peaceful One, with the Palms of the Triumpher, spread lilies, lilies, lilies... How much Blood the Saviour will have to shed to redeem us! How much indeed! From the thousands of wounds that Isaiah saw on the Man of Sorrows, a stream of Blood is falling, like dew from a porous vase. May this divine Blood not fall where there is desecration and blasphemy, but into chalices of fragrant purity that may receive it and gather it for the purpose of spreading it amongst the diseased and leprous souls and amongst those who are dead to God. Give lilies to wipe with their pure petals the sweat and the tears of Christ! Give lilies for His keen desire of Martyrdom! Oh! Where will that Lily be, that will bear You? Where is the Lily that will quench Your parching thirst, that will become red with Your Blood, will die for the pain of seeing You dying, and will cry over Your bloodless Body? Oh! Christ! Christ! My desire! ... »

Mary is now silent, weeping and overwhelmed.

Anna is also silent for a little while and then with her clear voice of a deeply moved old woman, she asks: « Have You anything else to teach me, Mary? »

Mary rouses. She must think, in Her humility, that Her teacher is reproaching Her and She exclaims: « Oh! Forgive Me! You are My teacher. I am nothing. But this voice comes from My heart. I watch over it, to avoid speaking. But like a river that under the fury of water breaks its embankment, it has now overcome Me and overflowed. Please pay no attention to My words and chastise My presumption. Words of mystery should remain in the depths of one's heart, which God helps in His goodness. I know. But this Invisible Presence is so sweet that I am filled with joy... Anna, please forgive your little servant! »

Anna embraces Her while tears shine on her old wrinkled trembling face. The tears run along her wrinkles, like water along an uneven ground that becomes a trembling swamp. But the old teacher does not provoke laughter, on the contrary her crying excites the deepest respect.

Mary is clasped in her arms, Her little face against Her teacher's breast. And it all finishes thus.

Jesus says:

« Mary remembered God. She dreamt of God. She thought She dreamt. She was only seeing again what She had seen in the splendour of God's Heaven, in the instant She was created to be united to the body conceived on the earth. She shared with God one of God's properties, although in a lesser degree, as was fitting. That is the property of remembering, seeing and foreseeing, which is an attribute of the mighty and perfect intelligence not impaired by Fault. Man was created in the image and likeness of God. One of the likenesses is the capability, for the soul, of remembering, seeing and foreseeing. This explains the faculty for reading into the future. This faculty sometimes comes directly, by God's will, sometimes it is a power of recollection, that rises like the sun in the morning, illuminating a point on the horizon of centuries, already seen in the vision of God.

Such mysteries are too deep to be fully understood by you. But consider.

Can the Supreme Intelligence, the Mind that knows everything, the Sight that sees everything, give you something different from Himself, having created you by an act of His will and a breath of His infinite love, and having made you His children both by your origin and your destination? He gives you it in an infinitesimal part, as the creature cannot contain the Creator. But that part is perfect and complete, although infinitesimal.

What treasure of intelligence God gave man, Adam! The Fall impaired it, but My sacrifice reinstates it and opens the splendour of Intelligence, its wealth, its science for you. How sublime is the human mind united to God by His grace, sharing with God the faculty of knowledge!... The human mind united to God by Grace.

There is no other way. Those who inquisitively seek ultrahuman secrets should remember that. All knowledge that does not come from a soul in grace – and is not in grace who is against God's Law, which is very clear in its commandments – such knowledge comes from Satan. It seldom corresponds to the truth when human matters are concerned, it never corresponds to the truth with regard to superhuman matters. The Demon is in fact the father of falsehood and can but lead on to the path of falsehood. There is no other method of knowing the truth, except the one that comes from God, Who speaks and says or reminds, as a father reminds his son of his paternal house and says to him: “Don't you remember when you used to do this with Me, you saw that, you heard something else? Don't you remember when I used to kiss you goodbye? Do you remember when you saw Me for the first time and you admired the bright light on My face shining on your virginal soul, which, having been just created by Me was still pure and free from the evil that later impaired you? Do you remember when you understood for the first time, in a throb of love, what Love is? Which is the mystery of our Being and Proceeding?” And what the limited capability of a man in grace cannot reach, the Spirit of science clarifies and teaches.

But to possess the Spirit, Grace is needed. To possess Truth and Science, Grace is required. To possess the Father, Grace is necessary. Grace is a tent in which the three Persons dwell, it is a Propitiatory on which the Eternal Father rests and speaks, not from within a cloud, but revealing His face to His faithful children. Saints and just people remember God. They remember the words they heard in the Creating Mind and which the Supreme Goodness revives in their hearts to raise them like eagles to the contemplation of the Truth and to the knowledge of Time.

Mary was full of Grace. The whole One and Trine Grace was in Her. The whole One and Trine Grace prepared Her like a Bride for the Wedding, like a Nuptial Bed for the Offspring, like a Divine Person for Her Maternity and mission. She closes the cycle of the Prophetesses of the Old Testament and opens the period of the “spokesmen of God” of the New Testament.

True Ark of the Word of God, looking into Her immaculate heart, She discovered the words of eternal knowledge, which the finger of God had written there, and She remembered, as all saints do, that She had already heard them when Her immortal soul was being created by God Father, the Creator of all living beings... And if She did not remember everything of Her future mission, the reason is that God leaves some gaps in every human perfection, according to a Law of divine prudence, out of goodness and as a reward to creatures.

Mary, the second Eve, had to achieve Her part of merit in being the Mother of Christ, with a faithful good will, that God exacted also from His Christ to make Him a Redeemer.

The spirit of Mary was in Heaven. Her morale and Her body were on the earth and they had to tread on the earth and on the flesh to reach the spirit and join it to the Spirit in a fruitful embrace. »

A note of mine. All day yesterday I thought I was going to see the news of the death of Her parents being given to Mary by Zacharias, I do not know why. I also thought, in my way, that Jesus would have dealt with the point « remembrance of God by the saints ». This morning, when the vision started, I said to myself: « Here we are, they will now tell Her that She is an orphan » and my heart was already trembling because I would have experienced my own sadness of these past days. Instead there has been absolutely nothing of what I thought I was going to see or hear. Not even one word by mistake. I am very happy about this because it confirms that there is nothing of my own in this work, not even an honest suggestion with regard to one situation. It all comes from a different source. My continuous fear ceases... until the next time because I shall always be afraid of being deceived and deceiving.

11. Mary Will Confide Her Vow to the Spouse God Will Give Her.

3rd September 1944.

What a terrible night! It seemed that the demons were raiding the world. Cannon shots, thunder and lightning, dangers, fears, the suffering because I was lying on a bed which was not mine. And in the middle of all this, there was Mary, like a sweet white flower amongst fire and troubles. She looked a little older than in yesterday's vision, but still a young girl with Her plaits of fair hair over Her shoulders. Her dress was white and Her smile mild and coy: an intimate smile at the glorious mystery enclosed in Her heart. I spent the night comparing Her mild appearance with the ferocity of the world and meditating on Her words of yesterday morning, a song of living charity, as compared to the ferocious hatred of men...

This morning, in the quiet of my room, I saw the following scene.

Mary is still in the Temple. She is now coming out with other virgins from the inner part of the Temple.

There must have been a ceremony because there is the scent of incense in the air of a red sunset. It must be late October, because the sky, already serenely restful as is usual in clear October days, is bending over the gardens of Jerusalem, where the yellow ochre leaves about to fall add gold red spots to the silvery green of the olive-trees.

The crowd, nay the host of white dressed virgins, crosses the rear yard, then climbs the steps, goes through a porch and enters another square yard, not quite so splendid, without any other door except the one leading into it. It must be the yard allocated to the small dwellings of the virgins assigned to the Temple, because each girl moves towards her cell, like a little dove to its nest. They look like a flock of doves that separate after gathering together. They are all speaking in low but joyful voices, before separating. Mary is silent. Before leaving the other girls, She bids them goodbye affectionately and then goes to Her little room in a comer on the right hand side.

One of the teachers, an elderly lady, but not so old as Anna of Phanuel, joins Her. « Mary, the High Priest wants to see You. »

Mary looks at her somewhat surprised, but does not ask any question. She only replies: « I will go at once. »

I do not know whether the large hall, which She enters, is the house of the High Priest or whether it is part of the dwellings of the women assigned to the Temple. I know it is wide and bright, tastefully arranged. In addition to the High Priest, a stately man in his robes, there are also Zacharias and Anna of Phanuel.

Mary bows down on the threshold and does not enter until the High Priest says to Her: « Come in, Mary. Do not be afraid » Mary looks up again and slowly moves forward, not because She is unwilling, but because of a somewhat unintentional gravity, which makes Her look more of a woman.

Anna smiles at Her to encourage Her and Zacharias greets Her: « Peace to you, cousin. »

The High Priest observes Her very carefully and then he remarks to Zacharias: « She is obviously of the stock of David and Aaron...»

« My child, I am aware of Your grace and goodness, I know that every day You are growing in grace and knowledge before God and men. I know that the voice of God whispers His sweetest words to Your heart. I know that You are the Flower of God's Temple and that a third Cherub is before the Testimony since You were here. And I would like Your perfume to continue to rise with the

incense every day. But the Law says differently. You are no longer a girl, but a woman. And every woman must be a wife in Israel to bear a son to the Lord. You shall follow the commandment of the Law. Do not be afraid, do not blush. I am aware of Your royalty. The Law that prescribes that each man is to be given a woman of his own stock will protect You. But even if that were not the case, I would do so, so that Your magnificent blood might not be corrupted. Don't You know anyone of Your stock, Mary, who might be Your husband? »

Mary lifts Her face full of blushes. Her eyes are shining with tears which begin to appear and with a trembling voice She replies: « No, nobody. »

« It is not possible for Her to know anyone, because She came here in Her childhood and David's race has been struck too severely and scattered too widely to allow the various branches to gather like foliage around the royal palm » says Zacharias.

« We shall then leave the choice to God. »

The tears that Mary had restrained so far, gush out and fall on Her trembling mouth. She looks imploringly at Her teacher.

« Mary has consecrated Herself to the Lord for His glory and for the salvation of Israel. She was but a little child just learning to read and write and She had already made Her vow... » says Anne, helping Her.

« Is that why You are crying then? Not because You wish to resist the Law? »

« Just for that... nothing else. I shall obey you, Priest of God. »

« This confirms what I have always been told of You. How long have You been consecrated to the Lord? »

« I have always been, I think. I was not yet in this Temple, and I had already given Myself to the Lord. »

« But are You not the little one who came twelve years ago and asked me to be allowed to enter? »

« Well, then, how can You say that You already belonged to God then? »

« If I look back, I find I was consecrated... I do not remember when I was born, neither do I remember how I began to love My mother and to say to My father: “Father, I am your daughter.”.. But I remember that I gave My heart to God, although I do not know when it started. Perhaps it was with the first kiss that I was able to give, with the first word that I learned to say, with the first step that I took... Yes, I think I find My first recollection of love with My first steady step... My house... near the house there was a garden full of flowers... and there was an orchard and some fields... and there was a spring of water at the rear, under the hill, and the water gushed out from a hollow rock that formed a grotto... it was full of long and thin herbs that hung down forming small green waterfalls everywhere and they seemed to be weeping because the thin little leaves, that seemed an embroidery work, had tiny little drops of water on them and when the drops fell they tinkled like little bells. Also the spring seemed to be singing. And there were birds on the olive and apple-trees above the spring and white doves used to come and wash in the clear water of the fountain... I was no longer thinking of all that, because I had put all My heart in God and, with the exception of My father and mother, whom I loved in life and in death, every other worldly thing had disappeared from My heart... But you have made Me think of it... I must find when I gave Myself to God... and the things of My first years come back to My mind... I loved that grotto, because I heard a voice sweeter than the song of the water and the warbling of the birds say to Me: “Come, My Beloved.” I loved those herbs covered with tinkling and sparkling diamond drops, because I could see in them the sign of My Lord and I used to say to Myself: “O soul of Mine, see how great Your God is, He Who made the cedars of Lebanon for the eagles, has also made these little leaves that bend down under the weight of a little mosquito and He made them for the joy of Your eyes and as a protection for Your little feet.” I loved that silence of pure things: the light breeze, the silvery water, the purity of the doves... I loved the peace that hovered over the little grotto, and descended from the apple and olive-trees, now full of blossoms, then laden with beautiful fruit... And I do not know... the voice seemed to be saying to Me, yes, just to Me: “Come, specious olive; come, sweet apple; come, sealed spring; come, My dove...” Sweet is the love of a father, sweet the love of a mother... sweet their voices calling Me... but this, this one! Oh! in the earthly Paradise I think that she, who became guilty, heard it thus, and I do not understand how she could prefer a hiss to this voice of love, how she could desire any other knowledge that was not God... With My lips which still tasted of My mother's milk, but with My heart full of celestial honey, I then said: “Here I am. I am coming. I am Yours. No one will have My body but You, My Lord, neither will My soul have any other love...” And while saying so, it seemed to Me that I was saying over again things already said and that I was fulfilling a rite already fulfilled, and the chosen Spouse was not a

stranger to Me, because I already knew His ardour and My sight had been formed at His light and My capacity for loving had been fulfilled in His embrace... When? I do not know. Beyond life, I would say, because I feel I always had Him, and that He always had Me, and that I exist because He wanted Me for the joy of His Spirit and Mine... Now I obey you, o Priest. But please tell Me how I am to behave... I have neither father nor mother. Please be My guide. »

« God will give You Your husband and he will be a holy man, because You have entrusted Yourself to God. You will tell him Your vow. »

« And will he agree? »

« I hope so. Pray, my child, that he may understand Your heart. Go now. May God always accompany You.»

Mary withdraws with Anna. Zacharias stays with the High Priest. The vision ends thus.

12. Joseph Is Appointed Husband of the Virgin.

4th September 1944.

I see a rich hall with a beautiful floor, curtains, carpets and inlaid furniture. It must be still part of the Temple: there are priests in it, including Zacharias, and many men of every age, from twenty to fifty approximately.

They are all talking in low but animated voices. They seem to be anxious about something I do not know. They are dressed in their best clothes, which seem to be new or just recently washed and they are obviously dressed for some special feast. Many have removed the piece of cloth covering their heads, others still wear it, particularly the elder ones, whereas the young people show their bare heads, some dark blond, some brown, some black, only one auburn. Their hair is mostly short, but some wear it long down to their shoulders. They do not all know one another, because they observe one another inquisitively. But they seem to be akin somehow, because it is clear that they are all concerned with the same matter.

In a comer I can see Joseph. He is talking to a hale and hearty elderly man. Joseph is about thirty years old. He is a handsome man with short and rather curly hair, dark brown like his beard and his moustache, which cover a well shaped chin and rise towards his rosy-brown cheeks, which are not olive-coloured as is normal in most people with a brown complexion. His eyes are dark, kindly and deep, very serious and perhaps somewhat sad. But when he smiles, as he does now, they become gay and young looking. He is dressed in light brown, very simple but very tidy.

A group of young Levites comes in and they take up position between the door and a long narrow table, which is against the same wall as the door, which is left wide open. A single curtain hanging down to about twenty centimetres from the floor is drawn to cover the empty space.

The curiosity of the group increases. It grows more so when a hand pulls the curtain to one side to admit a Levite, who is carrying in his arms a bundle of dry branches on which one in blossom is gently laid: it looks like a light foam of white petals, with a vague pinkish hue that spreads softer and softer from the centre to the top of the light petals. The Levite lays the bundle of branches on the table very gently to avoid detracting from the miracle of the branch full of flowers among so many dry ones.

Whispering spreads in the hall. They all stretch their necks and sharpen their eyes to see. Zacharias, who is near the table with the other priests, also endeavours to see. But he can see nothing.

Joseph, in his comer, gives a quick glance to the bundle of branches and when the man he was speaking to says something to him, he shakes his head in denial as if to say: « Impossible » and smiles.

A trumpet is heard beyond the curtain. They all become quiet and turn in an orderly way towards the door, which is now completely clear as the curtain has been pulled to one side. The High Priest enters surrounded by elders. They all make a deep bow. The Pontiff goes to the table and begins to speak, standing up.

« Men of the race of David, gathered here at my request, please listen. The Lord has spoken, glory be to Him! From His Glory a ray has descended and, like the sun in springtime, it has given life to a dry branch which has blossomed miraculously, whereas no other branch on earth is in bloom to-day, the last day of the Feast of Dedication, and the snow that fell on the mountains in Judah has

not yet melted and everything is white between Zion and Bethany. God has spoken and has made Himself the father and the guardian of the Virgin of David Who has Him alone as Her protection. A holy girl, the glory of the Temple, She deserved the word of God to learn the name of a husband agreeable to the Eternal One. And he must be very just to be chosen by the Lord as the protector of the Virgin so dear to Him! For this reason our sorrow in losing Her is alleviated and all worries about Her destiny as a wife cease. And to the man appointed by God we entrust with full confidence the Virgin blessed by God and by ourselves. The name of the husband is Joseph of Jacob of Bethlehem, of the tribe of David, a carpenter in Nazareth in Galilee. Joseph: come forward. It is an order of the High Priest ... »

There is a lot of whispering. Heads move round, eyes cast inquisitive glances, hands make signs: there are expressions of disappointment and relief. Someone, particularly amongst the older people, must be happy that it was not his fate.

Joseph, blushing and embarrassed moves forward. He is now near the table, in front of the Pontiff, whom he has greeted reverently.

« Everyone must come here to see the name engraved on the branch. And everyone must take his own branch to make sure that there is no deception.»

The men obey. They look at the branch gently held by the High Priest and then each takes his own: some break it, some keep it. They all look at Joseph. Some look and are silent, others look and congratulate him. The elderly man to whom Joseph was speaking before, exclaims: « I told you, Joseph! Who feels less certain, is the one who wins the game! » They have all now passed before the Pontiff.

The High Priest gives Joseph his branch in bloom, he lays his hand on his shoulder and says to him: « The spouse the Lord has presented you with, is not rich, as you know. But all virtues are in Her. Be more and more worthy of Her. There is no flower in Israel as beautiful and pure as She is. Please, all go out now. You, Joseph, stay here. And you, Zacharias, since you are Her relative, please bring in the bride.»

They all go out, except the High Priest and Joseph. The curtain is drawn once again over the door.

Joseph is standing in a very humble attitude, near the Priest. There is silence, then the Priest says to Joseph: « Mary wishes to inform you of a vow She made. Please help Her shyness. Be good to Her, Who is so good.»

« I will put my strength and my manly authority at Her service and no sacrifice on Her behalf will be heavy for me. Be sure of that. »

Mary enters with Zacharias and Anna of Phanuel.

« Come, Mary » says the Pontiff. « Here is the spouse that God has destined to You. He is Joseph of Nazareth. You will therefore go back to Your own town. I will leave You now. May God give You His blessing. May the Lord protect You and bless You, may He show His face to You and have mercy on You. May He turn His face to You and give You peace. »

Zacharias goes out escorting the Pontiff. Anna congratulates Joseph and then she goes out, too.

The betrothed are now facing each other. Mary, full of blushes, is standing with Her head bowed. Joseph, who is also red in the face, looks at Her and tries to find the first words to be said. He eventually finds them and a bright smile lights up his eyes. He says: « I welcome you, Mary. I saw You when You were a little baby, only a few days old... I was a friend of Your father's and I have a nephew, the son of my brother Alphaeus, who was a great friend of Your mother. He was her little friend, because he is only eighteen years old, and when You were not yet born, he was only a little boy and he cheered up Your sad mother who loved him so much. You do not know us because You were only a little girl when You came here. But everyone in Nazareth loves You and they all think and speak of Joachim's little Mary, Whose birth was a miracle of the Lord, Who made the barren old lady blossom wonderfully... And I remember the evening You were born... We all remember it because of the prodigy of a heavy rain that saved the country and of a violent storm during which the thunderbolts did not damage even a stem of heather and it ended with such a large and beautiful rainbow that the like has never been seen again. And then... who does not remember Joachim's happiness? He dandled You showing You to his neighbours... As if You were a flower that had descended from Heaven, he admired You and wanted everyone to admire You, a happy old father who died talking about his Mary, Who was so beautiful and good and Whose words were so full of wisdom end grace... He was quite right in admiring You and in saying that there is no other woman lovelier than You are! And Your mother? She filled Your house and the neighbourhood with her songs and she sang like a skylark in springtime when she was carrying You, and afterwards when she held You in her arms. I

made a cradle for You. A tiny little cradle, with roses carved all over it, because Your mother wanted it like that. Perhaps it is still in the house... I am old, Mary. When You were born I was beginning to work. I was already working... I would never have believed that I was going to have You as a spouse! Perhaps Your parents would have died a happier death if they had known, because they were my friends. I buried Your father, mourning over his death with a sincere heart, because he was a good teacher to me.»

Mary raises Her face, little by little, taking heart, as She hears Joseph speak to Her thus, and when he mentions the cradle She smiles gently and when Joseph speaks of Her father, She holds out Her hand to him and says: « Thank you, Joseph. » A very timid and gentle « thank you.»

Joseph holds Her little jasmine hand in his short and strong hands of a carpenter and he caresses it with an affection that expresses more and more confidence. Perhaps he is waiting for more words. But Mary is silent once again. He then goes on: « As You know, Your house is still intact, with the exception of the part that was demolished by order of the consul, to build a road for the waggons of the Romans. But the fields, what is left of them -You know that because of Your father's illness much of the property had to be disposed of- have been rather neglected. For over three years the trees and the vines have never been pruned and the land is untilled and hard. But the trees that saw You when You were a little girl are still there, and if You agree, I will at once take care of them.»

« Thank you, Joseph. But you have your work ... »

« I will work in Your orchard in the morning and in the evening. The days are getting longer and longer. By springtime I want everything to be in order for Your happiness. Look: this is a branch of the almond tree near the house. I wanted to pick it -the hedge is so ruined that one can enter anywhere, but I will remake it solid and strong- I wanted to pick it, because I thought that if I should be the chosen one, You would have been pleased to have a flower from Your garden. But I was not expecting to be the chosen one as I am a Nazirite and I have obeyed because it is an order of the Priest, not because I wish to get married. Here is the branch, Mary. With it I offer You my heart, that, like it, has bloomed up till now only for the Lord and is now blooming for You, my spouse.»

Mary takes the branch. She is moved and looks at Joseph with a face that has become more and more confident and bright. She feels certain of him. When he says to Her « I am a Nazirite (1) », Her face becomes bright and She takes courage: « Also I am all of the Lord, Joseph. I do not know whether the High Priest told you ... »

« He only told me that You are good and pure, that You wish to inform me of a vow, and that I must be good to you. Speak, Mary. Your Joseph wants You to be happy in all Your desires. I do not love You my with body. I love You with my soul, holy girl given to me by God! Please see in me a father and a brother, in addition to a husband. And open Your heart to me as to a father and rely on me as on a brother ... »

« Since My childhood I have consecrated Myself to the Lord. I know this is not the custom in Israel. But I heard a voice requesting My virginity as a sacrifice of love for the coming of the Messiah. Israel has been waiting for Him for such a long time!... It is not too much to forgo the joy of being a mother for that! »

Joseph gazes at Her as if he wanted to read Her heart, then he takes Her tiny hands which are still holding the branch in blossom and he says: « I will join my sacrifice to Yours and we shall love the Eternal Father so much with our chastity that He will send His Saviour to the world earlier, and will allow us to see His Light shining in the world. Come, Mary. Let us go before His House and Nazareth to prepare everything for You, in Your house, if You wish to go there, or elsewhere if You wish so.»

« In My house... There was a grotto down at the bottom... Is it still there? »

« It is, but it is no longer Yours... But I will build another one for You where it will be cool and quiet during the hottest hours of the day. I will make it as much as possible identical to the older one. And tell me: whom do You want with You? »

« Nobody. I am not afraid. Alphaeus' mother, who has always come to see Me, will keep Me company during the day. At night I prefer to be alone. No harm can befall Me.»

« And now I am there, too. When shall I come and get You? »

« Whenever you wish, Joseph.»

« Then I will come as soon as the house is ready. I will not touch anything. I

want You to find it as Your mother left it. But I want it to be bright and clean, to receive You without any sadness. Come, Mary. Let us go and tell the Most High that we bless Him.»

I do not see anything else. But I feel in my heart the sense of confidence that Mary feels.

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(1) Hebrew who had taken special vows of abstinence, see Numbers, 6.

13. Wedding of the Virgin and Joseph.

5th September 1944.

How beautiful Mary is dressed as a bride, among Her joyful friends and teachers! There is also Elizabeth amongst them.

She is dressed in snow-white linen, so soft and refined that it looks like precious silk. She is wearing round Her slender waist a burin wrought belt in gold and silver, made of medallions held together by little chains – each medallion is an embroidery of gold threads on heavy silver burnished by age. Probably because the belt is too long for Her, still a gentle girl, the last three medallions hang down in the front and fall amongst the folds of the very wide dress that is so long as to form a sort of train. On Her feet She is wearing white leather sandals with silver buckles.

Around Her neck the dress is held by a chain of small gold roses and silver filigree, reproducing on a smaller scale the design of the belt. Running through large holes on the loosely cut neck, the chain gathers the cloth and forms a kind of small frill. Mary's neck emerges from the white pleated cloth with the grace of a stem wrapped in a precious fabric and seems even more slender and whiter than ever, the stem of a lily ending in a lily-like face, which is even paler than usual for the excitement – and purer. The face of a most pure victim.

Her hair no longer hangs over Her shoulders. It is arranged in a knot of plaits in a charming style, and precious burnished silver hairpins, all made with embroidered filigree at the top, hold it in position. Her mother's veil is placed over the plaits and it falls in beautiful folds under the precious thin plate that encircles Her snow-white forehead. The veil falls down Her sides and since Mary is not as tall as Her mother, it falls lower than Her hips, whereas it reached Anne's waist. She has nothing on Her hands, but is wearing bracelets on Her wrists. Her wrists are so thin that the heavy bracelets of Her mother cover the back of Her hands and would fall to the ground if She tossed Her hands.

Her friends gaze upon Her and admire Her. They twitter gaily like sparrows asking questions and expressing their admiration.

« Are they Your mother's? »

« They are antique, are they not? »

« How beautiful, Sarah, this belt is! »

« And what about this veil, Susan? How refined it is. Just look at those lilies woven in it! »

« Let me see Your bracelets, Mary. Were they Your mother's? »

« Yes, she wore them. But they are of My father's mother.»

« Oh! Look. They have the seal of Solomon interwoven with thin little branches of palm and olive-trees and amongst these there are lilies and roses. Oh! Who did such perfect and refined work? »

« They belong to the House of David » explains Mary. « The women of the family have worn them for centuries, when they get married and they are left in heritage to the heiress.» « Certainly! You are the heiress... »

« Did they bring You everything from Nazareth? »

« No, they did not. When My mother died, My cousin took My trousseau to her house to keep it safely. Now she has brought it back to Me.»

« Where is it? Where is it? Show it to Your friends.»

Mary does not know what to do... She would like to be kind, but she is not anxious to pull out all the things which are nicely laid in three heavy trunks.

Her teachers come to Her help: « The groom is about to arrive » they point out. « This is not the moment to cause confusion. Leave Mary alone. You are tiring

Her. Go and get ready.»

The chattering group go away somewhat sulkily. Mary can now enjoy in peace the company of Her teachers who say words of praise and blessing to Her.

Also Elizabeth has come near. And as Mary, deeply moved, is crying because Anna of Phanuel has called Her « daughter » and has kissed Her with true motherly love, Elizabeth says to Her: « Mary, Your mother is not here, and yet she is present. Her soul is rejoicing with Yours. Look, the things that You are wearing are giving You her caresses once again. You can still find in them the flavour of her kisses. One day, a long time ago, the day You came to the Temple, she said to me: “I have prepared Her dresses and Her trousseau, because I wish to be the one who weaves Her linens and makes Her bridal dresses, so that I shall not be absent on the day of Her joy.” And listen. In the last days, when I was assisting her, every evening she wanted to caress Your first little dresses and the ones You are now wearing and she would say: “I can smell the jasmine perfume of my little one and I want Her to perceive here the kiss of Her mummy.” How many kisses on this veil that is now shading Your forehead! There are more kisses than threads!... And when You will wear the cloth woven by her, just think that it was woven more by her motherly love than by the shuttle. And these jewels... Also in hard circumstances they were saved by Your father for You, that You might be beautiful in this hour, as befits a princess of the House of David. Be happy and cheerful, Mary. You are not an orphan, because Your parents are with You and Your husband is a father and a mother to You, such is his perfection... »

« Yes, that is true! I certainly cannot complain. In two months he has been here twice, and today he has come for the third time, facing the rain and the windy weather, to take orders from Me... Fancy: orders from Me who am a poor woman and much younger than he is! And he has denied Me nothing. He does not even wait for Me to ask. I think an angel must tell him what I want, because he tells Me before I can speak. The last time he said: “Mary, I think that You prefer to stay in Your father's house. Since You are a daughter heiress, You can do so, if that is Your wish. I will come to Your house. However, in order to accomplish the rite, You will go for one week to my brother Alphaeus' house. Mary already loves You so much. And from there the procession will start that will take You to Your house in the evening of the wedding day.” Was that not very kind of him? It did not even matter to him if the people should say that he has not a house which I would like... I would have liked it, because he is there and he is so good. Certainly... I prefer My own house... because of memories... Oh! Joseph is so good! »

« What did he say about Your vow? You haven't told me yet.»

« He made no objection. On the contrary, when I told him the reasons, he said: “I will join my sacrifice to Yours.”»

« He is a holy young man » says Anna of Phanuel.

The « holy young man » is coming in just now in the company of Zacharias.

He is really magnificent. All dressed in gold yellow he seems an eastern sovereign. A splendid belt supports his bag and his dagger, the former of morocco embroidered in gold, the latter with a morocco sheath and gold decorations. On his head he is wearing a turban, that is the usual piece of cloth worn like a hood, as is still customary amongst certain people in Africa, such as the bedouins, and it is held by a precious ring, a thin wire of gold, to which there are tied some small bunches of myrtle. He has on a new mantle, with fringes, and he wears it with great dignity. He is sparkling with joy. He has in his hands small bunches of myrtle in bloom.

« Peace to you, my spouse! » he greets Her. « Peace to everyone.» When he has received a reply to his greetings, he says: « I saw Your joy the day I gave You a branch from Your garden. I thought I should bring You some myrtle which I picked near the grotto You love so much. I wanted to bring You some of the roses that are already beginning to bloom near Your house. But roses do not last long. After a journey of several days I would have arrived here with only the thorns. And I want to offer You, my dear, only roses and spread Your way with soft scented flowers, so that Your feet may rest on them without touching anything dirty or harsh.»

« Oh! Thank you, you are so good! But what did you do to keep it so fresh?»

« I tied a vase to the saddle and I put in it the branches of the flowers in bud. During the journey they have burst into flower. Here they are, Mary. May Your forehead be garlanded with purity, the symbol of a bride, which, however, is much inferior to the purity of Your heart.»

Elizabeth and the teachers adorn Mary with a little garland of flowers which they form attaching to the precious ring the little white bunches of myrtle and

they insert small white roses which they take from a vase placed on a small chest.

Mary is on the point of taking Her large white mantle to put it on Her shoulders, but Joseph precedes Her and helps Her to fasten it at the top of Her shoulders with two silver buckles. The teachers then arrange the folds with loving care.

Everything is ready. While they are awaiting I do not know what, Joseph takes Mary to one side and says to Her: « I have pondered a lot on Your vow these last days. I told You that I will share it with You. But the more I think of it, the more I realise that a temporary Naziritism is not sufficient, even if renewed several times. I have understood You, Mary. I do not yet deserve the word of Light, but a murmur of it comes to me. And it causes me to read Your secret, at least in its main lines. I am a poor ignorant man, Mary. A poor workman. I know nothing of letters and I have no treasures. But I place at Your feet my treasure: my absolute chastity, forever, to be worthy of being beside You, Virgin of God, “my sister spouse, enclosed garden, sealed fountain,” as our Ancestor says, who perhaps wrote the Song of Songs seeing You... I shall be the guardian of this garden of spices in which are the most precious fruits and from which a spring of living water gushes out in a gentle surge: Your kindness, o spouse, has conquered my soul with Your innocence, o most beautiful one. You are more beautiful than dawn, You are a sun that shines because Your heart shines, You are full of love for Your God and for the world, to which You wish to give a Saviour with Your sacrifice of a woman. Come, my beloved spouse » and he takes Her gently by the hand and leads Her towards the door. All the others follow them and outside the joyful companions, all dressed in white and wearing veils, join them.

They go through yards and porches, among the crowds that watch them, up to a point that is not the Temple, but seems to be a hall used for ceremonies, because there are lamps and rolls of parchment as in synagogues. They go as far as a tall lectern, almost a desk, and they wait. The others stand orderly behind them. Other priests and curious people gather at the end.

The High Priest enters solemnly.

There is whispering amongst the curious crowd: « Is he going to marry them? »

« Yes, because She is of royal and sacerdotal rank. A flower of David and Aaron, the bride is a virgin of the Temple. The groom is of the tribe of David.»

The Pontiff joins the right hand of the bride with the right hand of the groom and he blesses them solemnly: « May the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob be with you. May He join you and fulfill His blessing in you giving you His peace and numerous descendants with a long life and a happy death in the bosom of Abraham.» He then withdraws as solemn as when he entered.

The promise has been exchanged. Mary is Joseph's spouse. (1)

They all go out and they orderly move to a hall where they stipulate the wedding contract in which it is stated that Mary, the daughter heiress of Joachim of David and of Anne of Aaron gives Joseph, as Her dowry, Her house and the estate attached to it, Her personal property and what She has inherited from Her father.

It is now all over.

The betrothed go out into the yard and they move toward the exit near the dwellings of the women assigned to the Temple. A comfortable heavy waggon is waiting for them. A tent is laid over it as a shelter and Mary's heavy trunks are already loaded on it.

After farewell words, kisses and tears, blessings and advice, Mary gets into the waggon with Elizabeth, while Joseph and Zachar ias sit in the front. They have taken off their best mantles and are all wearing dark ones. The waggon departs at the heavy trot of a big dark horse. The Temple walls and then the city walls are receding and here is the country, new, fresh, blooming in the early springtime sunshine, with the corn a few inches off the ground, its little leaves, which look like emeralds, waving at a gentle breeze, which carries the scent of peach and apple flowers, of clover flowers and of wild mint.

Mary is weeping silently, under Her veil, and now and again She removes the tent and looks at the far away Temple and the city She has left...

The vision ends thus.

(1) In Israel, also at the time of Our Lady, a marriage comprised two phases: the engagement and the wedding. The rite of the engagement, by which the marriage was essentially established, implied that the young couple should be blessed by a priest while holding each other's right hand; a legal contract was made in regard to property and rights. During this first phase they did not live together. The wedding was the solemn accomplishment of the contract and the couple began to live together.

Jesus says:

« What does the Book of Wisdom say, singing her praises? “Within wisdom is a spirit intelligent, holy, unique, manifold, subtle.” And it goes on listing her endowments, ending the period with the words... “almighty, all-surveying, penetrating all intelligent, pure and most subtle spirits. She is so pure she pervades and permeates all things. She is a breath of the power of God, hence nothing impure can find a way into her... image of His goodness. Although alone she can do all, herself unchanging, she makes all things new, she passes into holy souls, she makes them friends of God and Prophets.”

You have seen how Joseph, not by human culture, but by supernatural education can read in the sealed book of the Immaculate Virgin and how he borders upon prophetic truths by his “seeing” a superhuman mystery where others could only see a great virtue. Since he is imbued with this wisdom, which is a breath of the power of God and a definite emanation of the Almighty, he sails with a secure spirit the sea of this mystery of grace which is Mary. He penetr ates with Her spiritual contacts, in which, rather than the lips, the two spirits speak to each other in the sacred silence of their souls, where God only can hear voices and those who are well liked by God, because they are His faithful servants and are full of Him.

The wisdom of the Just man, which increases by his union and closeness to Mary, Full of Grace, prepares him to penetrate the deepest secrets of God and enables him to protect and defend them from the snares of man and demon. And in the meantime it invigorates him. It makes the just man a saint, and the saint the guardian of the Spouse and of the Son of God.

Without removing the seal of God, he, a chaste man, now elevating his chastity to angelical heroism, can read the word of fire written by God on the virginal diamond, and he reads what his wisdom does not repeat, but is greater than what Moses read on the stone tablets. And to prevent profane eyes from prying into the mystery, he places himself, seal upon the seal, as an archangel of fire on the threshold of Paradise, within which the Eternal Father takes His delight, “walking in the cool of the evening” and talking to Her Who is His love, Garden of lilies in bloom, Air scented with perfumes, fresh morning Breeze, lovely Star, Delight of God. The new Eve is there, in front of him, not bone from his bones, nor flesh from his flesh, but companion of his life, living Ark of God, Whom he receives in guardianship and Whom he must return to God as pure as he received Her.

“Spouse to God” was written in the immaculate pages of that mystical book... And when in the hour of trial suspicion hissed its torture, he suffered as a man and as a servant of God, as no man suffered, because of the suspected sacrilege. But this was to be the future trial. Now, in this time of grace, he sees and he puts himself at the most true service of God. Then the storm of the trial will come, as for all saints, to be tested and made coadjutors of God.

What do you read in Leviticus? “Tell Aaron, your brother, that he must not enter the sanctuary beyond the Veil in front of the Throne of mercy that is over the Ark, whenever he chooses. He may die; for I appear in a cloud on the Throne of mercy, unless he has done these things first: he will offer a young bull for a sacrifice for sin and a ram for holocaust, he is to wear a linen tunic and cover his nakedness with a linen girdle.”

And Joseph really enters the sanctuary of God, when and as far as God wants, beyond the veil that conceals the Ark on which the Spirit of God hovers and he offers himself and will offer the Lamb, a holocaust for the sin of the world and in expiation of such sin. And he does that dressed in linen, and mortifying his virile limbs to abolish their faculty of sensation, which once, at the beginning of times, did triumph, impairing the rights of God on man and which will now be crushed in the Son, in the Mother and in the putative father, to lead men back to Grace and restore the right of God on man. He does that with his perpetual chastity.

Was Joseph not on Golgotha? Do you think he is not amongst the co-redeemers? I tell you solemnly that he was the first and therefore he is great in the eyes of God. Great for his sacrifice, his patience, his perseverance, his faith. Which faith is greater than this one that believed without seeing the miracles of the Messiah?

Praise be to My putative father, an example to you of what you lack most: purity, faithfulness and perfect love. Praise be to the magnificent reader of the sealed Book, imbued with Wisdom to be able to understand the mysteries of Grace and chosen to protect the Salvation of the world from the snares of all enemies.»

14. Joseph and Mary arrive in Nazareth.

6th September 1944.

A very blue sky of a mild February is over the hills of Galilee. The gentle hills that I have never seen in the early history of Mary, are now instead as familiar to me as if I were born there.

The main road is fresh looking because of last night's rain and it is neither dusty nor muddy. It is hard and clean as if were the street of a town and it runs between two hedges of hawthorn in bloom.

The hedges are so white that they look like a snowfall. The scenary is broken by the monstrous conglomerations of cacti, with thick leaves like palettes, spiked with stings and decorated with the huge granades of their peculiar fruits, grown without stem on the top of the leaves. Because of their colour and shape, the cactus leaves always give me the impression of sea depths and coral reefs, of jellyfish and other deep sea animals.

Beyond the hedgerows, there is the country. The purpose of the hedges is to fence in the grounds of the various owners, and thus they stretch in every direction forming a strange geometrical design of curves and angles, lozenges, squares, semicircles and the most unbelievable acute and obtuse angled triangles, a design all sprayed with white, like a strange ribbon thrown over the country just for fun and over which hundreds and hundreds of birds fly, chirp, sing, in the joy of love, while working to build their nests. In the fields the corn is taller than in Judaea. The meadows are full of flowers and there are hundreds of fruit-trees all in full bloom, that look like clouds of vegetables white, red, pink, with all gradations of these colours: they seem to be an answer to the light clouds in the sky which the setting sun paints pink, light lilac, periwinkle violet, opal blue and coral orange.

With the light evening breeze the first petals fall from the trees in blossom and they seem a swarm of little butterflies searching for pollen on wild flowers. And from tree to tree there are festoons of vines still barren, except at the top of the festoons, where there is more sunshine, and the first little innocent, surprised, trembling leaves are beginning to open.

The sun is setting peacefully in the sky, which is so benign in its deep blue. The light makes it even more limpid and causes the snow on Mount Hermon and other far away mountain tops to shine.

A waggon is moving along the road. It is the waggon that is carrying Joseph, Mary and Her cousins. Their journey is at an end.

Mary is looking with the eagerness of those who want to know, nay want to recognise what they have already seen, but can no longer remember and they smile when a faint memory comes back to them and rests, like a light, on this or that thing, on this or that point. Elizabeth, Zacharias and Joseph help Her to remember, pointing to various places and houses. Nazareth is already showing its houses, spread out on the undulations of its hills. Lit up from the left by the setting sun, it shows the white of its low wide little houses bordered in pink and surmounted by terraces. Some of them, fully illuminated by the sun, seem to be near a fire, so red are the fronts of the houses because of the sun, that also lights up the water of the ponds and of the low wells, with practically no parapets, and from which squeaky pails of water are being pulled up for the houses as well as water-bags for the orchards.

Children and women rush to the side of the road and look into the waggon and greet Joseph who is well known to them. But they are somewhat embarrassed and shy with regard to the other three travellers.

But when the waggon enters the little town, there is no longer any embarrassment or shyness. Many people of all ages are gathered at the entrance of the village under a rustic arch of flowers and branches, and there is an outburst of shrill voices and a tossing of branches and flowers as soon as the waggon appears from behind the corner of the last house lying before it in the country. It is the women, girls and children of Nazareth greeting the bride. The men, more grave, are standing behind the excited and shouting crowd and they are greeting solemnly.

The waggon is not covered now by the tent, which was removed before reaching the village, both because the sun was no longer annoying them and to enable Mary to see Her native land. Mary thus appears in all the beauty of a lovely flower. White and blonde like an angel, She smiles lovingly at everybody: at the children who throw Her flowers and kisses; at the girls of Her own age who call Her by name; at the elderly women who bless Her with their cheerful voices. She bows to the men and particularly to one who is perhaps the rabbi or the elder of the town.

The waggon proceeds slowly along the main road, followed for a considerable distance by the crowd, for whom the arrival is an event.

« There is Your house, Mary » says Joseph, pointing with his whip to a little house which is just under the edge of an undulation of the hill. Behind the house there is a lovely large kitchen garden all in bloom, at the end of which there is a small olive-grove. Behind the olive-grove there is the usual boundary hedge of hawthorn and cactus. The fields that once belonged to Joachim, are farther beyond...

« As You can see, very little is left for You» says Zacharias. « Your father's illness was a long and expensive one. Also the expenses to repair the damage done by the Romans were heavy. See? The road took away the three main rooms and the house was cut down in size. In order to enlarge it, without excessive expenses, a part of the mountain was adapted, where the grotto is. Joachim kept his supplies there and Anne her looms. You will do as You think best.»

« Oh! It does not matter if only little is left. It will be sufficient for Me. I will work ... »

« No, Mary. » It is Joseph who is speaking. « I will work. You will do nothing but weave and sew things for the house. I am young and strong and I am Your husband. Please do not humiliate me with Your work. »

« I shall do as you wish. »

« Yes, in this case I do want it. In everything else Your wishes are the law. But not in regard to this.»

They have arrived. The waggon stops.

Two women and two men, about forty and fifty years of age respectively, are at the entrance and many children and young boys are with them. « May God give You peace, Mary » says the elder man and one of the women approaches Mary embracing and kissing Her.

« He is my brother Alphaeus and she is Mary, his wife, and these are their children. They have come to greet You and to tell You that their house is Yours if You wish so » says Joseph.

« Yes, come Mary, if it is painful for You to live by Yourself. The country is beautiful in springtime and our house is in the middle of fields full of flowers. And You will be the loveliest flower there » says Mary of Alphaeus.

« Thank you, Mary. I would come so willingly. But I am so anxious to see and recognise My own home. I left it when I was a little girl, and I have forgotten what it is like... Now I have found it again... and I feel I have found also My lost mother, My beloved father, and that I can hear the echo of their words... and I smell the perfume of their last breathing. I feel I am no longer an orphan, because once again I have around Me the embrace of these walls... Please understand Me, Mary.» Mary's voice trembles and Her eyes begin to shine with tears.

Mary of Alphaeus replies to Her: « As You wish, my dear. I want You to feel that I am Your sister and friend, and also a mother to You, since I am so much older than You are. »

The other woman has come forward: « Hello, Mary. I am Sarah, Your mother's friend. I saw You being born. And this is Alphaeus, Alphaeus' nephew, and a great friend of Your mother. What I did for Your mother, I am willing to do for You, if You wish so. See? My house is the nearest to Yours and Your fields are now ours. But if You want to come, come whenever You wish. We will open a passage through the hedge and we shall be together, yet each of us will be at home. This is my husband.»

« Thank you all and for everything. Thank you for all the good you did to My parents and for your love for Me. May God the Almighty bless you for it.»

The heavy trunks are unloaded and carried into the house. They go in. I now recognise the little house of Nazareth, as it was during the life of Jesus.

Joseph takes Mary by Her hand and they go in. On the threshold he says to Her: « And now, on this threshold, I want a promise from You. That whatever may happen to You, whatever You may need, there is no other friend whom to apply to but Joseph and that, for no reason whatsoever, may You worry all by Yourself. Remember that I am everything for You and it will be a joy for me to make Your life happy and, since happiness is not always in our power, I will at least make it peaceful and safe.»

« I do promise, Joseph.»

The door and windows are opened. The last searching rays of the sun enter.

Mary has now taken off Her mantle and veil, because, with the exception of the myrtle flowers, She has still Her bridal dress on. She then goes into the kitchen garden in bloom. She looks and smiles. Still held by the hand by Joseph, She

goes round the garden. She looks as if She were taking possession of a lost place.

And Joseph shows Her his work: « See? I dug a hole here to gather the rain water, because these vines are always thirsty. I cut off the oldest branches of this olive tree to strengthen it and I transplanted these apple trees because two of them had withered. Over there I planted some fig trees. When they grow up they will shelter the house both from the excessive heat of the sun and from inquisitive people. The pergola is the old one. I only changed the rotten poles and I did some trimming. It will give You a lot of, grapes, I hope. And here, look» and he leads Her proudly towards the side of the hill at the back of the house, which limits the northern side of the garden, « here I dug a grotto and I have reinforced it and when these little plants take roots, it will be almost identical to the one You had. There is no spring... but I hope to convey a little stream there. I will work in the long summer evenings, when I come to see You...»

« What do you mean? » asks Alphaeus. « Are you not getting married this summer? »

« No. Mary wants to weave Her woollen clothes, the only things missing from Her trousseau. And I agree with Her. Mary is so young that it does not matter if we wait for a year or more. In the meantime She will get used to the house...»

« Well! You have always been somewhat different from other people and you still are. I do not know who would not be in a hurry to get married to a beautiful flower like Mary, and you are delaying things by months!...»

« A joy awaited for a long time is a joy to be taken delight in more intensely» replies Joseph with a gentle smile.

His brother shrugs his shoulders and asks: « Well, then, when are you thinking of getting married? »

« When Mary is sixteen. After the feast of the Tabernacles. The winter evenings will be sweet for the newly weds!...» and he smiles again looking at Mary. A smile of a gentle secret understanding. A smile of a brotherly chastity giving comfort. He then resumes his tour of the garden. « This is the big room under the mountain. If You agree, I will use it as a workshop when I come here. It is joined to the house, but not in the house. So I will not annoy You with noises and disorder. However, if You wish otherwise...»

« No, Joseph. That is perfectly all right.»

They go back into the house and light the lamps.

« Mary is tired » says Joseph. « Let us leave Her in peace with Her cousins.»

They all say goodbye and go out. Joseph stays for a few moments and speaks to Zacharias in a low voice.

« Your cousin is leaving Elizabeth with You for a little while. Are You happy? I am. Because she will help You... to become a perfect housewife. With her You will be able to arrange Your things and Your furniture, and I will come every evening to help You. With Elizabeth You can purchase the wool and whatever You may need. And I will see to the expenses. Remember, You have promised to come to me for everything. Goodbye, Mary. Sleep the first night as the landlady of this house and may the angel of God make Your sleep peaceful. May the Lord be always with You.»

« Goodbye, Joseph. May you also be under the wings of God's angel. Thank you, Joseph. For everything. As far as I can, I will requite your love with Mine. »

Joseph says goodbye to Her cousins and goes out. And the vision ends with him.

15. Conclusion to the Pre-Gospel.

Jesus says:
« The cycle is over. It has been so sweet and gentle and with it your Jesus has taken you out of the turmoil of these days without any shock. Like a baby enveloped in soft woollen swaddling clothes and laid on soft cushions, you have been immersed in those blissful visions so that you might not perceive the cruelty of men who hate instead of loving one another, and be terrorised by such ferocity. You could no longer endure certain situations, and I do not want you to die because of them, because I take care of My “mouthpiece”.

The reason why victims have been tortured by utter despair is about to cease in the world. Therefore, Mary, the time of your dreadful suffering for too many reasons in such strong contrast with your feelings, will come to an end as well.

But your suffering will not cease: you are a victim. But part of it: the latter, will cease. Then the day will come when I will say to you, as I said to Mary of Magdala when she was dying: “Rest. It is now time for you to rest. Give Me your thorns. It is now time for roses. Rest and wait. I bless you, o blessed soul.”

That is what I was saying to you, and it was a promise which you did not understand, as the time was approaching when you were to be immersed in, rolled over, chained and filled with thorns, in deepest darkness... I am repeating that to you now, with the joy which only the Love, Which I am, can feel when It can stop one of Its beloved from suffering. I am now telling you that that time of sacrifice is ceasing. And I, Who know, say to you, on behalf of the world which does not know, on behalf of Italy, of Viareggio, of this little village, where you brought Me – meditate on the meaning of these words – I say to you “thanks” as is due to holocausts for their sacrifices.

When I showed you Cecily, the virgin-spouse, I told you that she became impregnated with My perfumes, behind which she dragged her husband, brother-in-law, servants, relatives, friends. You played the role of Cecily in this mad world, and you do not know, but I am telling you, I Who know.

You became saturated with Me, with My word, you informed people of My desires and the best among them understood and following you, a victim, many more have risen, and if your fatherland and the places dearer to you are not completely ruined, that is due to the fact that many victims have been consumed after your example and your ministry. Thank you, My blessed one. But go on. I have great need to save the earth, to buy the earth again, and you victims are the money.

May Wisdom, which taught saints and teaches you directly, elevate you more and more in the understanding of the Science of life and in its practice. Pitch your little tent near the house of the Lord. Nay, pitch the pegs of your own dwelling in the abode of Wisdom and live there without ever coming out. You will rest, under the protection of the Lord Who loves you, like a bird among flowery branches and He will shelter you from all spiritual storms and you will be in the light of the glory of God, from Whom words of peace and truth will descend for you.

Go in peace. I bless you, o blessed soul.»

Immediately afterwards Mary says:

« A present to Mary for her feast from Mother. A chain of presents. And if there are some thorns amongst them, do not complain to the Lord Who has loved you as He has loved few people. I told you at the beginning: “Write about Me. All your sorrows will be comforted.” You can now see that it was true. This gift had been put aside for this time of excitement, because we do not take care only of the spirit, but we also look after matter, which is not the queen but a useful servant to the spirit in fulfilling its mission.

Be grateful to the Most High, Who is really a Father to you, also in an affectionately human sense, and lulls you with sweet ecstasies to conceal from you what would frighten you. Love Me more and more. I have led you into the secrecy of My early years. You now know everything about Mother. Love Me as daughter and sister in our destiny of victims. And love God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit with perfect love. The blessing of the Father, of the Son and of the Spirit passes through My hands, is scented with My motherly love for you and it descends and rests upon you. Be supernaturally happy.»

16. The Annunciation.

8th March 1944.

What I see. Mary, a very young girl: She looks fifteen years old, at most. She is in a small rectangular room: a room most suitable for a girl. Along one of the longer walls, there is a bed: a low bed, without bedstead, covered with thick mats or carpets, which appear to be laid on boards or cane-trellis, because they are very stiff and without any curve, as is usual with our beds. Against the other wall there is a kind of bookcase with an oil lamp, some rolls of parchment, some needlework carefully folded: it seems to be embroidery work.

Beside the bookcase, towards the door, which opens onto the kitchen garden and which is now covered by a curtain gently moved by a light breeze, there is the Virgin sitting on a low stool. She is spinning some linen which is as white as snow and as soft as silk. Her little hands, just a little darker than linen, are whirling the spindle very quickly. Her beautiful young face is slightly bent

forward and She is smiling gently as if She were caressing or following some sweet thought.

There is a great silence in the little house and in the kitchen garden. There is a great peace both on Mary's face and in the surrounding place. There is peace and order. Everything is neat and tidy and the room, although very modest looking and very modestly furnished -it is almost as bare as a cell- has something austere and regal about it because of its cleanliness and the care with which everything is laid: the clothes on the bed, the rolls, the lamp, the copper pitcher near the lamp, with a bunch of branches in bloom in it. I do not know whether they are peach or pear branches. They are certainly branches of a fruit-tree, with pinkish white flowers.

Mary begins to sing in a low voice, then She raises Her voice slightly. But She does not sing loudly. Still, it is a voice vibrating in the little room and one can perceive the vibration of Her soul in it. I do not understand the words as they are spoken in Hebrew. But as now and again She repeats « Jehovah » I realize that it is a sacred song, perhaps a psalm. Mary is probably remembering the songs of the Temple. And it must be a happy memory because She lays Her hands in Her lap, while still holding the yarn and the spindle, and lifts Her head leaning against the wall: Her face is beautifully flushed and Her eyes are lost behind... I wonder what sweet thought. Her eyes are shining with tears, which appear but do not overflow and they make Her eyes look larger. And yet those eyes are smiling, they are smiling at a thought they can see and by which Mary is abstracted from the earthly world. Mary's face, flushed and girded by the plaits She wears rolled up like a crown round Her head, seems a beautiful flower, as it emerges from Her plain white dress.

The song changes into a prayer: « Most High Lord God, do not delay any longer in sending Your Servant to bring peace to the world. Grant us the favourable time and the pure and prolific virgin for the coming of Your Christ. Father, Holy Father, grant Me, Your servant to offer My life for this purpose. Grant Me to die after seeing Your Light and Your Justice on earth and after knowing that our Redemption has been accomplished. O Holy Father, send the Promise of the Prophets to the earth. Send the Redeemer to Your maidservant, so that in the hour of My death, Your abode may be opened to Me, as its gates have already been opened by Your Christ for all those who have hoped in You. Come, come, O Spirit of the Lord. Come to the faithful who are expecting You. Come, Prince of Peace!...» Mary remains absorbed thus...

The curtain moves fast, as if someone behind it ventilated it or shook it to draw it. And a pearl white light mixed with pure silver makes the slightly yellow walls clearer and makes the colours of the cloths brighter and Mary's raised face more spiritual. And in such light, while the curtain is still drawn on the mystery to be accomplished, the Archangel prostrates himself: the curtain no longer moves: it is hanging stiff against the doorposts like a wall separating the inside from the outside.

The Angel must necessarily take a human appearance. But it is a transhumanised appearance. Of what flesh is this beautiful and gleaming figure made? With what substance did God form it to make it perceptible to the senses of the Virgin? Only God can possess such substances and use them so perfectly. It is a face, a body, eyes, a mouth, hair and hands like ours. But they are not our dull matter. It is a light that has taken the colour of flesh, of eyes, hair, lips, a light that moves and smiles, looks and speaks.

« Hail, Mary, full of Grace, Hail! » The voice is a sweet arpeggio as of pearls thrown on a precious metal plate.

Mary is startled and lowers Her head. And She is even more startled when She sees the shining creature kneeling at about a metre from Her and looking at Her with infinite veneration, his hands crossed over his chest.

Mary jumps to Her feet and She squeezes against the wall. She turns pale and red alternately. Her face shows surprise and fear. She subconsciously presses Her hands against Her breast hiding them under Her large sleeves. She stoops, endeavouring to conceal Her body as much as possible. An attitude of gentle modesty.

« No. Do not fear. The Lord is with You! You are blessed amongst all women! »

But Mary continues to be afraid. Where has that extraordinary being come from? Is he a messenger of God or of the Deceiver?

« Do not fear, Mary! » repeats the Archangel. « I am Gabriel, the Angel of God. My Lord has sent me to You. Do not be afraid, because You have found grace in the eyes of God. And You will conceive and bear a Son and You will call Him “Jesus”: He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High (and such He will really be). And the Lord God will give Him the throne of His Ancestor David and He will rule over the House of Jacob forever, and His reign will have no end. Understand, o Holy Virgin loved by God, Daughter blessed by Him,

called to be the Mother of His Son, what Son You will generate! »

« How can this come about, since I do not know man? Perhaps the Lord God will no longer accept the offer of His maidservant and does not want Me a Virgin for His love? »

« Not by deed of man You will be a mother, Mary. You are the Eternal Virgin, the Holy Virgin of God. The Holy Spirit will come upon You and the power of the Most High will cover You with its shadow. So the Child born of You will be called Holy and Son of God. Our Lord God can do everything. Elizabeth, the barren one, in her old age has conceived a son who will be the Prophet of Your Son, and will prepare His ways. The Lord has removed her disgrace and her memory will remain amongst peoples together with Your name, as the name of her creature will be joined to the name of Your Holy Son, and until the end of centuries you will be called blessed, because of the grace of the Lord which has come to you both and particularly to You, by means of Whom Grace has come to all peoples. Elizabeth is in her sixth month and her burden lifts her to joy, and will lift her even more when she hears of Your joy. Nothing is impossible to the Lord, Mary, full of Grace. What shall I tell my Lord? Let no thought whatsoever disturb You. He will protect Your interests if You trust in Him. The world, Heaven, the Eternal Father are awaiting Your word! »

Mary crosses Her hands over Her breast and bowing down deeply, She says: « I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let what you have said be done to Me.»

The Angel shines out of joy. He kneels in adoration because he certainly sees the Spirit of God descend upon the Virgin bent down in assent, and he disappears without moving the curtain, but leaves it well drawn over the holy Mystery.

17. The Disobedience of Eve and the Obedience of Mary.

5th March 1944.

Jesus says:

« ...Do we not read in Genesis that God made man the overlord of everything on the earth, that is everything except God and His angelical ministers? Do we not read that He made the woman the companion of man in his joy and his domination over all living beings? Do we not read that they were allowed to eat of everything with the exception of the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil? Why? What is the meaning of the words “that he might rule”? And what is the meaning of the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil? Have you ever asked these questions, you man, who ask so many useless ones and never ask your soul about heavenly truths? Your soul would tell you, if it were alive, because a soul in grace is held like a flower in the hands of your angel, and like a flower it is kissed by the sun and sprinkled with dew by the Holy Spirit, Who warms and illuminates it, sprays and decorates it with heavenly lights. How many truths your soul would tell you, if you only knew how to converse with it, if you loved your soul that makes you like God, Who is a spirit, as your soul is a spirit. What a great friend you would have if you loved your soul instead of hating it to the extent of killing it; what a great and sublime friend with whom you could talk of celestial matters, since you men are so eager to talk and you ruin one another with friendships which, if they are not unworthy ones (as sometimes they are), they are almost always useless and they turn into a vain and damaging tumult of worldly words.

Did I not say: “If anyone loves Me he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make Our home with him”? The soul in grace possesses love, and by possessing love it possesses God, that is the Father Who preserves it, the Son Who teaches it, the Spirit Who illuminates it. It therefore possesses Knowledge, Science, Wisdom, Light. Consider therefore what sublime conversations your soul could hold with you. Such conversations filled the silence of prisons, the silence of cells, the silence of hermitages, the silence of the rooms of holy sick people. Such conversations were the consolation of prisoners awaiting martyrdom, of cloistered monks and nuns searching for the Truth, of hermits longing for an advanced knowledge of God, of sick people in bearing, nay, in loving their crosses.

If you knew how to question your soul, you would be told that the true, extensive meaning – as comprehensive as creation itself – of the words “that he might rule” is this: “That man might dominate everything, that is his three states. The lower state, the animal one. The middle state, the moral one. The superior state, the spiritual one. And all three of them are to be directed to one sole aim: to possess God.” To possess Him by deserving Him through a strict control which subdues all the power of one's ego and conveys it to one only purpose: to

deserve to possess God.

Your soul would tell you that God had forbidden the knowledge of good and evil, because He had already granted good to His creatures gratuitously, and He did not want you to know evil, because it is a sweet fruit to taste, but once its juice becomes part of your blood, it causes a fever that kills you and produces a parching thirst, so that the more one drinks of that false juice, the more thirsty one becomes.

You may object: “And why did He put it there?” Because evil is a force that originated by itself like certain monstrous diseases in the most wholesome body.

Lucifer was an angel, the most beautiful of all the angels, a perfect spirit, inferior only to God, and yet in his bright essence a vapour of pride arose and he did not scatter it. On the contrary, he condensed it by brooding over it. And Evil was born of this incubation. It existed before man. God had hurled him out of Paradise, the cursed incubator of Evil, who had desecrated Paradise. But he is the eternal incubator of Evil and as he can no longer soil Paradise, he has soiled the earth.

That metaphorical tree proves this truth. God had said to the man and the woman: “You know all the laws and the mysteries of creation. But do not infringe on My right of being the Creator of man. My love will suffice for the propagation of the human race and it will spread among you and will excite the new Adams of the race without any lust of the senses but with purely charitable pulsations. I have given you everything. I am only keeping for Myself this mystery of the formation of man.”

Satan wanted to deprive man of this intellectual virginity and with his venomous tongue he blandished and caressed Eve's limbs and eyes, exciting reflections and a perspicacity which they did not have before, because malice had not yet intoxicated them. She “saw”. And seeing, she wanted to try. Her flesh was aroused. Oh! If she had called to God! If she had hurried to Him saying: “Father! The Serpent has caressed me and I am upset.” The Father would have purified and healed her with His breath, which could have infused new innocence into her as it had infused life. And it would have made her forget the snake's poison, nay it would have engendered in her a disgust for the Serpent, as it happens in those who bear an instinctive dislike for diseases of which they have just been cured. But Eve does not go to the Father. Eve goes back to the Serpent. The sensation is a sweet one for her. “Seeing that the fruit of the tree was good to eat and pleasing and agreeable to the eye, she took it and ate it.”

And “she understood”. Now Malice was inside her and was gnawing at her intestines. She saw with new eyes and heard with new ears the habits and voices of beasts. And she craved for them with insane greed.

She began the sin by herself. She accomplished it with her companion. That is why a heavier sentence is laid on woman. Because of her, man has become rebellious towards God and has become acquainted with lewdness and death. Because of her, he was no longer capable of dominating his three reigns: the reign of the spirit, because he allowed the spirit to disobey God; the moral reign, because he allowed passions to master him; the reign of the flesh, because he lowered it down to the instinctive level of beasts. “The Serpent seduced me” says Eve. “The woman offered me the fruit and I ate of it” says Adam. And the triple greed has ruled the three dominions since then.

Only Grace can relax the hold of this ruthless monster. And if Grace is alive, nay thoroughly alive, and kept more and more alive by the good will of a faithful son, it will succeed in strangling the monster and will no longer have anything to fear. It will not be afraid of internal tyrants, which are the flesh and passions; neither will it be afraid of external tyrants, these are the world and the mighty ones on the earth. It will dread neither persecutions nor death. It is as Paul the Apostle says: “I fear none of these things, neither do I care for my life more than I care for myself, provided I carry out the mission and the ministry the Lord Jesus gave me, and that was to bear witness to the Good News of God's Grace.” [...]

8th March 1944.

Mary says:

« I obeyed in My joy, because when I understood the mission to which God called Me, I was full of joy, My heart opened like a closed lily and it shed that blood which was to become the soil for the Lord's Seed.

The joy of being a mother.

I had consecrated Myself to God since My childhood, because the light of the Most High had shown Me the cause of evil in the world and, as far as it was in

My power, I wanted to remove from Myself every trace of Satan.

I did not know I was without stain. I could not think I was. That simple thought would have been presumption and pride, because, since I was born of human parents, it was not right for Me to think that I was the Chosen One to be the Faultless One. The Spirit of God had informed Me of the pain of the Father because of the corruption of Eve, who had lowered herself to the level of inferior creatures, whereas she was a creature of grace. It was My intention to soothe that pain by remaining unprofaned by human thoughts, wishes and contacts and thus restoring an angelical purity in My body. The palpitations of My heart were to be only for Him, and only for Him My whole being.

But if there was no passion of the flesh in Me, there was still the sacrifice of not being a mother. Also Eve had been granted by the Father Creator the gift of maternity, a maternity devoid of what now degrades it. The sweet and pure maternity without a sensual burden! I experienced it! Of how much did Eve divest herself by giving up such wealth! More than immortality. And do not think that I am exaggerating. My Jesus and I, His Mother, with Him, have experienced the languor of death. I, the sweet languor of a tired person who falls asleep, Jesus, the intense languor of who dies sentenced to death. So we also experienced death. But only I, the new Eve, experienced maternity without any kind of profanation, that I might tell the world how sweet was the destiny of woman called to be a mother without any bodily pain. And the desire of such pure maternity was possible and actually existed in the Virgin wholly devoted to God, because that maternity is the glory of woman.

If you consider in what high esteem the Israelites held a mother, you will realise even more what sacrifice I had made when I consecrated Myself to virginity. Now the Eternal Good Father granted Me, His servant, this gift, without divesting Me of the purity I had clothed Myself in to be a flower on His throne. And I rejoiced with the double joy of being the mother of a man and the Mother of God.

The joy of being the Woman by means of Whom peace was reestablished between Heaven and earth.

Oh! What a joy to have desired this peace for the sake of God and of men and to know that it was coming to the world through Me, the poor handmaid of the Almighty! What a joy to say: “Men, do not cry any longer. I have in Me the secret that will make you happy. I cannot tell what it is because it is sealed in Me, in My heart, just as the Son is enclosed in My inviolate womb. But I am already bringing it to you, and the moment when you will see Him and hear His Holy name is getting nearer and nearer.”

The joy of having made God happy: the joy of the believer for his God made happy.

Oh! The joy of removing from God's heart the bitterness of Eve's disobedience, pride and disbelief!

My Jesus explained the fault with which the first Couple got stained. I redeemed that sin by going up the same stages as they descended.

Disobedience was the beginning of the downfall: “Do not eat and do not touch of that tree” said God. And man and woman did not respect that prohibition, although as kings of creation they were allowed to touch and eat of everything except of that tree because God wanted them to be inferior only to angels.

The tree: the means to test their obedience. What does obedience to God's commands imply? It implies all possible good, because God commands nothing but good. What is disobedience? It is evil, because it brings about a rebellious mental state in which Satan can be active.

Eve goes toward the tree, which, if avoided, would have caused her welfare, if approached, would cause her ruin. She goes there led by the childish curiosity of seeing what is special about it, and by a rashness that makes her consider God's command a useless one since she is strong and pure, the queen of Eden, where everything is subject to her and nothing can hurt her. Her presumption is her ruin. Presumption is the yeast of pride.

At the tree she finds the Seducer, who sings his song of lies to her inexperience, to her beautiful virginal inexperience, to her badly guarded inexperience. “You think there is evil here? No, there isn't. God told you because He wants to keep you as slaves under His power. You think you are king and queen? You are not even as free as wild animals. Animals can love one another with true love. You cannot. Animals are granted the gift of being creators like God. Animals generate little ones and see their families grow as much as they like. You do not. You are denied this joy. Why make you man and woman if you have to live thus? Be gods. You do not know the joy of being two in one flesh, that creates a third one and many more. Do not believe God when He promised you the joy of posterity seeing your children forming new families, leaving their father and

mother for their families. He has given you a sham life: real life is to know the laws of life. Then you will be like gods and will be able to say to God: 'We are equal to You' .”

And the allurement continued because there was no will to break it, on the contrary there was the will to continue it and to learn what did not belong to man. And the forbidden tree becomes really mortal for the human race because from its branches there hangs the fruit of bitter knowledge that comes from Satan. And the woman becomes a female and with the yeast of Satanic knowledge in her heart, she moves on to corrupt Adam. With their bodies and souls degraded and their morals corrupted, they became acquainted with sorrow and the death of both their souls deprived of Grace and of their bodies divested of immortality. And Eve's wound engendered suffering, which will not subside until the last couple on earth are dead.

I went along the road of the two sinners, but in the opposite direction: I obeyed. I obeyed in every way. God inspired Me to be a virgin. I obeyed. When I loved virginity that made Me as pure as the first woman before she met Satan, God asked Me to get married. I obeyed, elevating marriage to the degree of purity intended by God when He created the First Parents. I was then convinced that My destiny was solitude in marriage and the contempt of people because of My holy sterility, when God asked Me to be a Mother. I obeyed. I believed that it was possible and that the word came from God, because I was filled with peace when I heard it. I did not think: “I deserved it.” I did not say: “Now the world will admire Me, because I am like God, creating the flesh of God.” No, I did not. I lowered Myself in My humility.

Joy gushed out of My heart like the stem of a rose. But it was soon decorated with sharp thorns and it was clenched in the tangle of sorrow, like branches enveloped by the bearbines of convolvuli (1). Sorrow for the pain of My spouse: it suffocated My joy. Sorrow for the pain of My Son: a thorn that pierced My joy.

Eve wanted pleasure, triumph, freedom. I accepted sorrow, humiliation, slavery. I gave up My peaceful life, the esteem of My spouse, My own freedom. I kept nothing for Myself. I became the maid of God in the flesh, in morals, in the spirit, relying on Him not only for the virginal conception, but also for the protection of My honour, for the consolation of My spouse, for the means suitable to elevate him also to the sublimation of marriage, so that we could restore man and woman to their lost dignity. I embraced the will of the Lord for Myself, My spouse and My Creature.

I said “Yes” for the whole three, as I was certain that God would not break His promise to assist Me in My sorrow of a spouse who realises she is considered guilty, and of a mother who knows she is generating a Son to deliver Him to sorrow. I said “Yes” and nothing else. That “Yes” cancelled Eve's “No” to God's command. “Yes, My Lord, as You wish. I will know what You want Me to know. I will live as You want Me to live. I will rejoice if You wish so. I will suffer for what You want Me to suffer. Yes, forever, My Lord, from the moment Your ray made Me a Mother to the moment You called Me back to You. 'Yes', forever 'Yes'. All the good voices of the flesh, all the good passions of the spirit were under the weight of My perpetual 'Yes'. And above, on a diamond pedestal, there was My spirit, lacking wings to fly to You, but it was the master of the whole 'ego' subdued and made Your servant. Servant in joy, servant in sorrow. But smile, o God. And be happy. Guilt has been defeated. It has been removed and destroyed. It lies under My heel, it was washed in My tears and destroyed by My obedience. The new Tree will be born of My bosom and it will bear the Fruit that knows all the evil because It suffered it all in Itself and will give all the good. All men will be able to come to It and I shall be happy if they take of It, even if they do not remember that It was born of Me. Providing man is saved and God is loved, let it be done to His handmaid what is done to a clod of earth on which a tree is planted: a step to ascend”.

Mary, we must always be steps so that other people may ascend to God. It does not matter if they tread on us, providing they are successful in reaching the Cross. It is the new tree that has the knowledge of Good and Evil, because it tells man what is good and what is evil so that he may choose and live and at the same time it is a medicine that cures those who are intoxicated by the evil they wanted to taste. Let our hearts be under the feet of men, that the number of the redeemed may increase and the Blood of My Jesus not be shed fruitlessly. That is the destiny of the maids of God. But then we deserve to receive the holy Host in our hearts and to say at the foot of the Cross drenched with His Blood and our tears: “Here is, o Father, the immaculate Host which we offer to You for the salvation of the world. Look at us, Father, melted with It and give us Your blessing for Its infinite merits.”

And I give you My caresses. Rest now, My dear daughter. The Lord is with you. »

(1) A genus of climbing plants, including the bindweed.

Jesus says:

« My Mother's words should disperse all perplexity of thought also in the minds most confused and muddled by pseudo science [...].

I said: “metaphorical tree”. Now I will say: “symbolical tree”. Perhaps you will understand better. Its symbol is clear: the inclination to good and to evil of the two children of God, would be understood by their behaviour towards the tree. Like 'aqua regia' that tests gold and the scales of the goldsmith that weigh its carats, that tree, by God's command, became a means of testing and it gave the measure of Adam's and Eve's symbolic metal purity.

I can already hear your objection: “Was the punishment not excessive and the means used to condemn them not childish?”

Not so. Actual disobedience in you, who are their heirs, is not so grave as if it were in them. You have been redeemed by Me. But Satan's poison is always ready to rise again, like certain diseases that never disappear completely in the blood. The First Parents possessed Grace without ever even nearing Disgrace. They were therefore stronger and more firmly supported by Grace that generated love and innocence. The gift given them by God was infinite. Much graver is therefore their fall notwithstanding that gift.

Also the fruit that was offered and eaten was symbolical. It was the fruit of an experience they wanted to have at Satan's instigation to break God's command. I had not forbidden men love. I only wanted them to love each other without malice; as I loved them in My holiness, they were to love each other in the holiness of affections unsoiled by lewdness.

It must not be forgotten that Grace is light, and whoever possesses it knows what is good and useful to know. Mary, Full of Grace, knew everything, because Wisdom taught Her, Wisdom that is Grace, and She knew how to live in a holy way. Also Eve knew what was good for her to know. But not more, because it is valueless to know what is not good. But she did not have faith in God's word, and was not faithful to her promise of obedience. She believed in Satan, she broke her promise, she wanted to know what was not good, she loved it without regret, she turned love into something corrupt and degraded, which I instead had permitted as something holy. A sullied angel, she wallowed in mud and litter, whereas she could have run happily amongst the flowers of the earthly Paradise and she could have seen her offspring flourish around her, like a plant that is covered with flowers without bending its leaves into the mire.

Do not be like the foolish children mentioned by Me in the Gospel; they heard other children sing and they stopped their ears, they heard them play the pipes and they did not dance, they heard them weep and they wanted to laugh. Do not be narrow-minded, do not be deniers. Accept the Light without malice and stubbornness, without irony and disbelief. Enough said about that.

To make you understand how grateful you must be to Him Who died to elevate you to Heaven and to defeat Satan's concupiscence, I wanted to speak to you, in this period of preparation for Easter, of what was the first link of the chain by which the Word of the Father was dragged to death, the Divine Lamb to the slaughterhouse. I wanted to speak to you about it, because at present ninety percent of you are like Eve intoxicated by Lucifer's breath and words, and you do not live, to love one another, but to glut yourselves with sensuality, you do not live for Heaven but for filth, you are no longer creatures gifted with soul and reason, but dogs without soul and without reason. You have killed your souls and perverted your reason. I solemnly tell you that brutes surpass you in the honesty of their love.»

18. The Annunciation of Elizabeth's Pregnancy to Joseph.

25th March 1944.

The little house of Nazareth appears to me with Mary in it. Mary, a young girl, as when the Angel of God appeared to Her. This simple sight fills my soul with the virginal perfume of the house. The scent still remains in the room where the Angel gently waved his golden wings. That divine perfume was all concentrated on Mary to make a mother of Her and it now emanates from Her.

It is evening, because shadows begin to invade the room into which so much heavenly light had descended.

Mary is kneeling near Her little bed and is praying with Her arms crossed over Her breast and Her face bowed down very low. She is still dressed as She was at

the moment of the Annunciation. Everything is exactly as it was then. The flowery branch is in its vase, the furniture in the same position. Only the distaff and the spindle are now leaning in a comer, the former with its flax, the latter with its bright thread wrapped around it.

Mary stops praying and stands up, Her face is flushed as if it were lit up by a flame. Her lips are smiling, but Her eyes are shining with tears. She takes the oil lamp and lights it with a flint. She checks that everything is in good order in the room. She straightens up the blanket on the bed as it had been displaced. She adds some water to the vase containing the flowery branch and She places it outside, in the cool of the night. She then comes back in. She takes the folded embroidery from the bookcase and the lamp and goes out closing the door. She takes a few steps in the little kitchen garden, along the side of the house and then goes into the little room where I saw the parting goodbye of Jesus and Mary. I recognise it although some pieces of furniture which were there previously are now missing.

Mary disappears into another small adjoining room, taking the lamp with Her, and I am left alone in the company of the embroidery work laid on the corner of the table. I can hear Mary's light steps moving to and fro, She then makes a noise with water as if She were washing something. Then there is the noise of broken sticks and I understand that She is lighting the fire.

Then She comes back and goes into the little garden. She comes in once again with some apples and vegetables. She puts the apples on the table, on an engraved metal tray, possibly made of copper. She goes back into the kitchen, (for the kitchen is certainly over there). Now the flames of the fireplace are merrily casting light through the open door into this room and make dancing shadows on the wall.

Some time goes by and Mary comes in with a small brown loaf and a bowl of hot milk. She sits down and dips some small slices of bread into the milk. She eats them slowly. Then leaving half of the bowl of milk, She goes into the kitchen and comes back with the vegetables on which She pours some oil and She eats them with the bread. She quenches Her thirst with the milk. She then takes an apple and eats it. The meal of a little girl.

Mary eats and thinks, and She smiles at some inner thought. She looks up and all around the walls and seems to be telling them a secret. Now and again, She becomes serious, almost sad. But soon Her smile is back on Her lips again.

There is a knocking at the door. Mary gets up and opens it. Joseph comes in. They greet each other. Then Joseph sits on a stool in front of Mary, on the opposite side of the table.

Joseph is a handsome man in the prime of life. He must be thirty-five years old at most. His face is framed by his dark brown hair and a beard of the same colour and his eyes are very sweet and very dark, almost black. His forehead is large and smooth, his nose thin and slightly aquiline, his cheeks are roundish of a brown hue, but not olive-coloured, on the contrary they are rosy near the cheek-bones. He is not very tall, but he is strong and well built.

Before sitting down he has taken off his mantle and it is the first I have seen of its kind, because it is a full circle. It is held close at the neck by a kind of hook and it has a hood. The colour is light brown and it seems to be made of a cloth of coarse wool proof against water. It looks like the mantle of a mountaineer suitable to shelter from inclement weather.

Also before sitting down he offers Mary two eggs and a bunch of grapes, somewhat withered, but well preserved. And he smiles saying: « The grapes were brought to me from Cana. I was given the eggs by a Centurion for some repair work I did to his cart. A wheel was broken and their carpenter is ill. They are new laid. He took them from the hen house. Drink them. They will do You good.»

« To-morrow Joseph. I have just finished My meal.»

« But You can take the grapes. They are good, as sweet as honey. I carried them very carefully, so that they would not get spoiled. Eat them. There are plenty more. I'll bring them to-morrow in a little basket. I couldn't this evening, because I came straight from the Centurion's house.»

« Well, then, you have not had any supper yet.»

« No, I haven't, but it does not matter.»

Mary gets up at once and goes into the kitchen and She comes back with some milk, some olives and cheese. « I have nothing else » She says. « Take an egg. »

But Joseph does not want it. The eggs are for Mary. He eats with relish his bread and the cheese and he drinks the lukewarm milk. He then accepts an apple. And his supper is over.

Mary takes Her embroidery after cleaning the table and Joseph helps Her and he remains in the kitchen even when She comes back here. I can hear him putting things away. He pokes the fire because it is a cool evening. When he comes in, Mary thanks him.

They speak to each other. Joseph tells Her how he spent the day. He talks of his little nephews and he takes an interest in Mary's work and in Her flowers. He promises to bring Her some beautiful flowers which the Centurion has promised him. « They are flowers we haven't got here. They were brought from Rome. And he promised me some little plants. Now, when the moon is in the right quarter I will plant them for You. They have lovely colours and a beautiful scent. I saw them last year, because they bloom in summer . They will scent the whole house for You. Then I will prune the trees when the moon is right. It is time.»

Mary smiles and thanks him. Then there is silence. Joseph looks at Mary's fair head bowed over Her embroidery. A look of angelical love. Certainly, if an angel were to love a woman with the love of a husband, he would look at her thus.

Then Mary, as if She were taking a sudden decision, lays the embroidery on Her lap and says: « I also have something to tell you. I never have anything to say, because you know how retired I live.

But today I have some news. I heard that our relative Elizabeth, Zacharias' wife, is about to have a child... »

Joseph opens his eyes wide and exclaims: « At her age? »

« At her age » replies Mary smiling. « The Lord can do everything, and now He is giving this joy to our relative.»

« How do you know? Is the news certain? »

« A messenger came. One who would not tell lies. I would like to go to Elizabeth's, to help her and tell her that I am rejoicing with her. If you will allow Me... »

« Mary, You are my lady and I Your servant. Whatever You do is well done. When would You like to go? »

« As soon as possible. But I shall be away for some months.»

« And I will count the days waiting for You. Go and don't worry. I will look after the house and Your little garden. You will find the flowers as beautiful as if You had taken care of them. Only... wait. Before Passover I must go to Jerusalem to buy certain things for my work. If You can wait for a few days, I will come with You as far as Jerusalem. I can't go any farther, because I must hurry back. But we can go there together. I will be happier if I know that You are not on the road by Yourself. When You want to come back, You can let me know and I will come and meet You. »

« You are so good, Joseph. May the Lord reward you with His blessings and keep sorrow away from you. I always pray Him for that. »

The chaste couple smile at each other angelically. There is silence again for a little while. Then Joseph gets up. He puts his mantle on and he covers his head with the hood. He says goodbye to Mary Who has also got up, and he goes out.

Mary looks at him going out and She sighs rather sadly. She then lifts Her eyes to Heavens. She is certainly praying. She closes the door carefully. She folds the embroidery. She goes into the kitchen, puts out or covers up the fire. She makes sure that everything is in order. She then takes the oil lamp and goes out closing the door. With Her hand She shields the feeble flame that flickers in the cool evening breeze... She enters Her room and prays once again. The vision ends thus.

Mary says:

« My dear daughter, when I came back to the reality of earthly life after the ecstasy that had filled Me with inexpressible joy, My first thought was for Joseph: a thought as sharp as a rose thorn, that pierced My heart enraptured among the roses of Divine Love, Who had become My Spouse only a few moments before.

By this time I loved My holy and provident guardian. Since the time when by the will of God, manifested to Me by the word of the Priest, I had become married to Joseph, I had the possibility of knowing and appreciating the holiness of that Just man. When I became united to him, My dismay at being an orphan disappeared and I no longer regretted the lost retreat of the Temple. He was as sweet as My deceased father. With him I felt as safe as with the Priest. All perplexity had disappeared, nay it had been forgotten, so far it was from My virginal heart. I had in fact understood that there was no reason whatsoever for

hesitation or fear with regard to Joseph. My virginity entrusted to Joseph was safer than a child in his mother's arms.

But now, how could I tell him that I was a Mother? I endeavoured to find suitable words to give him the news. A difficult task, as I did not want to boast of God's gift and on the other hand there was no way of justifying My maternity without saying: “The Lord has loved Me amongst all women and has made Me, His servant, His Bride.” Neither did I wish to deceive him by concealing My condition from him.

And while I was praying, the Spirit of Whom I was full, said to Me: “Be silent. Entrust Me with the task of justifying You with Your spouse.” When? How? I did not ask. I had always relied upon God, and I had always allowed Myself to be led by Him exactly as a flower is led away by running water. The Eternal Father had never abandoned Me without His help. His hand had always supported, protected and guided Me so far. It would do so also now.

O My daughter, how beautiful and comforting is faith in our Eternal Good God! He holds us in His arms as in a cradle, like a boat He steers us into the bright harbour of Goodness, He warms our hearts, comforts and nourishes us, He bestows rest and happiness, light and guidance on us. Reliance in God is everything, and God grants everything to those who trust in Him: He gives Himself.

That evening I elevated to perfection My reliance as a creature. Now I was able to do so, because God was in Me. Before I had the confidence of a poor creature, such as I was: a mere nothing, even if I was so much loved as to be the Faultless One. But now I had a divine confidence, because God was Mine: My Spouse, My Son! Oh! What a joy! To be One with God. Not for My own glory, but to love Him with a total union and say to Him: “You, only You are in Me: please assist Me with Your Divine perfection in everything I do.”

If He had not said to Me: “Be silent!”, I would probably have dared say to Joseph, with My face bowed to the ground: “The Spirit has penetrated Me and now the Embryo of God is in Me,” and he would have believed Me, because he held Me in high esteem and because like those who never lie, he could not believe that others lied. Yes, to avoid hurting his feelings in future, I would have overcome My reluctance to praise Myself. But I obeyed the divine command. And for months after that moment, I felt the first wound pierce My heart.

It was the first pain in My destiny of Co-Redeemer. I offered and suffered it in atonement and to give you a guidance for similar circumstances in life, when it is necessary to suffer in silence for an event that casts a bad light on you in relation to those who love you.

Entrust God with the protection of your reputation and affections. If you deserve God's protection with a holy life, you can proceed safely. Even if the whole world is against you, He will defend you with regard to those who love you and will cause the truth to be known.

Now rest, My dear, and be more and more My dear daughter.»

19. Mary and Joseph Set Out for Jerusalem.

27th March 1944.

I see their departure to go to St. Elizabeth's.

Joseph has come with two little donkeys to fetch Mary: one for himself, the other for Mary: one of the little animals has the usual saddle with a strange gadget attached to it. Later I gather that it is a kind of a luggage-rack on which Joseph fastens a small wooden casket, a small trunk we would call it nowadays, which he brought for Mary's clothes, to prevent them from getting wet.

I hear Mary thank Joseph wholeheartedly for the provident gift, in which She packs what She takes out of a parcel She had made up previously. They close the door of the house and start off. It is daybreak, for I can see the rosy dawn in the east. Nazareth is still asleep. The two early travellers meet only a shepherd who is driving forward his little sheep, which are trotting along, one against the other, jammed in close flock. They are all bleating. The little lambs with their shrill sharp voices bleat more than the others, and want their mothers' breasts even while moving. But the mothers are hurrying towards the pastures and with their louder bleatings they urge the little ones to follow them.

Mary looks and smiles and since She has stopped to let the herd go by, She bends on the saddle and caresses the mild little beasts that pass near Her donkey. When the shepherd arrives carrying a newly-born little lamb in his arms and he

stops to speak to Mary, She smiles and caresses the pinkish little face of the lamb, that is bleating desperately and She exclaims: « It's looking for its mother. Here is your mother. She won't leave you, of course she won't, little lamb. » In fact the ewe rubs herself against the shepherd, then stands up on her hind legs and licks the face of her little one.

The herd passes by making the noise of water drops falling on leaves. Behind it there is the dust raised by the trotting feet of the sheep and the patterns of their footprints on the dusty road.

Joseph and Mary take to the road again. Joseph is wearing his large mantle, Mary has on a kind of a striped shawl, because it is a very cool morning.

They are now in the country and they are proceeding one beside the other. They seldom speak. Joseph is thinking of his business, Mary is following Her own thoughts and in Her concentration She smiles at them. At times She looks around and smiles at the things She sees. Now and again She looks at Joseph and then an expression of sad gravity darkens Her face; then She smiles again, still looking at Her provident spouse who speaks so little and when he does speak it is only to ask Her whether She is comfortable and whether She needs anything. By now there are many people on the road, particularly near and inside villages. But Mary and Joseph do not pay much attention to the people they meet. They proceed on their trotting donkeys, in the midst of the noise of the harness bells, and they stop only once in the shade of a thicket, to eat some bread and olives and to drink at a well that runs down from a grotto. They stop later to take shelter from a sudden heavy downpour from a very dark cloud.

They have taken cover under the mountain, against a protruding rock that protects them from most of the heavy rain. Joseph wants Mary to put on his big mantle, which is proof against water and he insists so much that Mary is obliged to yield to the insistence of Her spouse, who to reassure Her of his own immunity, covers his head and shoulders with a small grey blanket which was on the saddle. Probably the donkey's blanket. Now Mary looks like a little monk, with Her face framed by the hood and the mantle closed round Her neck and covering all Her body.

The shower slackens and turns into a tedious drizzling rain. Mary and Joseph start off again along a muddy road. But it is springtime and after a short while the sun makes the journey more comfortable. Also the two little donkeys are now trotting more happily along the road.

I do not see anything else because the vision ends here.

20. From Jerusalem to Zacharias' House.

28th March 1944.

We are in Jerusalem. I know the town very well now, with its streets and gates.

The first thing Mary and Joseph do is to go to the Temple. I recognise the stable where Joseph left his donkey on the day of Jesus' presentation in the Temple. Also now he leaves the two donkeys there, after feeding them, and then he goes with Mary to worship the Lord.

When they come out, they enter a house which apparently belongs to people they know. They take some refreshment there and Mary rests until Joseph comes back with a little old man. « This man is going Your way. You will not have to travel a long way by Yourself to get to Your relatives. You can trust him because I know him.»

They get on their donkeys again and Joseph goes with Mary as far as the Gate (it is not the one they entered but a different one) and they part there. Mary proceeds with the little old man who is as talkative as Joseph was silent and takes an interest in many things. Mary answers him patiently. In front of the saddle She has now the little trunk which Joseph's donkey had carried earlier and She is no longer wearing the large mantle. Neither has She on the shawl, which is folded on the trunk, and She is really beautiful in Her dark blue dress and white veil that protects Her from the sun. How beautiful She is!

The old man must be somewhat deaf, because Mary, Who is wont to speak in a very low voice, had to speak loudly to make Herself heard. And now he is tired. He has finished with all his questions and news and is dozing on the saddle, led by the donkey that is familiar with the road.

Mary takes advantage of this respite to collect Her thoughts and to pray. It must be a prayer that She sings in a low voice, looking at the blue sky, with Her arms crossed over Her breast, while Her face is bright and happy because of some internal emotion.

I see nothing else.

And even now that the vision is interrupted, as it happened yesterday, I am left with Mother near me, visible to my internal sight so clearly that I can describe for you the light rosy hue of Her cheeks, not very chubby but gently soft, the bright red of Her little lips and Her clear blue eyes sweetly shining between Her dark-blond eyelashes.

I can tell you how Her hair, divided into two on the crown of Her head, falls softly with three undulations on each side, as far down as to cover half of Her little rosy ears, and then disappears with its pale shiny gold behind the veil covering Her head (because I see Her with Her mantle over Her head, wearing a dress of paradisiac silk and a dark mantle, as thin as a veil, of the same cloth as the dress).

I can tell you that Her dress is tight round Her neck by means of a sheathing inside which runs a cord the ends of which form a knot in front at the base of Her neck. Likewise Her dress is gathered at Her waist by a thicker cord, also of white silk, hanging down Her side with two tassels.

I can even tell you that Her dress, tight as it is at Her neck and waist, forms seven round soft folds on Her breast, the only ornament of Her very modest garment.

I can inform you of the chastity emanating from all Her aspect, from Her so delicate and harmonious forms which make Her such an angelical woman. And the more I look at Her the more I suffer thinking of how much they made Her suffer and I wonder how they could have had no mercy on Her, so meek and kind, so delicate also in Her physical appearance. I look at Her and I can hear once again all the shouting on Calvary, also against Her, all the mockery and insults, all the maledictions shouted against Her because She was the Mother of the Convict. Now I see Her beautiful and tranquil. But Her present countenance does not cancel the memory of Her tragical face during those hours of agony, or that of Her desolate face in the house in Jerusalem, after Jesus' death. And I would like to be able to caress and kiss Her cheek, so delicately rosy and soft, to remove with my kiss that remembrance of grievous tears, as She certainly remembers as I do.

You cannot believe how much peace it gives me to have Her near me. I think that to die seeing Her must be as sweet and even sweeter than the sweetest hour of one's lifetime. During the time that I did not see Her thus, all for myself, Her absence was a great sorrow to me, just like the absence of a mother. I now feel once again the ineffable joy which was my companion in December and early January. And I am happy, notwithstanding that the sight of the torture of the Passion casts a veil of grief on all my happiness.

It is difficult to explain and make you understand what I feel and what has been happening since February the eleventh, when in the evening I saw Jesus suffer in His Passion. That sight has changed me completely. Whether I die now or in one hundred years' time, that vision will always be the same in intensity and consequences. Previously I used to think of the sorrows of Christ, now I live them, because one word, or a glance at an image is enough to make me suffer all over again what I suffered that evening and be horrified at those tortures; and I grieve over His desolate sufferings, and even if nothing reminds me of them, their remembrance tears my heart.

Mary is beginning to speak and I become silent.

Mary says:

« I will not speak much, because You are very tired, My poor daughter. I only wish to draw your attention and the attention of readers to the constant habit of Joseph and Mine of giving priority to prayer. Tiredness, haste, worries, occupations never hindered our prayer, on the contrary they helped it. It was always the queen of our occupations, our relief, our light, our hope. If in sad moments it was a consolation, in happy ones it was a song. But it was always the constant friend of our souls. It detached us from the earth, from our exile, and it raised us up towards Heaven, our Fatherland.

Not only I, Who by now had God with Me and I had but to look at My bosom to worship the Holy of Holies, but also Joseph felt united to God when he prayed, because our prayers were a true adoration of our whole beings, which melted with God by worshipping Him and by being embraced by Him.

And please note that not even I, although I had the Eternal God in Me, not even I felt exempted from respectful homage to the Temple. The deepest holiness does not exempt anyone from feeling a mere nothing with regard to God and from converting such nothingness into an endless hosanna to God's glory, since He allows us to do so.

Are you weak, poor, faulty? Invoke the holiness of the Lord: “Holy, Holy, Holy!” Invoke the Blessed Holy One to assist you in your misery. He will come and instill His holiness into you. Are you holy and rich in merits in the eyes of God? Invoke the holiness of the Lord just the same. It is infinite and will increase yours. The angels, who are superior to the weaknesses of mankind, do not cease singing their “Sanctus” not even for an instant, and their supernatural beauty increases with each invocation of the holiness of our God. Imitate the angels.

Never divest yourselves of the protection of prayer, which blunts the weapons of Satan, the malice of the world, the incentives of the flesh and mental pride. Never lay down this weapon, which causes Heaven to open and pour out Its graces and blessings.

The world needs a shower of prayers to be purified from the sins that draw punishments from God. And since only few people pray, those few must pray as if they were many. They must multiply their living prayers to make up the necessary amount to obtain graces. Prayers are living when they are flavoured with true love and sacrifice.

My dear daughter, it is a good thing, pleasing to God and meritorious, that you should suffer because of the sufferings of My Jesus and Mine, in addition to your own. Your sympathetic love is so dear to Me. But do you want to kiss Me? Kiss the wounds of My Son. Dress them with the balm of your love. I suffered spiritually the pangs of the scourges, of the thorns and the torture of the nails and of the cross. And likewise I feel spiritually all the caresses given to my Jesus, as they are as many kisses given to Me. And then come. I am the Queen of Heaven. But I am always the Mother...»

And I am happy.

21. Arrival at Zacharias' House.

1st April 1944.

I am now in a mountainous place. They are not high mountains, neither are they just hills. There are ridges and creeks as we see in our Apennines in Tuscany and Umbria. The vegetation is thick and beautiful and there is plenty fresh water, that keeps the pastures green and the orchards fruitful: apple and fig-trees are mostly cultivated in the orchards and grapes near the houses. It must be springtime because the grapes are rather big, about the size of vetch grains, and the apple-blossoms have already sprung and they look like so many little green pellets; on top of the fig branches the first fruits can be seen, still in the embryo stage, but already well formed. The meadows are real soft multicolored carpets. Sheep are grazing or resting on them and they look like white spots on the emerald of the grass.

Mary on Her donkey is climbing up a rather well kept road, probably the main road. She is climbing because the village is higher up and it looks quite tidy. My internal warner says to me: « This place is Hebron. » You spoke to me of Montana. I cannot help it. It is indicated to me with this name. I do not know whether Hebron is the whole area or only the village. That is what I hear and that is what I say.

Mary is now entering the village. It is evening. Some women on their doorsteps watch the arrival of the stranger and gossip with one another. Their eyes follow Her and they are not happy until they see Her stop in front of one of the prettiest houses, in the centre of the village, with a kitchen garden in the front and rear and a well cultivated orchard around it. The orchard continues into a large meadow that rises and slopes according to the sinuosity of the mountain and ends in a wood of tall trees, beyond which I do not know what there is. The whole place is surrounded by a hedge of blackberries or wild roses. I cannot tell exactly which, because, if you remember, the flowers and leaves of these two thorny hedges are very much alike and until their branches bear fruit it is easy to confuse them. In front of the house, that is on the side that skirts the village, the place is enclosed by a small low white wall, on top of which there are rows of rose-bushes, at present without flowers, but already full of buds. In the centre there is an iron gate. It is easily understood that it is the house of a notable of the village or of a well-to-do family, because everything shows comfort and great order, if not riches and pomp.

Mary gets off the donkey and goes to the gate. She looks through the iron bars, but does not see anyone. She endeavors then to-make Herself heard. A little old woman, who more curious than the others has followed Her, shows Her a strange gadget that is used as a bell. It consists of two pieces of metal balanced on a kind of yoke, at the end of which there is a rope. When the rope is pulled,

the two metal pieces strike each other and give the sound of a bell or gong. Mary pulls the rope, but so gently, that there is only a faint tinkling, which no one hears. Then the little old woman, whose face is all nose and slipper'-chin and whose tongue is worth ten put together, gets hold of the rope and pulls it several times with all her might. She makes enough noise to raise a dead man! « That's how You do it, woman. Otherwise, how can they hear You? You know, Elizabeth is old and Zacharias also is old. Now he is also dumb, as well as deaf. Also the two servants are old, don't You know? Have You ever been here before? Don't You know Zacharias? Are You… »

Mary is rescued from the deluge of information and questions by a little old man who suddenly appears panting. He must be a gardener or a farmer, for he is holding a hoe in his hand and there is a pruning knife tied to his belt. He opens the gate and Mary enters thanking the little woman but… leaving her fairly recent question unanswered. What a disappointment for the curious soul!

As soon as She is inside Mary says: « I am Mary of Joachim and Anne, from Nazareth. I am your masters' cousin ».

The man bows down and welcomes Her, he then calls out in a loud voice: « Sarah! Sarah! »

He opens the gate again to let in the donkey that had been left outside. Mary, in fact, to get rid of the persistent little woman, had slipped inside very quickly and the gardener just as quickly had closed the gate in the face of the gossip. And while taking the donkey in, he exclaims: « Oh! What a great happiness and what an upheaval to this household! Heaven has granted a child to the barren one, may the Most High be blessed! But seven months ago, Zacharias came back dumb from Jerusalem. He now makes himself understood by gestures or by writing. Perhaps You already know. My landlady has longed so much for You in this joy and this travail! She always spoke to Sarah about You and she would say: “If I only had little Mary with Me! I wish She were still in the Temple! I would send Zacharias to fetch Her. But now the Lord wanted Her married to Joseph of Nazareth. She is the only one who can comfort me in my pain and help me to pray to God, because She is so good. And they all miss Her in the Temple. On the last feast day, the last time I went to Jerusalem with Zacharias to thank the Lord for the child He has given me, Her teachers said to me: 'The Temple seems to be without the Cherubim of the Glory since Mary's voice is no longer heard inside these walls.' ” »

He then shouts again: « Sarah, Sarah! My wife is a little deaf. But come, please, I'll show You the way. »

Instead of Sarah, a fairly old woman appears at the top of the staircase on one side of the house. Her face is all wrinkles and her hair is very grey. It must have been very black at one time because her eyelashes and eyebrows are still very dark and also from the color of her face one can tell that she was swarthy. Her present very obvious pregnant condition is a strange contradiction to her evident old age, notwithstanding her wide and loose dress. She looks down shading her eyes with her hand. As soon as she recognizes Mary she raises her arms to the sky and utters an « Oh! » of joy and surprise. She then rushes, as fast as she can, towards Mary. Also Mary, who always moves very quietly, now runs, as swift as a little deer, and reaches the foot of the staircase at the same time as Elizabeth. And She embraces with great affection Her cousin who is crying with joy at seeing Her.

They remain embraced for an instant and then Elizabeth detaches herself exclaiming: « Ah! », an exclamation of mingled joy and sorrow and she places her hands on her enlarged abdomen. She bows her face and turns red and pale alternately. Mary and the servant hold out their hands to support her because she staggers, as if she were unwell. But Elizabeth, after a moment of concentration, lifts her face which is now so bright that she looks much younger. She then looks at Mary with evident veneration as if she sees an angel, she bows in a deep salutation exclaiming: « You are blessed amongst all women! Blessed is the Fruit of Your womb! (She says exactly that: two clearly separate sentences).

How did I deserve that the Mother of my Lord should come to me, Your servant? There, at the sound of Your voice, the child leaped out of joy in my womb and when I embraced You, the Spirit of the Lord whispered deepest truths to my heart. You are blessed, because You believed that it was possible for God also what does not appear possible to the human mind! You are blessed, because by Your faith You will accomplish the things the Lord predicted to You and the Prophets foretold for our times! You are blessed, for the Salvation You have brought to the house of Jacob! You are blessed for the Holiness You have brought to my son, whom I feel leaping with joy, like a happy little kid, in my womb, because he feels free from the burden of guilt, and is called to be the Predecessor, sanctified before Redemption by the Holy One Who is growing within You! »

Mary, with two tears that run down like two pearls from Her sparkling eyes to Her smiling lips, with Her face raised to heaven and also Her arms raised up, in the attitude that Her Jesus will take so often, exclaims: « My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord » and She continues the canticle as it has been handed down to us. At the end, at the verse: « He has come to the help of Israel his servant etc. », she puts Her hands on Her breast, kneels down stooping to the ground, adoring God.

The servant, who quite wisely had disappeared when he realized that Elizabeth was not really physically unwell, on the contrary, she was confiding her thoughts to Mary, is now coming back from the orchard with a solemn old man, whose hair and beard are completely white, and who greets Mary from a distance with great gestures and loud guttural sounds.

Zacharias is arriving says Elizabeth, touching the shoulder of Mary, engrossed in prayer. « My Zacharias is dumb. God has punished him because he did not believe. I will tell You later. But now I hope that God will forgive him, because You have come. You, full of Grace. »

Mary rises and goes to meet Zacharias. She stoops to the ground in front of him, kissing the hem of his white robe that reaches down to the ground. It is a very wide robe, held tight to the waist by a large embroidered braid.

Zacharias welcomes Mary by gestures and they both move toward Elizabeth. They all enter a room on the ground floor. It is a wide room, tastefully arranged, where they make Mary sit down and they offer Her some new milk – there is still foam on it – and some small cakes.

Elizabeth gives some orders to the maid servant, who has appeared at last, her hands still covered with flour and her hair whiter than usually because of the flour dust on it. Perhaps she was baking bread. She gives orders also to the male servant, whose name I hear is Samuel, and tells him to take Mary's trunk to a room which she indicates to him. She thus fulfills her duties of a landlady towards her guest.

In the meantime Mary is replying to the questions Zacharias is asking Her, writing them on a wax tablet with a style. From Her answers I understand that he is asking Her about Joseph and Her married life with him. I also understand that Zacharias has been denied all supernatural light about Mary's state and Her condition of Mother of the Messiah. Elizabeth goes near her husband and laying her hand on his shoulder, in a loving attitude, as if she were caressing him chastely, she says to him: « Also Mary is a mother. Rejoice over Her happiness. » But she does not say anything else. She looks at Mary. And Mary looks at her but does not encourage her to say more and Elizabeth keeps silent.

A sweet, very sweet vision! It obliterates the horror of the sight of Judas' suicide.

Last night, before falling asleep, I saw Mary crying, bent over the unction stone, on the dead body of Our Redeemer. She was on His right-hand side, with Her back to the opening of the sepulcher grotto.

The torches lit up Her face so that I could see Her poor face ravaged by sorrow and washed by tears. She would take Jesus' hand, caress it, warm it against her cheeks, kiss it, stretch its fingers out… kiss them one by one, those poor motionless fingers. Then She would caress His face, would bend down to kiss His open mouth, His half-open eyes, His wounded forehead. The reddish light of the torches made the wounds of the tortured body appear more real and rendered the cruelty of His torture and the realism of His death more true and real.

And I remained in contemplation until my mind was clear. When I came out of my sopor, I prayed and I lay down to go to sleep. Then the above vision began. But Mother said to me: « Don't move. Just look. You will write it tomorrow » In my sleep I dreamt it all over again. When I woke up at 6.30 I saw what I had already seen both when I was awake and in my sleep. And I wrote while I was seeing. Then you came and I asked you if I could add the following. They are various sketches of Mary's stay in Zacharias' house.

22. Mary and Elizabeth Speak of their Children.

2nd April 1944.

It is morning. I see Mary sewing, sitting in the room on the ground floor. Elizabeth is going to and fro, busy with the housework. And when she comes into Mary's room, she never fails to go and caress Her fair head, which looks even more fair against the rather dark walls and in the beautiful sun rays that enter through the door open on to the garden.

Elizabeth bends down to look at Mary's work – the embroidery She had in Nazareth – and she praises its beauty.

« I have also some linen to spin » says Mary.

« For your Child? »

« No. I had it already when I never thought…» Mary does not say anything else. But I understand: « …when I never thought I was to be the Mother of God »

« But now You will have to use it for Him. Is it good? Fine? Children, You know, need very soft material. »

« I know. »

« I had begun… Late, because I wanted to be sure that it was not a deception of the Evil One. Although… I felt such a joy within me, that it could not possibly come from Satan. After… I suffered so much. I am old, Mary, really old, to be in this state. I suffered so much. Don't You suffer… »

« No. I don't. I have never been so well. »

« Of course. Quite right. You… there is no stain in You, as God chose You for His Mother. And that is why You are not subject to Eve's sufferings. The One You bear is holy. »

« I feel as if I had a wing in My heart and not a burden. I seem to have within Me all the flowers and all the birds that sing in springtime, and all the honey and all the sunshine… Oh! I am so happy! »

« Blessed Mary! Neither do I feel any longer burden, tiredness or pain, since I saw You. I seem to be new, young, freed from the miseries of woman's flesh. My child, after leaping happily at the sound of Your voice, is now quiet in his joy. And I seem to have him, in me, as in a living cradle, and I see him sleeping satisfied and happy, breathing like a little bird under the wing of its mother… I will now start working. He will no longer be a weight. I cannot see very well, but… »

« Never mind, Elizabeth. I will see to the spinning and weaving both for you and for your baby. I am quick and My sight is very good. »

« But you will have to see to Your… »

« Oh! There will be plenty time!… First I will take care of you, since you are going to have your baby very shortly, and later I will see to My Jesus. »

It is beyond human possibility to tell you how sweet are Mary's expression and voice, how bright Her eyes are with sweet happy tears, and how She smiles in pronouncing that Name, looking at the clear blue sky. She seems to be enraptured simply saying: « Jesus ».

Elizabeth exclaims: « What a beautiful name! The name of the Son of God, of Our Redeemer! »

« Oh! Elizabeth! » Mary becomes sad and She seizes the hands of Her relative who had laid them across her enlarged abdomen. « Tell Me, since you were illuminated by the Spirit of the Lord, when I came here, and you prophesied what the world does not know, tell Me: what will My Creature have to suffer to save the world? The Prophets… Oh! What do the Prophets say of the Savior? Isaiah… Do you remember Isaiah? “He is the Man of sorrows. Through His wounds we are healed. He was pierced through for our faults, crushed for our sins. Yahweh has been pleased to crush Him with suffering. After being condemned He was lifted up…” What lifting is he referring to? They call Him the Lamb and I cannot help thinking of the lamb of the Passover, of the lamb of Moses, and I associate it with the serpent elevated by Moses on a cross. Elizabeth!… Elizabeth!… What will they do to My Creature? What will He have to suffer to save the world? » Mary is crying.

Elizabeth comforts Her. « Mary, don't cry. He is Your Son, but He is also the Son of God. God will see to His Son, and will look after You, His Mother . And if so many will be cruel to Him, so many will love Him. So many!… Forever and ever. The world will look at Your Son and will bless You with Him. They will bless You, for You are the Spring from which redemption gushes out. The destiny of Your Son! He will be raised to the rank of King of the whole creation. Just think of that, Mary. King, because He will redeem the whole creation, and as such, He will be universal King. And He will be loved also in the world, in its lifetime. My son will precede Yours and will love Him. The angel told Zacharias. And he wrote it down for me. How painful it is to see him dumb, my Zacharias! But I hope that when the baby is born also the father will be freed from his punishment. Will You pray, too, since You are the Seat of the Power of God and the Cause of delight in the world. To obtain this grace I make my offers to the Lord, as best I can. I offer my creature: because it belongs to Him, as He

lent it to His servant to grant her the joy of being called “mother”. It is the testimony of what God has done for me. I want his name to be “John”. Isn't my son a grace? And didn't God grant me it? »

« And God, I am sure, will grant you the grace. I will pray… with you ».

« I suffer so much seeing him dumb!… » Elizabeth is crying.

« When he writes, as he can no longer speak to me, there seem to be mountains and oceans between me and my Zacharias. After so many years of sweet conversation, now there is nothing but silence from his mouth. And particularly now, when it would be so nice to talk about who is about to come. I even refrain from speaking to avoid seeing him getting strained in his efforts to reply to me by gestures. I have cried so much! How much did I long for You! The people of the village watch, talk and criticise. Such is the world. But when one has a pain or a joy, one needs to be understood, not criticised. But now my life seems completely improved. I feel a joy in me since You came here. I feel that my test is about to end and that I will soon be completely happy. I am right, am I not? I have resigned myself to everything. But if God would only forgive my husband! If I could only hear him pray once again! »

Mary caresses and comforts her and in order to divert her attention, she invites her to take a little walk in the sunny garden.

They walk under a well cultivated pergola, as far as a little rustic tower, in the holes of which doves have nested.

Mary scatters the birdseed laughing, because the doves have rushed on Her, cooing loudly and flapping noisily, forming iridescent circles around Her. They alight on Her head, shoulders, arms and on Her hands, stretching their rosy beaks to snatch the grains from Her hands, gracefully pecking the Virgin's rosy lips and Her teeth that shine in the sun. Mary takes the golden corn from a little sack and She laughs in the middle of that tournament of intrusive greed.

« How fond they are of You! » points out Elizabeth. « You have only been here a few days and they love You more than me, although I have always taken care of them. »

They continue walking until they reach an enclosure, at the end of the orchard, where there are about twenty goats with their little kids.

« Have you come back from the pasture? » Mary asks a little shepherd, caressing him.

« Yes, because my father said to me: “Go home, because it is going to rain shortly and there are some sheep about to lamb. Make sure they have dry herb and litter.” There he is, he is coming. » And he points to the wood, whence a continual trembling bleating can be heard.

Mary caresses a little kid, as fair as a child, which rubs itself against Her, and together with Elizabeth She drinks some new milk that the little shepherd offers them.

Then the sheep arrive led by a shepherd as hairy as a bear. But he is obviously a good man because he is carrying a groaning sheep on his shoulders. He puts her down gently and explains: « She is about to lamb. She can only walk with difficulty. I put her on my shoulders and I hurried all the way to get here in time. » The sheep, still limping painfully, is led into the fold by the boy.

Mary is sitting on a stone and is playing with the little kids and the lambs, offering clover flowers to their pretty rosy little faces. A black and white kid puts its little hooves on Her shoulder and smells Her hair. « It is not bread » says Mary laughing. « I will bring you some crumbs tomorrow. Be good, now. »

Once again cheerful, Elizabeth also laughs.

I see Mary Who is spinning very quickly under the pergola, where the grapes are growing bigger and bigger. Some time must have elapsed because the apples are beginning to redden on the trees and the bees are humming near the fig flowers already mature.

Elizabeth is now quite stout, and she is walking heavily. Mary looks at her carefully and lovingly. Also Mary's sides appear more round when She gets up to pick up the spindle which has fallen far away from Her. The expression on Her face has changed. It is more mature; before She was a girl, now She is a woman.

The women go into the house because it is now getting dark, and the lamps are lit in the room. While waiting for supper, Mary begins to weave.

« Does it never tire You? » asks Elizabeth, pointing to the loom.

« No, you can be sure of that. »

« I am exhausted by this heat. I have not suffered any longer, but now the weight is too heavy for my old kidneys. »

« Take courage. You will soon be free. How happy you will then be. I am longing to be a mother. My Child! My Jesus! What will He be like? »

« As beautiful as You are, Mary. »

« Oh no! More beautiful! He is God. I am His maid. What I meant is, will He be fair or dark? Will His eyes be like a clear sky, or like the eyes of a mountain deer? I imagine Him more beautiful than a cherub, with golden curly hair, His eyes the same color as the Sea of Galilee when the stars begin to peep on the horizon, His tiny little mouth as red as a pomegranate that bursts when it matures in the sun, and His cheeks as pink as this pale rose, with two little hands that could be contained in the hollow of a lily, they are so small and tiny, and two tiny feet that I can hold in the hollow of My hand, so soft and smooth, even more so than the petal of a flower. See. The idea I form of Him is taken from all the beautiful things that nature suggests to Me. And I can hear His voice. When He cries – because My Child will cry a little when He is hungry or sleepy, and it will always be a great pain for His Mummy Whose heart will be pierced every time She hears Him cry – when He cries, His voice will be like the bleating that now comes from a little lamb, only a few hours old, when it seeks its mother's breast, and her warm maternal fleece to sleep. When He laughs – and My heart in love with my Creature will then be full of Heaven, for I can be in love with Him, because He is My God, and it will not be against My consecrated virginity to love Him as a lover – His voice when He laughs will be like the merry cooing of a happy little dove which is full and content in its cosy little nest. And I think of Him when He is taking His first steps… a little bird hopping on a flowery meadow. The meadow will be His Mother's heart, it will be laid under His tiny pink feet with all Her love, so that He may not tread on anything that may hurt Him. Oh, how I will love My Child! My Son! Also Joseph will love Him. »

« But You will have to tell Joseph. »

Mary's face darkens, and She sighs. « Yes, I will have to tell him… I wish Heaven would tell him, because it is so difficult to tell. »

« Shall I tell him? We will ask him to come for John's circumcision… »

« No. I have entrusted God with the task of informing him of his happy destiny of putative father of the Son of God, and He will do so. The Spirit said to Me that evening: “Be silent. Entrust Me with the task of justifying You.” And He will do so. God never lies. It is a great trial, but with the help of the Eternal Father, it will be overcome. No one must learn from My mouth what the benignity of the Lord has done. Certainly you are the exception, because the Spirit revealed it to you. »

« I have not mentioned it to anybody, not even to Zacharias who would have been very happy. He thinks you are a mother according to nature. »

« I know. And I decided that out of prudence. The secrets of God are holy. The angel of the Lord did not reveal My divine maternity to Zacharias. He could have done so, if God had wanted, because God knew that the time for the Incarnation of His Word in Me was already imminent. But God hid this joyful light from Zacharias, who rejected your late maternity as something impossible. I have complied with the will of God, as you have seen. You perceived the secret living in Me. He did not perceive anything. Until the screen of his incredulity does not fall before the power of God, he will be separated from supernatural lights. »

Elizabeth sighs and becomes silent.

Zacharias comes in. He offers some parchment rolls to Mary. It is the hour of prayer before supper. Mary prays in a loud voice in place of Zacharias. Then they settle down at the table.

« When You are no longer with us, how we shall regret having no longer anyone to pray for us » says Elizabeth, looking at her dumb husband.

« You will pray then, Zacharias » says Mary.

He shakes his head and writes: « I will never be able to pray again for other people. I became unworthy when I doubted of my God. »

« Zacharias, you will pray. God forgives. »

The old man wipes a tear and sighs.

After supper, Mary goes back to the loom.

« That's enough! » says Elizabeth. « You will become too tired. »

« Your time is approaching, Elizabeth. I want to prepare for your child clothes worthy of him who will precede the King of the House of David. »

Zacharias writes: « Of whom will He be born? And where? »

Mary replies: « Where the Prophets said, and of whom the Eternal Father will choose. Whatever our Most High Lord does, is well done. »

Zacharias writes: « Well, in Bethlehem then! In Judah. We shall go and worship Him, woman. And You will come to Bethlehem, too, with Joseph. »

And Mary, bowing Her head over the loom says: « I will come. » The vision ends thus.

Mary says:

« The first charity towards our neighbors is to be exerted towards our neighbors. This must not seem a pun to you. There is charity towards God and charity towards our neighbors. Charity towards our neighbors comprises also charity towards ourselves. But if we love ourselves more than our neighbors, we are no longer charitable, we are selfish. Also in lawful matters, we must be so holy as to always give priority to the needs of our neighbor. Be sure, My children, that God provides for the generous by means of His power and His bounty.

It was this certainty that led Me to Hebron to assist My relative in her condition. And to My eagerness for human help, God, giving beyond measure as He is wont, added an unforeseen gift of supernatural assistance. I went to give material help and God sanctified My good intention by sanctifying, through it, the fruit of Elizabeth's womb, and by means of that sanctification, by which the Baptist was presanctified, He relieved the physical pain of the elderly daughter of Eve, who had conceived at an unusual age.

Elizabeth, a woman of fearless faith and confident submission to God's will, deserved to understand the mystery that was enclosed within Me. The Spirit spoke to her through the bouncing in her womb. The Baptist pronounced his first speech, as the Announcer of the Word, through the veils and the diaphragms of veins and flesh that separated and united him at the same time to his holy mother. Neither did I deny My prerogative of being the Mother of the Lord, because she was worthy of the information and the Light had revealed Itself to her. To deny it would have meant denying God the praise that it was just should be given to Him, the praise that I bore in Me, and which, since I could not tell anyone, I repeated to the herbs, to the flowers, to the stars, to the sun, to the singing birds and the patient sheep, to the warbling waters, to the golden light that kissed Me descending from Heaven. But it is sweeter to pray together rather than say our prayers by ourselves.

I would have liked all the world to know of My destiny, not for My own sake, but that they might join Me in praising My Lord.

Prudence forbade me to reveal the truth to Zacharias. That would have implied going beyond the work of God. And if I was His Spouse and Mother, I was still His servant, and I could not take the liberty of substituting Him and exceeding Him in a decree, simply because He had loved Me beyond measure. Elizabeth in her holiness understood, and was silent. Because a holy person is always submissive and humble.

The gift of God must increase our goodness. The more we receive from Him, the more we must give. Because the more we receive, the more obvious it is that He is with us and within us. And the more He is with us and within us, the more we must endeavor to reach His perfection.

That is why I worked for Elizabeth, postponing My own work. I was not afraid that I would not have time. God is the master of time. He provides for those who hope in Him, also in normal things. Selfishness does not speed matters up, it delays them. Charity does not delay, it speeds up. Always bear that in mind.

How much peace there was in Elizabeth's house! If I had not been worried about Joseph and… and my Child, Who was the Redeemer of the world, I would have been happy, But the cross was already casting its shadow on My life and I heard the voices of the Prophets like a knell…

My name was Mary. Bitterness was always mingled with the sweetness that God poured into My heart. And it increased more and more until the death of My Son. But when God calls us, Mary, to the destiny of victims for His glory, oh! it is sweet to be ground like corn in the millstone, to convert our pain into a bread that can strengthen the weak and make them capable of reaching Heaven! Now, it is enough. You are tired and happy. Rest now with My blessing »

23. The Birth of the Baptist.

3rd April 1944.

This vision of peace descends from Heaven, amid the disgusting things which the world nowadays offers us, and I do not know how that can be, because I am like a little twig at the mercy of the wind in my continuous conflicts with human wickedness so discordant with what lives within me.

We are still in Elizabeth's house. It is a beautiful summer evening, still clear in the last rays of the sun, and yet the sky is already decorated with a falcated moon that looks like a silver comma attached to a large deep blue cloth.

The rose-bushes give off strong perfume and the bees, like humming gold drops, are making their last flights in the quiet warm evening air. From the meadows, there is a strong smell of hay dried in the sun, it is almost like that of bread, of warm bread, just taken out of the oven. Perhaps it comes also from the many sheets hanging everywhere to dry, and which Sarah is now folding.

Mary is walking with Her cousin, linking arms with her. They go up and down very slowly, under the semi-dark pergola.

But Mary watches everything and, while taking care of Elizabeth, She sees that Sarah is ill at ease in folding a long sheet which she has taken off a hedge. « Sit down here, and wait for me » She says to her relative. And She goes to help the old servant, pulling the sheet to straighten it, and then folding it carefully. « They still smell of sun, they are warm » She says with a smile. And to make the old lady happy, She adds: « This sheet, after your bleaching, has become as beautiful as ever. You are the only one who knows how to do things so well. »

Sarah goes away, overjoyed, with her load of scented sheets.

Mary goes back to Elizabeth and says: « Let us take a few more steps. They will do you good. » And as Elizabeth is tired, and does not wish to move, Mary says to her: « Let us go only to see if your doves are all in their nests, and if the water in their tub is clear. We shall then come back home. »

Doves must be the favourite pets of Elizabeth. When they are in front of the rustic tower where all the doves are gathered, Elizabeth is deeply moved; in fact the hens are in the nests and the cocks are in front of them, but neither of them move, instead they all start cooing loudly when they see the two women: a gentle form of greeting. Elizabeth is overcome by the weakness of her condition and by fears which make her cry. She expresses her fears to her cousin. « If I should die… what will happen to my poor little doves? You will not be staying here. If You were to remain in my house, it would not matter if I died. I have had the greatest joy a woman can possibly have. The joy which I was no longer expecting to have, and I cannot even complain of death with the Lord, because He has overwhelmed me with His benignity, may He be blessed for it. But there is Zacharias-… and then there will be the child. An old man who would feel as though he were lost in a desert without his woman. And the other is so small, that he would be like a flower, condemned to die of cold because he is without his mother. Poor baby, without the caresses of his mother!… »

« But why are you so sad? God has given you the joy of being a mother, and He will not take it away from you when it is full. Little John will receive all the kisses of his mummy, and Zacharias all the attentions of his faithful wife until the very end of his long life. You are two branches of the same tree. One will not die, leaving the other alone. »

« You are good, and You comfort me. But I am so old to have a son. And now that I am about to have one, I am afraid. »

« Oh! No! There is Jesus here. We must not be afraid where there is Jesus. My Child relieved your pain, you said that yourself, when He was just a bud newly formed. Now that He is becoming more and more mature, and He already lives as My Creature – I can feel in My throat the beating of His little heart, and I feel as if a little nestling with a light pulsating heart were resting on My throat He will remove all dangers from you. You must have faith. »

« I have. But if I should die… don't leave Zacharias at once. I know that You are concerned with Your own house. But please remain here a little longer to help my husband in his first days of sorrow. »

« I shall stay to take delight in your joy and in the joy of your husband, and I will leave you when you are strong and happy. But now be quiet, Elizabeth. Everything will be all right. Nothing will happen to your household while you are suffering. Zacharias will be served by the most loving maid, your flowers will be looked after, and your doves will be attended to, and you will find them all beautiful and happy to rejoice with, when their loved mistress comes back. Let us go in now, because you are getting pale… »

« Yes, I think I am beginning to suffer again. Perhaps my time has come. Mary,

pray for me. »

« I will support you with My prayer until your labour ends in joy. »

The two women slowly go back into the house.

Elizabeth withdraws to her rooms. Mary, a capable and provident woman, gives the necessary instructions, prepares everything that may be necessary, and at the same time, She comforts Zacharias who is worried.

In the house that is sleepless that night, and where one can hear the strange voices of women called in to help, Mary is watchful like a lighthouse on a stormy night. The whole house rotates around Her, and She sees to everything, smiling sweetly. And She prays. When She is not called for this or that matter, She concentrates in prayer. She is now in the room where they always gather for their meals and to work. Zacharias is with Her, and he sighs and walks up and down uneasily. They have already prayed together. Then Mary has continued to pray. Also now that the old man, being tired, has sat down on his big chair near the table, and is quiet and sleepy, She prays. And when She sees him sleeping with his head resting on his arms crossed on the table, She takes Her sandals off to make no noise and walks barefooted and, making less noise than a butterfly fluttering around the room, She takes Zacharias' mantle, and lays it on him so gently that he continues to sleep in the comfort of the woollen cloth that protects him from the cold air of the night that comes in, in gusts from the door, which is very often opened. Then She starts praying again, and She prays more and more intensely, kneeling down, raising Her arms, when the painful cries of Elizabeth become heart-rending.

Sarah comes in and invites Her to go out. Mary goes out barefooted into the garden. « My mistress wants You » she says.

« I am coming. » And Mary walks along the house, goes upstairs… She looks like a white angel, wandering in the peaceful starry night. She goes into Elizabeth's room.

« Oh! Mary! Mary! What a pain! I can't stand it any longer, Mary! How much pain one must suffer to be a mother! »

Mary caresses her lovingly, and kisses her.

« Mary! Mary! Let me put my hands on Your belly! »

Mary takes the two wrinkled and swollen hands, and lays them on Her round abdomen, pressing them tightly with Her smooth, slender little hands. And She speaks in a low voice, now that they are alone: « Jesus is here, and He hears and sees you. Have faith, Elizabeth. His holy heart is beating more strongly because He is acting for your good. I can feel it throbbing as though I were holding it in My hands. And I understand the words that My Child says to Me. He is now saying: “Tell the woman not to be afraid. Only a little more pain. And then, with the first rays of the sun, among the many roses awaiting the morning's rays to open out on their stems, her house will have the most beautiful rose, and it will be John, My Predecessor.” »

Elizabeth now presses also her face against Mary's belly, and weeps gently.

Mary stands for some time in that attitude because the pain seems to ease giving a moment's relief. And she beckons everybody to be quiet. She remains standing, beautiful and white in the pale, faint light of an oil lamp, like an angel near a person who suffers. She is praying. I can see Her moving Her lips. But even if I did not see them move, I would understand that She is praying from the enraptured expression on Her face.

Some time goes by, and Elizabeth is in the throes once again. Mary kisses her again, and goes out . She goes downstairs very quickly in the moonlight, and goes to see if the old man is still sleeping. He is sleeping, and moaning in his sleep. Mary makes a gesture of compassion, and starts to pray once again.

More time passes. The old man awakes from his sleep and lifts up his head, and he is confused, because he does not recollect why he is there. Then he remembers, makes a gesture, and utters a guttural exclamation. He then writes: « Is he not born yet? » Mary shakes Her head in denial. Zacharias writes: « How much pain! Oh my poor woman! Will she manage without dying? »

Mary takes the hand of the old man, and reassures him: « At dawn, in a short while, the baby will be born. Everything will be all right. Elizabeth is strong. How beautiful this day will be – it will soon be daybreak – how beautiful this day will be when the child sees the light! It will be the nicest day of your life! The Lord has kept aside great graces for you and your child is the announcer of them. »

Zacharias shakes his head sadly, and points to his dumb mouth. He would like to say many things, but cannot.

Mary understands, and replies: « The Lord will complete your joy. Believe in Him completely, hope in Him indefinitely, love Him totally. The Most High will grant you more than you dare hope for. He wants this total faith from you, to wash out your past mistrust. Say in your heart with me: “I believe.” Say it with every beat of your heart. The treasures of God are opened for those who believe in Him and in His powerful bounty. »

The light begins to filter in through the partly open door. Mary opens it. Dawn makes the dewy earth completely white. There is a strong smell of humid earth and green herbs, and the first chirping of the birds, calling one another from branch to branch, can be heard.

The old man and Mary move towards the door. They are pale because of the sleepless night, and the light at dawn makes them look even more pale. Mary puts on Her sandals, and goes to the foot of the staircase and listens. A woman looks out, nods, and then goes back in. Nothing yet.

Mary goes into the room, and comes back with some warm milk which She gives to the old man. She goes to the doves, comes back, and disappears into the same room. Perhaps it is the kitchen. She moves around watching. She looks as though She had slept the most perfect sleep, She is so quick and serene.

Zacharias is walking up and down the garden very nervously. Mary looks at him compassionately. She then goes again into the usual room, and kneeling near Her loom, She prays intensely, because the cries of Elizabeth are becoming sharper. She bows down to the ground imploring the Eternal Father. Zacharias comes back in, and seeing Her in this prostrate state, the poor old man cries. Mary gets up and takes him by the hand. She is so much younger than he is, but She looks as though She were the mother of the poor old desolate soul, and She pours Her consolation on him.

They are standing thus, one beside the other, in the sun that makes the morning air rosy, and it is thus that the joyful news reaches them: « He is born! He is born! It's a boy! Happy father! A boy as beautiful as a rose, as beautiful as the sun, as strong and good as his mother! Joy for you, father, blessed by the Lord Who gave you a son that you may offer him to the Temple! Glory to God, Who has granted posterity to this house! Blessed are you, and your son who was born to you! May his offspring perpetuate your name for centuries, from generation to generation, and may his descendants always be in union with the Eternal Lord. »

Mary blesses the Lord weeping for joy. Then the two receive the little one, who has been brought to the father, that he may bless him. Zacharias does not go to Elizabeth. He receives the child, who is screaming desperately, but he does not go to his wife.

Mary instead goes, carrying with love the little one, who becomes quiet, as soon as She takes him in Her arms. The woman who is following Her notices this, and she says to Elizabeth: « Woman, your child became quiet immediately, when She took him. Look how peacefully he is sleeping, and only Heaven knows how restless and strong he is. But look now! He seems a little dove. »

Mary lays the creature near his mother and caresses her, tidying up her grey hair. « The rose is born » She whispers in a low voice, « and you are alive. Zacharias is happy. »

« Does he speak? »

« Not yet. But hope in the Lord. Rest now. I am staying with you. »

Mary says:

« If My presence had sanctified the Baptist, it did not nullify for Elizabeth the sentence against Eve. “You shall give birth to your children in pain” the Eternal Father had said.

Only I, because I was without stain, and I had not had any human copulation, was exempted from generating with pain. Sadness and pain are fruits of fault. I, Who was the Innocent One, had to know also sorrow and sadness, because I was the Co-Redeemer. But I did not know the torture of generating. No. I did not know that torture.

But believe Me, daughter, that there never was, and never will be a torture of puerpery like Mine as the Martyr of a spiritual Maternity, which was accomplished on the hardest of beds, the bed of My cross, at the foot of the scaffold of My dying Son. Which mother is compelled to generate thus? To blend the torture of Her bowels which contract spasmodically because of the death rattle of Her dying Creature, with the torture which tears Her bowels apart in the strain of overcoming the horror of having to say: “I love you, come to Me Who am your Mother” to each murderer of Her Son, born of the most sublime love that Heaven ever saw, of the love of a God with a virgin, of the kiss of Fire,

of the embrace of Light which became Flesh, and made the womb of a woman the Tabernacle of God?

“How much pain to be a mother!” says Elizabeth. So much! But nothing when compared to Mine.

“Let me press my hands on Your belly.” Oh, if you always asked Me for that when you suffer!

I am the Eternal Bearer of Jesus. He is in My womb, as you saw last year, like the Host in the monstrance. Who comes to Me, finds Him. Who leans on Me, touches Him. Who addresses Me, speaks to Him. I am His Dress. He is My Soul. My Son is united to His Mother more, much more now, than He was in the nine months that He was in My womb. And every pain is appeased, every hope flourishes and every grace flows for those who come to Me and rest their heads against My bosom.

I pray for you. Remember that. The beatitude of being in Heaven, living in the ray of God, does not cause Me to forget My children who are suffering on the earth. And I pray. And all Heaven prays, because Heaven loves. Heaven is living charity. And Charity has mercy on you. But even if I were all by Myself, My prayer would be sufficient for the needs of those who hope in God. Because I never stop praying for you all, for the holy and the wicked, to give joy to the holy, to give repentance to the wicked that they might be saved.

Come, come, o children of My sorrow. I am waiting for you at the foot of the Cross to grant you graces. »

24. The Circumcision of the Baptist.

4th April 1944.

I see the house rejoicing. It is the day of the circumcision.

Mary has made sure that everything is beautiful and in good order. The rooms are bright with light, the most beautiful cloths, the nicest furnishings are shining everywhere. There is a lot of people. Mary moves agile amongst the various groups. She is very beautiful in Her most beautiful white dress.

Elizabeth, respected by everybody as a matron, is enjoying most happily her feast. The child is laid on her lap sated with milk.

It is now the moment for the circumcision.

« We will call him Zacharias. You are old. It is only fair that the child be called after you » say the men.

« Not at all! » exclaims Elizabeth. « His name is John. His name must be the witness of the power of God. »

« But has there ever been a John in our kinship? »

« It does not matter, his name is to be John. »

« What do you say, Zacharias? You want your name, don't you? »

Zacharias shakes his head in denial. He takes his tablet and writes: « His name is John. » And as soon as he finishes writing, he adds, with his tongue now free: « because God has granted a great grace to me, his father, and to his mother, and to this new servant of His who will spend his life for the glory of the Lord, and will be called great forever in the world and in the eyes of God, because he will give converted hearts to the Most High Lord. The angel said so, and I did not believe. But now I believe, and the Light is now in me. The Light is amongst us, but you do not see it. It is its destiny not to be seen, because the souls of men are encumbered and idle, but my son will see It, and will speak of It, and will turn to It the hearts of the just in Israel. Oh! Blessed are those who believe in It and will always believe in the Word of the Lord. And blessed be You, o Eternal Lord, God of Israel, because You have visited and redeemed Your people, and You have raised up for us a powerful Saviour in the house of Your servant David. As You promised by mouth of the holy Prophets from ancient times, that You would save us from our enemies, and from the hands of all who hate us, to show Your mercy to our ancestors, and thus remember Your holy covenant. This is the oath You swore to our father Abraham; that You would grant us, free from fear, deliverance from the hands of our enemies, to serve You in Heaven and thrive in Your presence all our days » and he continues to the end.

The people present are most surprised at the name, at the miracle, at the words of Zacharias.

Elizabeth, who at the first words of Zacharias had uttered a cry of joy, is now weeping, embracing Mary, Who is caressing her happily.

I do not see the circumcision. I only see them bring back John, who is screaming at the top of his voice. Not even his mother's breast can calm him down. He is kicking like a little colt. Then Mary takes him, and lulls him, and he becomes quiet, and lies down peacefully.

« Now just look! » says Sarah. « He is quiet only when She picks him up! »

The people begin to go away slowly. In the room now there are only Mary, holding the baby in Her arms, and Elizabeth who is most happy.

Zacharias comes in, and closes the door. He looks at Mary with his eyes full of tears. He wants to speak. Then he is silent. He moves forward. He kneels down in front of Mary. « Bless the poor servant of the Lord » he says to Her. « Bless him, because You can do so, since You are carrying Him in Your womb. The word of the Lord was spoken to me when I admitted my error and I believed everything I had been told. I see You, and Your happy destiny. I adore the God of Jacob in You. You are my first Temple, where once again a priest, I can pray the Eternal Father again. You are blessed, because You obtained grace for the world and You are now bringing the Saviour to it. Forgive Your servant if he did not see Your majesty before. When You came here, You brought us all the graces, because everywhere You go, o Full of Grace, God works His miracles, and holy are those walls which You enter, holy become the ears which listen to Your voice, and holy the flesh You touch. Holy the hearts, because You grant graces, Mother of the Most High, Virgin of the Prophets, expected to bring the Saviour to the people of God. »

Mary smiles, full of humility and She speaks: « Praise be to the Lord. To Him only. From Him, not from Me, comes every grace. And He grants it to you, that you may love Him, and that it may help you to reach perfection in the following years to deserve His Kingdom that My Son will open to the Patriarchs, to the Prophets, to the just of the Lord. And since you can now pray before the Holy, please pray for the maidservant of the Most High, because to be Mother of the Son of God is blissful, to be Mother of the Redeemer must be a destiny of deepest sorrow. Pray for Me, because I feel My weight of sorrow increasing from hour to hour. And I shall have to bear it all My life. And even if I do not see the details, I feel that it will be heavier than if the whole world were placed on My shoulders of a woman, and I were to offer it to Heaven. I, I alone, poor woman! My Child! My Son! Ah! Your son no longer cries if I lull him. But shall I be able to lull Mine, to soothe His pain?… Pray for Me, priest of God. My heart shudders like a flower in a storm. I look at men, and I love them. But I see the Enemy appear behind their faces, and make them enemies of God, and of My Son Jesus… »

And the vision ends with the paleness of Mary, and Her tears, that cause Her eyes to shine brightly.

Mary says:

« God forgives him who acknowledges his sin, repents and confesses it with a humble and sincere heart, He does not only forgive, He rewards. Oh! How good is My Lord to those who are humble and sincere! To those who believe in Him, and trust in Him!

Clear your souls of what encumbers them and makes them insipid. Prepare your souls to receive the Light. As a light in darkness, It is a guide and a holy consolation.

O holy friendship with God, beatitude of His faithful ones, wealth unequalled by anything else, who possesses you is never alone, and never tastes the bitterness of despair. O holy friendship, you do not eradicate sorrow, because sorrow was the destiny of a God incarnate and can thus be the destiny of man. But you make this sorrow sweet in its bitterness, and you mingle with it a light and a caress which relieve the cross with a celestial touch.

And when Divine Bounty grants you graces, make use of the gift received to give glory to God. Do not be like foolish people who turn a good thing into a harmful weapon, or like lavish persons who convert their wealth into misery.

You give Me too much sorrow, My children, behind whose faces I see the Enemy appear, that is, he who hurls himself against My Jesus. Too much sorrow! I would like to be the Source of Grace for everybody. But too many among you do not want Grace. You ask for “graces”, but with a soul devoid of Grace. How can Grace succour you if you are Her enemies?

The great mystery of Good Friday is approaching. It is commemorated and celebrated in churches. But it is necessary to celebrate and commemorate it in your hearts, and to beat your breasts like those who were descending from

Golgotha and say. “In truth, this Man was the Son of God, the Saviour”, and say: “Jesus, for the sake of Your Name, save us”, and say: “Father, forgive us”, and finally say: “I am not worthy, but if You forgive me and come to me, my soul will be healed, and I no longer want to commit sin, because I no longer wish to be ill and hateful to You.”

Pray, children, with the words of My Son. Say to the Father for your enemies: “Father, forgive them.” Call the Father Who has withdrawn indignant at your errors: “Father, Father, why have You forsaken me? I am a sinner. But if You forsake me, I will perish. Come back, Holy Father, that I may be saved.” Entrust your eternal good, your spirit, to the Only One Who can preserve it unhurt from the demons: “Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit.” Oh! If with humility and love you surrender your spirit to God, He will lead it as a father leads his little one, neither will He allow anything to hurt your spirit.

Jesus, in His agony, prayed to teach you how to pray. I am reminding you of it in these days of His Passion.

And you, Mary, since you see My joy of a Mother and you are enraptured by it, consider and remember that I possessed God through an ever increasing sorrow. It descended into Me with the Seed of God and like a gigantic tree it has grown until it touched Heaven with its top, and hell with its roots, when I received on My lap the lifeless remains of the Flesh of My flesh, and I saw and counted His tortures, and I touched His torn Heart to consume My sorrow right until the last drop. »

25. The Presentation of the Baptist in the Temple. St. Joseph's Passion.

5th and 6th April 1944.

This is what I see the night between the Wednesday and Thursday of the Holy Week.

I see Zacharias, Elizabeth, Mary and Samuel getting off a comfortable waggon, to which also Mary's little donkey is tied. Mary is holding little John in Her arms and Samuel has a lamb and a basket with a pigeon in it. They get off at the usual stable, which must be the halting place for all the pilgrims to the Temple, who leave their mounts there.

Mary calls to the owner and asks him whether anybody arrived from Nazareth the day before or early that morning. « Nobody, woman » replies the little old man. Mary is surprised, but does not say anything else.

She gets Samuel to fix her little donkey, and then She joins the two elderly parents, and She explains Joseph's delay: « He must have been held up by something. But he will certainly come today. » She takes the child again from Elizabeth to whom She had handed him before, and they all set out for the Temple.

Zacharias is received with honour by the guards, and is greeted and congratulated by other priests. He is very handsome today, in his priestly robes and his joy of happy fatherhood. He looks like a patriarch. I think that Abraham must have been like him when he rejoiced offering Isaac to the Lord.

I see the ceremony of the presentation of the new Israelite and the purification of his mother. The ceremony is more stately than Mary's, because the priests celebrate it solemnly for the son of another priest. They all rush round the group of women and the child, and are happily engaged with them.

Also some curious people have come near and I can hear their comments. Since Mary is holding the child in Her arms while they move to the appointed place, the people think She is the mother.

But a woman says: « It's not possible. Can't you see that She is pregnant? The baby is only a few days old and she is already with child. »

« And yet » points out another one « only She can be the mother. The other woman is old. She must be a relative. But she certainly cannot be the mother at her age. »

« Let us follow them, and we will see who is right. »

And their surprise becomes even greater when they see that it is Elizabeth who fulfills the purification rite: she offers the bleating lamb in holocaust and the pigeon for sin.

« She is the mother. Didn't I tell you? »

« No! »

« Yes. »

The people whisper, still incredulous. They whisper so much that a peremptory « Ssst! » comes from the group of priests present at the rite. They are silent for a moment, but start whispering even louder when Elizabeth, radiant with holy pride, takes the child and moves forward in the Temple to make the presentation to the Lord.

« It is she! »

« It's always the mother who makes the offering. »

« What miracle can this be? »

« What will that child be, who has been granted to that woman at such an old age? »

« What sign can it be? »

« Don't you know? » says one, who has just arrived panting. « It's the son of Zacharias, the priest of the house of Aaron, the one who became dumb when he was offering incense in the Sanctuary. »

« It's a mystery! A mystery! And now he speaks once again! The birth of his son has untied his tongue. »

« I wonder what spirit spoke to him and paralysed his tongue to accustom him to be silent about the secrets of God! »

« It is a mystery! What secret truth does Zacharias know? »

« Will his son be the Messiah expected by Israel? »

« He was born in Judaea. Not in Bethlehem and not of a virgin. He can't be the Messiah! »

« Who is he, then? »

But the answer remains in the silence of God and the people are left to their curiosity.

The ceremony is over. The priests are now joyfully paying compliments to the mother and her child. The only one who is hardly noticed, nay, is avoided almost with disgust when they become aware of Her condition, is Mary.

After all the congratulations, most of them go out on to the road. Mary wants to go to the stable to see whether Joseph has arrived. He has not. Mary is disappointed and worried.

Elizabeth is anxious about Her. « We can stay until midday, then we must go, to be home before night. He is too young to be out at night. »

And Mary, calm and sad: « I will stay in one of the yards of the Temple. I will go to My teachers… I do not know. I will do something »

Zacharias puts forward a proposal which is immediately accepted as a good solution: « Let us go to Zebedee's relatives. Joseph will certainly look for You there. If he should not come there, it will be quite easy for You to find someone who will accompany You to Galilee, because the fishermen from Gennesaret are continuously going to and coming from that house. »

They take the little donkey, and go to Zebedee's relatives, who are the very same people with whom Joseph and Mary stayed four months before.

The time passes quickly, but there is no sign of Joseph. Mary controls Her grief lulling the baby, but it is obvious that She is worried. Although it is so warm that everybody is perspiring, She has not taken off Her mantle, concerned as She is to conceal Her condition.

At long last, Joseph is announced by a loud knocking at the door. Mary's face shines, cheerful again.

Joseph greets Her, because She is the first to go and meet him and greet him reverently. « The Lord's blessing on you, Mary! »

« And on you, Joseph. And praised be the Lord that you have come! Here, Zacharias and Elizabeth were about to leave, to be at home before night. »

« Your messenger arrived in Nazareth, when I was at Cana, working there. I was told the other evening. And I left at once. But although I have travelled without stopping, I am late, because the donkey lost one of his shoes. Please forgive me. »

« I am to be forgiven by you, because I have been away from Nazareth for such

a long time! But see, they were so happy to have Me with them, that I decided to please them up till now. »

« You have done well, Woman. Where is the baby? »

They enter the room where Elizabeth is giving suck to little John, before departing. Joseph congratulates the parents on the sturdiness of the child, who screams and kicks, as if they were thrashing him, because he has been taken away from his mother's breast to be shown to Joseph. They all laugh at his protests. Also Zebedee's relatives, who have come in with fresh fruit, milk and bread for everybody, and a large tray of fish, laugh and join in the conversation.

Mary speaks very little. She is sitting quiet and silent in Her little comer, with Her hands on Her lap under Her mantle. Also when She drinks a cup of milk, and eats a bunch of golden grapes with a little bread, She speaks very little, and hardly moves. Her looks at Joseph are a mixture of pain and enquiry.

He also looks at Her. And after some time, bending over Her shoulder, he asks Her: « Are You tired or are You not well? You look pale and sad. »

« I am sorry I have to part from little John. I am very fond of him. I held him on My heart only a few minutes after he was born… »

Joseph does not ask any more questions.

It is time for Zacharias to depart. The waggon stops at the door and they all go towards it. The two cousins embrace each other fondly. Mary kisses the baby many times before putting him in the lap of his mother, who is already sitting in the waggon. She then says goodbye to Zacharias, and asks him to bless Her. When kneeling before the priest, Her mantle slips off Her shoulders, and Her figure appears in the bright light of the summer afternoon. I do not know whether Joseph notices Her figure at this moment, because he is intent on saying goodbye to Elizabeth. The waggon leaves.

Joseph goes back into the house with Mary, Who sits down again in the dim comer. « If You do not mind travelling by night, I would suggest we leave at sunset. It is very warm during the day. The night instead is cool and quiet. I am saying that for You, because I don't want You to get sunstroke. It makes no difference to me to be in a scorching sun. But You… »

« As you wish, Joseph. I also think it is better to travel by night. »

« The house has been all tidied up. And the little orchard. The flowers are beautiful, as You will see. You are arriving just in time to see them all in bloom. The apple-tree, the fig-tree, the vines are laden with fruit as was never seen before, and I had to put a support for the pomegranate, because its branches were so heavily laden with fruit already fully grown, a thing which has never been seen before at this time of the year. The olive-tree… You will have plenty oil. It blossomed in a miraculous way, and not one flower was lost. All the flowers are now little olives. When they are mature, the tree will seem full of dark pearls. There isn't another orchard as beautiful in the whole of Nazareth. Also Your relatives are surprised. Alphaeus says it is a miracle. »

« Your hands have worked it! »

« Oh! no! Poor me! What can I have done? I took care of the trees and I gave some water to the flowers… Do You know? I built a fountain for You down at the end, near the grotto, and I put a large basin there. So You will not have to go out to get water. I brought the water down from the spring which is above Matthew's olivegrove. It is pure and plentiful. I brought a little stream down to You. I dug a small duct in the ground, I covered it properly, and now the water comes down, singing like a harp. I was not happy that You should go to the village fountain, and then carry back home the jars full of water. »

« Thank you, Joseph. You are so good! »

Joseph and Mary are now silent, as if they were tired. And Joseph is also dozing. Mary is praying.

It is now evening. The host insists that they should eat something before leaving. Joseph, in fact, eats some bread and fish, while Mary takes only some milk and fruit.

They then depart. They get on their donkeys. Joseph has fastened Mary's little trunk to his saddle, as he had done when coming to Jerusalem. And before She gets on Her donkey, he makes sure that Her saddle is properly fastened. I see that Joseph looks at Mary when she mounts Her saddle. But he does not say anything. Their journey starts when the first stars begin to twinkle in the sky.

They hurry to the town gates to reach them before they close. When they come out of Jerusalem, and they take the main road towards Galilee, the clear sky is

already crowded with stars. There is solemn quietness in the country. One can hear only a few nightingales singing, and the beating of the hooves of the two donkeys on the hard road, baked by the sun.

Mary says:

« It is the eve of Maundy Thursday. Some people may think that this vision is out of place. But your grief of lover of My Jesus Crucified is in your heart and will remain there even if a sweet vision is shown to you. It is like the tepidity emanating from a flame, which is still fire but is no longer fire. The flame is fire, not its tepidity which comes from it. No beatific or peaceful vision will be able to remove that grief from your heart. And regard it as something precious, more precious than your own life. Because it is the greatest gift that God can grant a believer in His Son. Further, my vision is not discordant, in all its peace, with the commemorations of this week.

Also My Joseph suffered his passion. It began in Jerusalem when he noticed My condition. And it lasted several days, exactly as it had happened to Jesus and to Me. Neither was it less painful for his soul. And only because of the holiness of My just spouse, it was contained in such a dignified and secret form, that it has been hardly noticed throughout centuries.

Oh! Our first Passion! Who can feel its intimate and silent intensity? Who can describe My pain when I realised that Heaven had not yet heard My prayer by revealing the mystery to Joseph?

I understood that he was not aware of it when I saw that he was respectful to Me as usual. If he had known that I bore in Me the Word of God, he would have adored that Word enclosed in My womb, with the acts of veneration which are due to God and which he would not have failed to accomplish, as I would not have refused to receive, not for My own sake, but for Him Who was within Me and that I bore, as the Ark of the Alliance carried the stone code and the vases of manna.

Who can measure My struggle against the dismay that endeavoured to overwhelm Me in order to convince Me that I had hoped in vain in the Lord? Oh! I think it was the furious rage of Satan! I perceived doubt rising behind My back, and stretching its icy claws to imprison My soul and prevent it from praying. Doubt is so dangerous and lethal to the spirit. It is lethal because it is the first agent of the deadly disease called “despair”, against which we must react with all our strength, so that our souls may not perish, and we may not lose God.

Who can truly tell Joseph's pain, his thoughts, the perturbation of his feelings? Like a little boat caught in a great storm, he was in a vortex of conflicting ideas, in a turmoil of reflections, of which one was more piercing and painful than the other. He was, to all appearances, a man betrayed by his wife. He saw his good reputation and the esteem of his world collapse around him; because of Her he saw scornful fingers pointed at himself and felt pitied by the village people. Above all, he perceived that his love and esteem for Me had fallen, struck to death, before the evidence of a deed.

In this respect, his holiness shines brighter than Mine. And I give this witness with the affection of a spouse, because I want you to love My Joseph, this wise, prudent, patient and good man, who is not separated from the mystery of Redemption, on the contrary, he is closely connected to it, because he suffered for it, consuming himself in sorrow for it, saving your Saviour at the cost of his own sacrifice because of his holiness.

Had he not been so holy, he would have acted in a human way, denouncing Me as an adulteress so that I should be stoned, and the Son of My sin should perish with Me. If he had been less holy, God would not have granted him His light as guidance in his trial. But Joseph was holy. His pure spirit lived in God. His charity was ardent and strong. And out of charity he saved your Saviour for you, both when he refrained from accusing Me to the elders, and when he saved Jesus in Egypt, leaving everything with prompt obedience.

The three days of Joseph's passion were short in number, but deep in intensity. And they were tremendous also for Me, those days of My first passion. Because I was aware of his suffering, which I could not alleviate, in fact I had to obey God's command Who had said to Me: “Be silent!”

And when, after we arrived in Nazareth, I saw him go away with a laconic goodbye, and bent as if he had aged in a short time, and I noticed that he no longer came to see Me in the evening as he used to do, then I tell you, My children, that My heart wept very bitterly. Closed in My house, all alone, in the house where everything reminded Me of the Annunciation and the Incarnation, and where everything reminded Me of Joseph, married to Me with spotless virginity, I had to fight despair and Satan's insinuation, and hope, hope, hope. And pray, pray, pray. And forgive, forgive, forgive Joseph's suspicion, his

disturbance and just despair.

My children: it is necessary to hope, to pray, to forgive to obtain God's intervention in our favour. You must live your passions, because you deserved them with your sins. I can teach you how to overcome them and turn them into joy. Hope beyond measure. Pray with confidence. Forgive to be forgiven. God's forgiveness will be the peace you desire, My children.

I will not say anything else for the time being. There will be silence until after the Easter triumph. It is Passion time. Have pity on your Redeemer. Listen to His cries, and count His wounds and tears. The former were suffered, the latter shed for you. Let every other vision disappear before that one which reminds you of the Redemption accomplished on your behalf. »

26. Mary of Nazareth Clarifies the Matter with Joseph.

31st May 1944.

After fifty-three days Mother shows Herself again in this vision which She tells me to put in this book. Joy is renewed in me. Because to see Mary is to possess joy.

I see the little orchard in Nazareth. Mary is spinning in the shade of a very thick apple-tree overloaded with apples which begin to redden and are so rosy and round that they look like so many cheeks of children.

But Mary is not rosy at all. The beautiful colour that brightened Her cheeks at Hebron has disappeared. Her face is as pale as ivory, only Her lips are a curve of pale coral. Under Her lowered eyelashes there are two dark shadows and Her eyes are swollen as if She had cried. I cannot see Her eyes, because Her head is bowed, intent on Her work and even more on a thought which is obviously distressing Her, in fact I can hear Her sighing like a person sad at heart.

She is all dressed in white, in white linen, because it is very warm, notwithstanding that the freshness, still intact, of the flowers makes me understand that it is morning. Her head is uncovered, and the sun playing among the apple-tree leaves, which are stirred by a very gentle breeze, filters with its thin rays down to the dark brown earth of the flower-beds and forms small circles of light on Her blond head, so that Her hair looks like pure gold.

There is no noise whatsoever from the house or from the neighbourhood. One can only hear the babbling of the tiny stream of water that runs down into the large basin at the bottom of the orchard.

Mary starts at a loud resolute knocking at the door. She lays the distaff and spindle down and rises to go and open. Although Her dress is loose and wide it does not conceal the rotundity of Her pelvis.

Joseph is standing in front of Her. Mary turns pale, also in Her lips. Her face is so bloodless that it looks like a host. Mary looks at Joseph with sad enquiring eyes. Joseph looks at Her with imploring ones. They are both silent, looking at each other. Then Mary says: « At this time, Joseph? Is there anything you need? What do you want to tell Me? Come in. »

Joseph enters and closes the door. He is still silent.

« Speak, Joseph. What is it you want from Me? »

« I want You to forgive me. » Joseph bends down as if he wanted to kneel down. But Mary, Who is always so reserved in touching him, seizes him resolutely by his shoulders and stops him.

Mary's face blushes and blanches in rapid succession, one moment it is all red and immediately afterwards it is as white as snow, as it was before. « You want Me to forgive you? I have nothing to forgive you, Joseph. I can but thank you once again for everything you have done here while I was away and for your love for Me. »

Joseph looks at Her, and I can see two large tears welling up in the cavity of his deep eyes, they remain there as if they were on the rim of a vase, and they then roll down on to his cheeks and his beard. « Forgive me, Mary. I mistrusted You. Now I know. I am not worthy of having such a treasure. I lacked in charity, I accused You in my heart, I accused You unfairly, because I did not ask You to tell me the truth. I sinned against God's law, because I did not love You as I loved myself… »

« Oh! no! You have not sinned! »

« Yes, I have, Mary. If I had been accused of such a crime, I would have

defended myself. But You… I was not giving You the possibility of defending Yourself, because I was about to take a decision without questioning You. I have been unfair to You, because I offended You with my suspicion. Also a single suspicion is an offence, Mary. Who suspects does not know. And I did not know You as I should have done. But for the torment I suffered… three days of torture, forgive me, Mary. »

« I have nothing for which to forgive you. On the contrary, I ask you to forgive Me for the pain I caused you. »

« Oh! Yes, it was a great pain! What a torture! Look! I was told this morning that my temples are white haired and my face wrinkled. These past days have been more than ten years of my life! But why, Mary, have You been so humble as to conceal Your glory from me, Your spouse, and thus allow me to suspect You? »

Joseph is not on his knees, but he is bent so low that he is as good as kneeling down, and Mary lays Her tiny hand on his head and smiles. She seems to be absolving him. And She whispers: « If I had not been humble in the most perfect manner, I would not have deserved to conceive the Expected One, Who is coming to pay for the sin of pride that ruined man. And then I obeyed… God had requested such obedience. It cost Me so much… because of you, because of the pain that you were to suffer. But I could but obey. I am the Handmaid of the Lord, and servants do not discuss the orders they receive. They fulfill them, Joseph, even if they cause bitter tears. » Mary weeps quietly while speaking. So quietly that Joseph, bent down as he is, does not notice it until a tear falls on the floor.

He then lifts his head and – it is the first time I see him do this he presses Mary's little hands in his dark strong ones and he kisses the tips of the rosy slender fingers that protrude like fresh buds of a peach-tree from the circle formed by his own hands.

« Now we shall have to arrange for… » Joseph does not say anything else, but he looks at Mary's body and She becomes purple and sits suddenly, to avoid Her figure being exposed to eyes watching Her. « We shall have to make haste. I will come here… We will complete the wedding… Next week. Is that all right? »

« Whatever you do is all right, Joseph. You are the head of the family, I am your servant. »

« No. I am Your servant. I am the happy servant of my Lord Who is growing in Your womb. You are blessed amongst all the women of Israel. This evening I will warn my relatives. And after… when I am here, we will work to prepare everything to receive… Oh! How can I receive God in my house? God… in my arms? I will die of joy!… I will never dare touch Him! I will never be able…! »

« You will be able, as I will, by the grace of God. »

« But You are… I am a poor man, the poorest of God's children!… »

« Jesus is coming to us, poor people, to make us rich in God, He is coming to us two, because we are the poorest and we admit it. Rejoice, Joseph. The House of David has the King long waited for and our home will become more splendid than Solomon's palace, because Heaven will be here and we shall share with God the secret of peace that men will be acquainted with later. He will grow among us, our arms will be the cradle for the Redeemer and our work will procure bread for Him… Oh! Joseph! We will hear the voice of God calling us "father and Mother!" Oh!… » Mary cries with joy. Such happy tears!

And Joseph, who is now kneeling at Her feet, is weeping with his head almost hidden in Mary's wide dress, which falls in folds on to the plain pavement of the room. The vision ends here.

Mary says:

« No one must interpret My pallor erroneously. It was not caused by human fear. From a human point of view I should have expected to be stoned to death. But I was not afraid because of that. I was suffering because of Joseph's pain. Neither was I upset by the thought that he might accuse Me. I was only sorry and afraid that he might be lacking in charity if he should insist in his accusation. That is why all My blood rushed to My heart when I saw him. It was the moment when even a just man might have offended Justice by offending charity. And I would have been extremely upset if a just man were to commit an error since he never erred.

Had I not been humble to the very extreme limit, as I told Joseph, I would not have deserved to bear within Me Him Who was lowering Himself: God, to the humiliation of being a man in order to make reparation for the pride of the

human race.

I have shown you that scene which is not described by any of the Gospels, because I want to draw the excessively misguided attention of men to the conditions which are essential to please God and receive His continuous calls to your hearts.

Faith: Joseph believed the heavenly messenger's words unquestioningly. He wanted but to believe, because he was sincerely convinced that God is good and that since he had hoped in the Lord, the Lord would not have reserved for him the torture of being betrayed, disappointed and sneered at by his neighbours. He asked for nothing, but to believe in Me, because, being honest, it was painful for him to think that other people were not honest. He lived according to the Law and the Law says: “Love your neighbour as you love yourself.” We love ourselves so much that we think we are perfect even when we are not. Can we therefore not love our neighbour simply because we think he is faulty?

Unrestricted Charity: A charity that knows how to forgive, that wants to forgive, and forgive in advance excusing wholeheartedly the imperfections of our neighbours. It is necessary to forgive immediately, accepting every extenuating circumstance.

Humility, as unrestricted as charity. You must admit that you can be faulty even in simple thoughts, and you must not be so proud as to refuse to say: “I made a mistake”, because such pride would be more harmful than the previous fault. Everybody makes mistakes, with the exception of God. Who can say: “I am never wrong” ? And there is a more difficult humility: the one that knows how to keep silent about God's wonderful things in us, when it is not necessary to proclaim them for His glory, so that we might not discourage our neighbour who has not received such special gifts from God. If He wants, oh! if He only wants, God reveals Himself in His servant! Elizabeth “saw” Me for what I was, My spouse knew Me for what I was, when it was time for him to know.

Leave to the Lord the care of proclaiming you His servants. He is anxious to do so, because every creature that rises to a particular mission, is a new glory which is added to His infinite glory, and is a witness of what man is, as God wanted him to be: a lesser perfection that reflects its Author. Remain in shadow and silence, you who are beloved by Grace, so that you may hear the only words of “life”, that you may deserve to have on you and in you the Sun that shines eternally.

Oh! Most Blessed Light, God, joy of Your servants, do shine on those servants of Yours that they may exult in their humility, praising You, only You, because You disperse the proud but raise the humble, who love You, to the splendour of Your Kingdom. »

27. The Census Edict.

4th June 1944.

I see the house in Nazareth once again: the little room where Mary usually takes Her meals. She is now working at a white piece of cloth. She lays Her work down to light a lamp, because it is getting dark, and She can no longer see well in the greenish light which comes in through the door half open on to the orchard. She closes the door, too.

Her abdomen is now very big. But She is still so beautiful. Her pace is always agile and all Her gestures are gentle. There is none of the heavy awkward movements which are generally noticed in a woman when she is about to give birth to her child. Only Her face has changed. Now She is « the woman ». Before, at the time of the Annunciation, She was a young girl with the serene innocent face of a child. Afterwards, in Elizabeth's house, when the Baptist was born, Her face had become more refined and gracefully mature. Now it is the serene but sweetly majestic face of a woman who has reached her full perfection in maternity.

She no longer resembles the « Annunciation » of Florence, so dear to you, Father. When She was a girl, I saw the resemblance. Her face is now longer and thinner, Her eyes are more pensive and larger. In brief, it is like what Mary is now in Heaven. Because Her countenance and age are once again as they were when the Saviour was born. Her youth is the eternal youth which not only has not known the corruption of death, but has not even experienced the withering of age. Time has not touched our Queen and Mother of the Lord Who created time; and if in Her torture at the time of Passion – a torture which had begun for Her a long time previously, I could say since Jesus began to evangelise – She looked old, such aging was like a veil cast over Her incorruptible person.

In fact since the moment that She sees Jesus risen, She becomes once again the fresh perfect creature She was before such torture, as if by kissing His Most Holy Wounds She had drunk a balm of youth which cancels the action of time, and even more so, of sorrow. In fact even eight days ago, when I saw the descent of the Holy Spirit on Whitsunday, I saw that Mary was “beautiful, most beautiful and all of a sudden looked younger” as I wrote and had written previously: “She looks like a blue angel.” Angels do not grow old. They are eternally beautiful, because they reflect the eternal youth and the eternal present of God. The angelical youth of Mary, blue angel, is perfected now, but not in the secrecy of a room unknown to the world and with only one archangel as witness. It reaches the perfect age which She took with Her to Heaven and which She will keep forever in Her holy glorified body, when the Spirit adorns Her with the bridal ring and crowns Her in the presence of everybody.

I wanted to make this digression because I thought that it was necessary. I will now revert to the description.

Mary, thus, is now really a « Woman » full of dignity and grace. Also Her smile has gained in sweetness and majesty. How beautiful She is!

Joseph comes in. He seems to be coming from the village, because he comes in through the main door, not from the workshop. Mary lifts Her head and smiles at him. Also Joseph smiles. But his smile seems to be a forced one, as if he were worried. Mary looks at him inquisitively. She then gets up to take the mantle that Joseph is taking off and She folds it and lays it on a chest.

Joseph sits at the table. He rests one elbow on it and lays his head on one hand, while with the other hand, absentmindedly, he combs and ruffles his beard with alternate strokes.

« Is there anything worrying you? » asks Mary. « Can I help you? »

« You always comfort me, Mary. But this time, I have a big problem… that concerns You. »

« Me, Joseph. And what is it? »

« They have posted an edict on the synagogue door. It orders the census of all Palestinians. And everybody must go and register in his place of origin. We must go to Bethlehem… »

« Oh! » exclaims Mary, interrupting him and putting one hand on Her bosom.

« It's a shock, isn't it? And a sad one. I know »

« No, Joseph. That's not it. I am thinking… I am thinking of the Holy Scriptures: Rachel, Benjamin's mother and Jacob's wife of whom the Star will be born: the Saviour. Rachel buried in Bethlehem, of which it is said: “But you, Bethlehem, Ephrathah, the least of the clans of Judah, out of you will be born the Ruler.” The Ruler who was promised to the House of David. He will be born there… »

« Do You… do You think it is already the time?… Oh! What shall we do? » Joseph is completely dismayed. He looks at Mary with two pitiful eyes.

She realises this and smiles. But She smiles more at Herself than at him. A smile that seems to say: « He is a man, a just man, but a man. And he sees as a man. He thinks as a man. Have pity on him, o soul of Mine, and guide him so that he may see as a spirit. » But Her kindness induces Her to reassure him. She is not untruthful. She simply diverts his anxiety. « I do not know, Joseph. My time is very close. But could the Lord not delay it to relieve you from this worry? He can do everything. Don't fear. »

« But the journey!… Think of the crowds. Will we find good lodgings? Will we be in time to come back? And if… if You are to become a Mother there, what will we do? We have no home there… We do not know anybody any longer. »

« Don't be afraid. Everything will be all right. God finds a shelter for the animal about to give birth. Do you think He will not find one for His Messiah? We trust in Him, don't we? We always trust in Him. The harder the trial, the more we trust. Like two children we put our hands in His fatherly ones. He is our guide. We rely entirely on Him. Consider how He has led us with love so far. A father, even the best of fathers, could not do it with greater care. We are His children and His servants. We fulfill His will. No harm can befall us. Also this edict is His will. What is Caesar after all? An instrument in the hands of God. Since the time when the Father decided to forgive man, He pre-arranged the events so that His Christ may be born in Bethlehem. Bethlehem, the smallest town in Judah did not yet exist and its glory was already destined. And there… a powerful man has risen, very far from here, and he conquered us, and now he wants to know all his subjects, now, while the world is in peace… so that the glory of Bethlehem may be accomplished and the word of God may not be belied, – as it would be if the Messiah were to be born elsewhere. Oh! What is our small

trouble if we consider the beauty of this moment of peace? Just think, Joseph: a period of time when there is no hatred in the world! Can there be a happier hour for the rising of the "Star", the light of which is divine and its influence is redemption? Oh! Do not be afraid, Joseph. If the roads are not safe, if the crowds will make the journey a difficult one, the angels will defend and protect us. Not us: but their King. If we find no accommodation, their wings will be our tents. No mishap will befall us. It cannot: God is with us. »

Joseph looks at Her and listens to Her, happy. The wrinkles on his forehead smooth away. He gets up, no longer tired or worried. He smiles. « You are blessed, Sun of my soul! You are blessed, because You see everything through the Grace, of which You are full! Don't let us waste time, then. Because we must leave as soon as possible, and come back as soon as possible, because everything is ready here for the… for the… »

« For our Son, Joseph. He must be such in the eyes of the world, remember that. The Father has covered His coming with the veil of mystery and we must not lift that veil. Jesus will do it, when the time comes… »

The beauty of Mary's face, look, expression and voice, when She says this « Jesus » cannot be described. It is already an ecstasy. And the vision ends on it.

Mary says:

« I will not add much more, because My words are already a lesson.

But I wish to draw the attention of wives to one point. Too many marriages break up through the fault of women, who do not possess that love, which is everything: kindness, pity and solace to their husbands. The physical suffering that lies heavy on women does not lie heavily on men. But all the moral worries do: necessities of work, decisions to be taken, responsibilities before the established authorities and one's own family… oh! how many things weigh on man! And how much comfort he also needs! And yet, a woman's selfishness is such that she adds the weight of useless and sometimes unfair complaints to the burden of her tired, disheartened, worried husband. And all this because she is selfish. She does not love. Love is not the satisfaction of one's senses and utility. To love is to satisfy him whom we love, beyond senses and utility, giving him the help he needs so that he may always be able to keep his wings open in the skies of hope and peace.

There is another point to which I wish to draw you attention. I have already spoken of it. But I wish to insist: trust in God. Trust summarises the theological virtues. Who trusts has faith. Who trusts hopes. Who trusts loves. When we love, we hope, we believe in a person, we trust. Otherwise we do not. God deserves our trust. If we trust poor men who may fail, why should we not trust God Who can never fail?

Trust is also humility. The proud man says: "I will do it by myself. I do not trust him because he is an incapable man, a liar, an overbearing fellow…" The humble man says: "I trust him. Why should I not? Why should I think that I am better than he is?" And more rightly he says of God: "Why should I mistrust Him Who is so good? Why should I think that I can do it by myself?" God gives Himself to the humble, but withdraws from the proud.

Trust is also obedience. And God loves the obedient man. Obedience implies that we acknowledge ourselves as His children and we acknowledge God as our Father. And a father can but love when he is a real father. God is our real Father and a perfect Father.

The third point I want you to consider. It is always based on trust. No event can happen unless God allows it. Are you powerful? You became so, because God permitted it. Are you a subject? You are such, because God permitted it. Endeavour, therefore, powerful one, not to turn your-power to your own detriment. It would always be "your detriment", even if at the beginning, it may appear detrimental to others. Because if God allows, He does not over-allow, and if you go beyond the mark, He will strike you and crush you. Endeavour, therefore, o subject, to make of your condition a magnet that will draw the protection of Heaven upon You. And never curse anyone. Leave that to God's care. It is for Him, the Lord of all, to bless and curse His creatures.

Go in peace. »

28. The Journey to Bethlehem.

5th June 1944.

I see a main road which is very crowded. Little donkeys, loaded with goods and chattels or with people, are going one way. Other little donkeys are going the opposite way. The people are spurring their mounts and those on foot are walking fast because it is cold.

The air is clear and dry. The sky is serene, but everywhere there is the sharp atmosphere common to winter days. The barren country seems vaster, the short grass in the pastures has been nipped by the winter winds; on the grazing ground, the sheep are looking for some grass and they are also looking for some sunshine, as the sun is rising very slowly. They are standing very close together one against the other, because they also are cold, and they bleat, lifting their heads and looking at the sun as if they were saying: « Come quick because it is cold! » The ground is undulating and its undulations are becoming clearer and clearer. It is a real hilly place. There are valleys and slopes covered with grass, and ridges. The road runs through the centre and goes south-east.

Mary is on a little grey donkey. She is all enveloped in a heavy mantle. In front of the saddle there is the fitting already seen in Her journey to Hebron, and on it there is the little trunk with the basic essential things.

Joseph is walking on the side holding the reins. « Are you tired? » he asks Her now and again.

Mary looks at him smiling and replies: « No, I am not. » The third time She adds: « You must be tired walking. »

« Oh! Me! It's nothing for me. I was only thinking that if I had found another donkey You would have been more comfortable, and we could have travelled faster. But I just could not find another one. Everybody needs a mount nowadays. But take heart. We shall soon be in Bethlehem. Ephrathah is beyond that mountain. »

They are both silent. The Virgin, when She does not speak, seems to concentrate on internal prayer. She smiles mildly at one of Her thoughts and if She looks at the crowd, She does not seem to see it for what it is: a man, a woman, an old man, a shepherd, a rich or a poor man, but only for what She sees.

« Are you cold? » asks Joseph when the wind starts blowing.

« No, thank you. »

But Joseph is not too happy. He touches Her feet, which are shod in sandals and are hanging down along the side of the donkey and can hardly be seen coming out from under Her long dress, and he must feel them cold, because he shakes his head and takes a blanket which he has across his shoulders and envelops Mary's legs in it and he spreads it also on Her lap, so that Her hands may be kept warm, being covered by the blanket and Her mantle.

They meet a shepherd, who cuts across the road with his herd, moving from the grazing ground on the right-hand side of the road to the one of the left-hand side. Joseph bends down to say something to him. The shepherd nods in assent. Joseph takes the donkey and drags it behind the herd into the grazing ground. The shepherd pulls a coarse bowl out of his knapsack, he milks a big sheep with swollen udders and hands the bowl to Joseph who offers it to Mary.

« May God bless you both » exclaims Mary. « You for your love, and you for your kindness. I will pray for you. »

« Are you coming from far? »

« From Nazareth » replies Joseph.

« And where are you going? »

« To Bethlehem. »

« A long journey for a woman in Her state. Is She your wife? »

« Yes, She is. »

« Have you got a place where to go? »

« No, we haven't. »

« That's bad! Bethlehem is overcrowded with people who have come from all over to register there, or are on their way to register elsewhere. I don't know whether you will find lodgings. Are you familiar with the place? »

« Not very. »

« Well… I will explain it to you… for Her… (and he points to Mary). Find the hotel, but it will be full. But I will tell you just the same, to guide you. It's in the square, in the largest one. This main road will take you to it. You can't miss it. There is a fountain in front of it, it is a long and low building with a very big door. It will be full. But if you do not find room in the hotel, or in any of the houses, go round to the back of the hotel, towards the country. There are some stables in the mountain, which are used sometimes by merchants to keep their animals there, on their way to Jerusalem, when they don't find room in the hotel. They are stables, you know, in the mountain: they are damp and cold and there

are no doors. But they are always a shelter, because your wife She can't be left on the road. Perhaps you will find room there and some hay to sleep on and for the donkey. And may God guide you. »

« And may God give you joy » answers Mary. Joseph instead replies: « Peace be with you. »

They take to the road again. A wider valley can be seen from the crest they have climbed over. In the valley, up and down the soft slopes surrounding it, there are many houses. It is Bethlehem.

« Here we are in David's land, Mary. Now You will be able to rest. You look so tired »

« No. I was thinking I think… » Mary gets hold of Joseph's hand and says to him with a blissful smile: « I really think that the time has come. »

« O Lord of mercy! What shall we do? »

« Don't be afraid, Joseph. Be steady. See how calm I am? »

« But You must be suffering a lot. »

« Oh! No. I am full of joy. Such a joy, so great, so beautiful, so uncontainable, that My heart is thumping and thumping and it is whispering to Me: “He is coming! He is coming!” It says so at each beat. It is My Child knocking at My heart and saying: “Mother, I am here and I am coming to give You the kiss of God.” Oh! What a joy, My dear Joseph! »

But Joseph is not joyful. He is thinking of the urgent need to find a shelter and he quickens his pace. He goes from door to door asking for a room. Nothing. They are all full. They reach the hotel. Even the rustic porches surrounding the large inner yard are full of campers.

Joseph leaves Mary on the donkey inside the yard and he goes out looking in other houses. He comes back thoroughly disheartened. He has not found anything. The fast winter twilight is beginning to spread its shadows. Joseph implores the hotel-keeper. He implores also some of the travellers. He points out that they are all healthy men, that there is a woman about to give birth to a child. He begs them to have mercy. Nothing.

There is a rich Pharisee who looks at them with obvious contempt and when Mary goes near him, he steps aside as if he had been approached by a leper. Joseph looks at him and his face blushes with disdain. Mary lays Her hand on his wrist to calm him and says: « Don't insist. Let us go. God will provide. »

They go out and they follow the wall of the hotel. They turn into a little street which runs between the hotel and some poor houses. They then turn behind the hotel. They look for the stables. At last, here are some grottos, a kind of cellars, I would say, rather than stables, because they are so low and damp. The best have already been taken. Joseph is utterly disheartened.

« Ehi! Galilean! » an old man shouts. « Down there, at the end, under those ruins, there is a den. Perhaps there is nobody in it yet. »

They hurry to the « den ». It is really a den. Among the ruins of an old building there is a hole, beyond which there is a grotto, an excavation in the mountain, rather than a grotto. It seems to consist of the foundations of the old building, with the roof formed by rubble supported by coarse tree trunks.

There is hardly any light, and to see better Joseph pulls out .tinder and flint and he lights a little lamp that he takes out of the knapsack he is carrying across his shoulders. He goes in and is greeted by a bellow. « Come in, Mary. It is empty. There is only an ox. » Joseph smiles. « It's better than nothing!… »

Mary dismounts from Her donkey and goes in.

Joseph has hung the little lamp on a nail of one of the supporting trunks. They see the vault covered with cobwebs, the soil stamped ramshackle earth, with holes, rubbish, excrement – the soil is strewn With straw. In the rear, an ox turns its head round and looks with his large quiet eyes while some hay is hanging from its lips. There is a rough seat and two big stones in a comer near a loop-hole. The blackness in that comer is a clear sign that a fire is generally lit there.

Mary, goes near the ox. She is cold. She puts Her hands on its neck to feel its warmth. The ox bellows but does not stir. It seems to understand. Also when Joseph pushes it aside to take a large quantity of hay from the manger and make a bed for Mary, the ox remains calm and quiet. The manger is a double one: that is, there is one out of which the ox eats, and above it there is a kind of a shelf, with some spare hay, which Joseph pulls down. The ox makes room also for the little donkey that, tired and hungry as it is, starts eating at once.

Joseph discovers also a battered bucket, turned upside down. He goes out,

because he saw a little stream outside, and he comes back with some water for the little donkey. He then takes possession of a bunch of twigs in a comer and he tries to sweep the floor with it. He next spreads the hay and makes a bed with it near the ox, in the most sheltered and dry comer. But he realizes that the poor hay is damp, and he sighs. He then lights a fire, and with the patience of Job, he dries the hay, a handful at the time, holding it near the fire.

Mary is sitting on the stool, She is tired, She watches and smiles. The hay is now ready. Mary sits down more comfortably on the soft hay, with Her back leaning against one of the tree trunks. Joseph completes… the furnishings hanging his mantle as a curtain on the hole that serves as a door. It is a makeshift protection. He then offers some bread and cheese to the Virgin, and he gives Her some water out of a flask.

« Sleep now » he says. « I will, sit up and watch that the fire does not go out. There is some wood fortunately, let us hope that it will bum and last. Thus I will be able to save the oil of the lamp. »

Mary lies down obediently. Joseph covers Her with Her own mantle and with the blanket that She had round Her feet earlier.

« But you… you will be cold. »

« No, Mary. I'll be near the fire. Try and rest now. Things will be better tomorrow. »

Mary closes Her eyes without insisting. Joseph creeps into his little comer, sits on the stool, with some dry shoot near him. They are very few. I do not think they will last long.

They are placed as follows: Mary is on the right hand side, with Her back to the… door, half hidden by the tree trunk and the ox which has lain down on the litter. Joseph is on the left side, towards the door, and since he is facing the fire, his back is turned towards Mary. But he turns round now and again to look at Her, and he sees She is lying quietly, as if She were sleeping. He breaks the little sticks as noiselessly as possible and throws them one at a time on to the little fire, so that it may not go out and may give some light and yet make the wood last longer. There is only the dim light of the fire: at times bright at times very faint. The lamp in fact has been put out and in the half light only the whiteness of the ox and of Joseph's hands and face can be seen. All the rest is a confused mass in the dull dim light.

« There is no dictation » says Mary. « The vision speaks by itself. It is for you to understand the lesson of charity, humility and purity emanating from it. Rest. Rest watching, as I used to keep watch waiting for Jesus. He will come to bring you His peace.' »

29. The Birth of Our Lord Jesus.

6th June 1944

I still see the inside of the poor stony shelter, where Mary and Joseph have found refuge, sharing the lot of some animals.

The little fire is dozing together with its guardian. Mary lifts Her head slowly from Her bed and looks round. She sees that Joseph's head is bowed over his chest, as if he were meditating, and She thinks that his good intention to remain awake has been overcome by tiredness. She smiles lovingly and making less noise than a butterfly alighting on a rose, She sits up and then goes on Her knees. She prays with a blissful smile on Her face. She prays with Her arms stretched out, almost in the shape of a cross, with the palms of Her hands facing up and forward, and She never seems to tire in that position. She then prostrates Herself with Her face on the hay, in an even more ardent prayer. A long prayer.

Joseph rouses. He notices that the fire is almost out and the stable almost dark. He throws a handful of very slender heath on to the fire and the flames are revived, he then adds some thicker twigs and finally some sticks, because the cold is really biting: the cold of a serene winter night that comes into the ruins from everywhere. Poor Joseph must be frozen sitting as he is near the door, if we can call a door the hole where Joseph's mantle serves as a curtain. He warms his hands near the fire, then takes his sandals off and warms his feet. When the fire is gaily blazing and its light is steady, he turns round. But he does not see anything, not even Mary's white veil that formed a clear line on the dark hay. He gets up and slowly moves towards Her pallet.

« Are You not sleeping, Mary? » he asks.

He asks Her three times until She turns round and replies: « I am praying. »

« Is there anything you need? »

« No, Joseph. »

« Try and sleep a little. At least try and rest. »

« I will try. But I don't get tired praying. »

« God be with You, Mary. »

« And with you, Joseph. »

Mary resumes Her position. Joseph to avoid falling asleep, goes on his knees near the fire and prays. He prays with his hands pressed against his face. He removes them now and again to feed the fire and then he resumes his ardent prayer. Apart from the noise of the crackling sticks and the noise made now and again by the donkey stamping its hooves on the ground, no other sound is heard.

A thin ray of moonlight creeps in through a crack in the vault and it seems a blade of unearthly silver looking for Mary. It stretches in length as the moon climbs higher in the sky and at last reaches Her. It is now on Her head, where it forms a halo of pure light.

Mary lifts Her head, as if She had a celestial call, and She gets up and goes on to Her knees again. Oh! How beautiful it is here now! She raises Her head, and Her face shines in the white moonlight and becomes transfigured by a supernatural smile. What does She see? What does She hear? What does She feel? She is the only one who can tell what She saw, heard and felt in the refulgent hour of Her Maternity. I can only see that the light around Her is increasing more and more. It seems to come down from Heaven, to arise from the poor things around Her, above all it seems to originate from Herself.

Her deep blue dress now seems of a pale myosotis blue, and Her hands and face are becoming clear blue as if they were placed under the glare of a huge pale sapphire. This hue is spreading more and more on the things around Her, it covers them, purifies them and brightens everything. It reminds me, although it is somewhat softer, of the hue I see in the vision of holy Paradise, and also of the colour I saw in the visit of the Wise Men.

The light is given off more and more intensely from Mary's body, it absorbs the moonlight. She seems to be drawing to Herself all the light that can descend from Heaven. She is now the Depository of the Light. She is to give this Light to the world. And this blissful, uncontainable, immeasurable, eternal, divine Light which is about to be given, is heralded by a dawn, a morning star, a chorus of atoms of Light that increase continuously like a tide, and rise more and more like incense, and descend like a large stream and stretch out like veils…

The vault, full of crevices, of cobwebs, of protruding rubble balanced by a miracle of physics, the dark, smokey repellent vault, now seems the ceiling of a royal hall. Each boulder is a block of silver, each crack an opal flash, each cobweb a most precious canopy interwoven with silver and diamonds. A huge green lizard, hibernating between two stones, seems an emerald jewel forgotten there by a queen: and a bunch of hibernating bats is like a precious onyx chandelier. The hay from the upper manger is no longer grass blades: it is pure silver wires quivering in the air with the grace of loose hair.

The dark wood of the lower manger is a block of burnished silver. The walls are covered with a brocade in which the white silk disappears under the pearly embroidery of the relief, and the soil… what is the soil now? It is a crystal lit tip by a white light. Its protrusions are like roses thrown in homage of the soil; the holes are precious cups from which perfumes and scents are to arise.

And the light increases more and more. It is now unbearable to the eye. And the Virgin disappears in so much light, as if She had been absorbed by an incandescent curtain…and the Mother emerges.

Yes. When the light becomes endurable once again to my eyes, I see Mary with the new-born Son in Her arms. A little Baby, rosy and plump, bustling with His little hands as big as rose buds and kicking with His tiny feet that could be contained in the hollow of the heart of a rose: and is crying with a thin trembling voice, just like a new-born little lamb, opening His pretty little mouth that resembles a wild strawberry, and showing a tiny tongue that trembles against the rosy roof of His mouth. And He moves His little head that is so blond that it seems without any hair, a little round head that His Mummy holds in the hollow of Her hand, while She looks at Her Baby and adores Him weeping and smiling at the same time, and She bends down to kiss Him not on His innocent head, but on the centre of His chest, where underneath there is His little heart beating for us… where one day there will be the Wound. And His Mother is doctoring that wound in advance, with Her immaculate kiss.

The ox, woken up by the dazzling light, gets up with a great noise of hooves and bellows, the donkey turns its head round and brays. It is the light that rouses them but I love to think that they wanted to greet their Creator, both for themselves and on behalf of all the animals.

Also Joseph, who almost enraptured, was praying so ardently as to be isolated from what was around him, now rouses and he sees a strange light filter through the fingers of his hands pressed against his face. He removes his hands, lifts his head and turns round. The ox, standing as it is, hides Mary. But She calls him: « Joseph, come. »

Joseph rushes. And when he sees, he stops, struck by reverence, and he is about to fall on his knees where he is. But Mary insists: « Come, Joseph » and She leans on the hay with Her left hand and, holding the Child close to Her heart with Her right one, She gets up and moves towards Joseph, who is walking embarrassed, because of a conflict in him between his desire to go and his fear of being irreverent.

They meet at the foot of the straw bed and they look at each other, weeping blissfully.

« Come, let us offer Jesus to the Father » says Mary. And while Joseph kneels down, She stands up between two trunks supporting the vault, She lifts up Her Creature in Her arms and says: « Here I am. On His behalf, O God, I speak these words to You: here I am to do Your will. And I, Mary, and My spouse, Joseph, with Him. Here are Your servants, O Lord. May Your will always be done by us, in every hour, in every event, for Your glory and Your love. »

Then Mary bends down and says: « Here, Joseph, take Him », and offers him the Child.

« What! I?… Me?… Oh, no! I am not worthy! » Joseph is utterly dumbfounded at the idea of having to touch God.

But Mary insists smiling: « You are well worthy. No one is more worthy than you are, and that is why the Most High chose you. Take Him, Joseph, and hold Him while I look for the linens. »

Joseph, blushing almost purple, stretches his arms out and takes the Baby, Who is screaming because of the cold and when he has Him in his arms, he no longer persists in the intention of holding Him far from himself, out of respect, but he presses Him to his heart and bursts into tears exclaiming: « Oh! Lord! My God! » And he bends down to kiss His tiny feet and feels them cold. He then sits on the ground, and holds Him close to his chest and with his brown tunic and his hands he tries to cover Him, and warm Him, defending Him from the bitterly cold wind of the night. He would like to go near the fire, but there is a cold draft there coming in from the door. It is better to stay where he is. No, it is better to go between the two animals which serve as a protection against the air and give out warmth. Thus, he goes between the ox and the donkey, with his back to the door, bending over the New-Born to form with his body a shelter, the two sides of which are a grey head with long ears, and a huge white muzzle with a steaming nose and two gentle soft eyes.

Mary has opened the trunk and has pulled out the linens and swaddling clothes. She has been near the fire warming them. She now moves towards Joseph and envelops the Baby with lukewarm linen and then with Her veil to protect His little head. « Where shall we put Him now? » She asks.

Joseph looks round, thinking… « Wait » he says. « Let us move the animals and their hay over here, we will then pull down that hay up there and arrange it in here. The wood on the side will protect Him from the air, the hay will serve as a pillow and the ox will warm Him a little with its breath. The ox is better than the donkey. It is more patient and quiet. » And he bustles about, while Mary is lulling the Baby, holding Him close to Her heart, and laying Her cheek on His tiny head to warm it.

Joseph makes up the fire, without economy this time, to have a good blaze, and he warms the hay and as it dries up, he keeps it near his chest, so that it will not get cold. Then, when he has gathered enough to make a little mattress for the Child, he goes to the manger and sorts it out as if it were a cradle. « It is ready » he says. « Now we would need a blanket, because the hay stings, and also to cover Him. »

« Take My mantle » says Mary.

« You will be cold. »

« Oh! It does not matter! The blanket is too coarse. The mantle is soft and warm. I am not cold at all. Don't let Him suffer any longer! »

Joseph takes the wide mantle of soft dark blue wool, he double folds it and lays it on the hay, leaving a strip hanging out of the manger. The first bed for the

Saviour is ready.

And the Mother, with Her sweet, graceful gait, moves to the manger, lays Him in it, and covers Him with the strip of Her mantle. She arranges it also around His bare head, almost completely covered by the hay, from which it is protected only by Mary's thin veil. Only His little face, the size of a man's fist, is left uncovered. Mary and Joseph, bending over the manger, are blissfully happy watching Him sleep His first sleep, because the warmth of the clothes and of the hay has appeased His crying, and made Him sleepy.

Mary says:
« I promised you that He would come to bring you His peace. Do you remember the peace you enjoyed at Christmas! When you saw Me with My Child? Then it was your time of peace. Now it is your time of pain. But you know by now. It is by means of pain that we achieve peace and every grace for ourselves and our neighbors. Jesus-Man became Jesus-God again, after the tremendous suffering of His Passion. He became Peace, once more. Peace from Heaven, from where He had come and from where He now pours out His peace for those who love Him in the world. But in the hours of His Passion, He, Peace of the world, was deprived of that peace. He would not have suffered if He had had it. And He had to suffer: and to suffer excruciatingly, to the very end.

I, Mary, redeemed woman by means of My divine Maternity. But that was only the beginning of woman's redemption. By refusing a human marriage in accordance with My vow of virginity, I had rejected all lustful satisfactions, deserving thus grace from God.

But it was not yet sufficient, because Eve's sin was a four branched tree: pride, avarice, gluttony and lust. And all four were to be cut off, before making the roots of the tree sterile.

By deeply humiliating Myself, I defeated pride.

I abased Myself before everybody. I am not referring to My humility towards God. Such humility is due to the Most High by every creature. Even His Word had it. It was necessary for Me, a woman, to have it. But have you ever considered what humiliation I had to suffer from men, without defending Myself in any way?

Even Joseph, who was a just man, had accused Me in his heart. The others, who were not just, had committed a sin of disparagement with regard to My condition, and the rumor of their words had come like a bitter wave to break up against My humanity. And they were the first of the infinite humiliations I was to suffer in My life as Mother of Jesus and of mankind.

Humiliations of poverty, of a refugee, humiliations for reproaches of relatives and friends who, being unaware of the truth, judged Me a weak woman with regard to My behavior as a Mother towards Jesus, when He was a young man, humiliations during the three years of His public life, cruel humiliations in the hour of Calvary, humiliation in having to admit that I could not afford to buy a place and the perfumes for the burial of my Son.

I overcame the avarice of the First Parents renouncing My Creature before the time.

A mother never renounces her creature unless she is forced to. Whether her heart is asked to renounce her creature by her country or by the love of a spouse or even by God Himself, she will resent and struggle against the separation. It is natural. A son grows in our womb and the tie that links him to us can never be completely broken. Even if the umbilical cord is cut, there is a nerve that always remains: it departs from the mother's heart and is grafted into the son's heart: it is a spiritual nerve, more lively and sensitive than a physical one. And a mother feels it stretching even to exceedingly severe pangs if the love of God or of a creature or the need of the country take her son away from her. And it breaks, tearing her heart, if death snatches her son from her.

And I renounced My Son from the very moment I had Him. I gave Him to God. I gave Him to you. I deprived Myself of the Fruit of My womb to make amends for Eve's theft of God's fruit.

I defeated gluttony, both of knowledge and of enjoyment, by agreeing to know only what God wanted Me to know, without asking Myself or Him more than what I was told. I believed unquestioningly. I overcame the innate personal delight of enjoyment because I denied Myself every sensual pleasure. I confined flesh, the instrument of Satan, together with Satan, under My heel and made of them a step to rise towards Heaven. Heaven! My aim. Where God was. My only hunger. A hunger which is not gluttony, but a necessity blessed by God, Who wants us to crave for Him.

I defeated lust, which is gluttony carried to the extreme of greed. Because every unrestrained vice leads to a bigger vice. And Eve's gluttony, which was already blameworthy, led her to lust. It was no longer enough for her to enjoy pleasure by herself. She wanted to take her crime to a refined intensity and thus she became acquainted with lust and was a mistress of lust for her companion.

I reversed the terms and instead of descending I have always ascended. Instead of causing other people to descend, I have always attracted them towards Heaven: of My honest companion, I made an angel.

Now that I possessed God and His infinite wealth with Him, I hastened to divest Myself of it saying: “Here I am: may Your will be done for Him and by Him.” He is chaste who chastises not only his flesh but also his affections and his thoughts. I had to be the Chaste One in order to annul the One who had been Unchaste in her flesh, her heart and her mind. And I never abandoned My reservedness, not even by saying of My Son: “He is Mine, I want Him”, since He belonged only to Me on earth, as He belonged only to God in Heaven.

And yet all this was not sufficient to achieve for woman the peace lost by Eve. I obtained that for you at the foot of the Cross: when I saw Him dying, Whom you saw being born. When I felt My bowels being torn apart by the cry of My dying Creature, I became void of all femininity. I was no longer flesh, but an angel. Mary, the Virgin Spouse of the Spirit, died that moment. The Mother of Grace remained, Who gave you the Grace She generated from Her torture. The female reconsecrated “woman” by me on Christmas night, achieved at the foot of the Cross the means to become a creature of Heaven.

This I did for you, depriving Myself of all satisfactions, even of holy ones. And whereas you had been reduced by Eve to females not superior to the mates of animals, I made of you, if you only wish so, saints of God. I ascended for you. As I had done for Joseph, I lifted you higher up. The 'rock of Calvary is My Mount of Olives. From there I took My leap to carry to Heaven the re-sanctified soul of woman together with My flesh, now glorified because it had borne the Word of God and had destroyed in Me the very last trace of Eve. It had destroyed the last root of that tree with four poisonous branches, a root stuck in the sensuality that had dragged mankind to fall and that will go on biting at your intestines until the end of time and to the last woman. From there, where I now shine in the ray of Love, I call you and I show you the Medicine to control yourselves: the Grace of My Lord and the Blood of My Son.

And you, My voice, rest your soul in the light of this dawn of Jesus, to gain strength for the future crucifixions which will not be spared you, because we want you here and one comes here through pain, because we want you here and the higher one comes the more one has suffered to obtain Grace for the world.

Go in peace. I am with you. »

30. The Adoration of the Shepherds.

7th June 1944. Eve of Corpus Christi.

I am writing in the presence of my Jesus-Master. He is here for me, all for me. He has come back, after such a long time, all for me.

You will say: « How? You have been hearing and seeing for almost a month and you say that He is with you after a long time? »

I will reply once again telling you what I have already told you several times both by word of mouth and in writing.

There is a difference between seeing and hearing. And above all there is a difference between seeing and hearing on behalf of other people, and seeing and hearing all for myself, exclusively for myself. In the former case I am a spectator and I repeat what I see and hear, but if that gives me joy because they are always things which bring great joy, it is also true that it is, so to say, an external joy. The word is a bad expression of what I feel so clearly.

But I cannot find a better one. In brief, just imagine that my joy is like that of one who reads a lovely book or sees a beautiful scene. One is moved, enjoys it, admires its harmony and thinks: « How lovely it is to be in the place of this person! » Instead in the latter case, that' is, when I hear and see for myself, then I am « that person.- » The word that I hear is for me, the person I see is for me. It is He and I, Mary and I, John and I. Alive, real, true, close to each other. Not in front of me, as if I were watching a film being shown, but beside my bed, or moving about my room, or leaning on pieces of furniture, or sitting, or standing, like real people alive, as my guests, which is quite different from a vision on behalf of everybody. In a word all that « is mine ».

And Jesus is here today, in actual fact He has been here since Yesterday afternoon, in His usual white woollen garment, which is rather ivory-white, and is so different in weight and shade from the magnificent one which He wears in Heaven and which seems to be made of immaterial linen, and is so white that it seems to be woven with yarn as clear as light. He is here with His long tapering fingers which are white verging to old ivory, with His handsome long pale face in which His dominating sweet eyes of dark sapphire shine between His thick brown eyelashes sparkling with blond-red reflections. He is here with His long soft hair, which is brighter blond-red where exposed to light and darker in the deep folds. He is here! He is here! And He is smiling at me while I write about Him. As He used to do at Viareggio… and as He stopped doing as from the Holy Week… causing all the distress which almost became a fever of despair, when in addition to the grief of being deprived of Him I was also bereft of the comfort of living where at least I had seen Him and I could say: « He used to lean there, to sit down here, here He bent to lay His hand on my head » and where my relatives had died.

Oh! unless one has experienced that, one cannot understand! It is not a question of pretending to have all that. We know very well that they are gratuitous graces and that we do not deserve them, neither can we expect them to last when they are granted to us. We know that. And the more they are given to us, the more we lower ourselves in humility, acknowledging our disgusting misery as compared with the Infinite Beauty and Divine Wealth which bestows itself upon us. But what do you think, Father? Does a son not wish to see his father and mother? Or a wife her husband? And when death or a long absence prevents them from seeing their dear ones, do they not suffer and do they not find comfort by living where they lived, and if they have to leave that place, do they not suffer twice as much, as they lose also the place where their love was reciprocated by the absent relative? Can those who suffer thus be reproached? No. And what about me? Is Jesus not my Father and Spouse? Dearer, much dearer than the dearest father and spouse?

And that He is such to me, you can judge by how I behaved at my mother's death. I suffered, you know? I still weep, because I loved her, notwithstanding her character. But you know how I got over that difficult hour. Jesus was there.

And He was dearer to me than my mother. Shall I tell you something? I suffered and I am suffering more now because of my mother's death, which took place eight months ago, than I suffered then . Because during these last two months I have been without Jesus for me and without Mary for me, and also now, if They leave me for a moment, I feel more than ever the desolation of being a sick orphan and I fall again into the deep human grief of those cruel days.

I am writing while Jesus is looking at me and therefore I am not exaggerating or distorting anything. In any case it is not my custom, and even if it were, it would be impossible to persist in it while He is watching me.

I have written this here, where it is not my habit to do so, because with regard to Mary's visions I never interpose my poor ego, as I already know that I must continue describing Her glories. Was Her Maternity not a crown of glories every moment? I am very ill and it is burdensome for me to write. And afterwards I feel extremely weak. But in order to make Her known, so that She may be loved more, I disregard everything. Are my shoulders aching? Is my heart giving in? Am I suffering from a racking headache? Is my temperature rising? It does not matter! Let Mary be known, beautiful and dear as I see Her through God's kindness and Hers, and that is enough for me.

Later I see a very wide country. The moon is at its zenith and she is sailing smoothly in a sky crowded with stars. They look like diamond studs fixed to a huge canopy of dark blue velvet and the moon is smiling in the middle of them with her big white face, from which streams of light descend and make the earth white. The barren trees seem taller and darker against so white a ground, whereas the low walls which rise here and there on the boundaries, look as white as milk and a little house far away seems a block of Carrara marble.

On my right I see a place enclosed by a thorn-bush hedge on two sides and by a low rugged wall on the other two. The wall supports a kind of low wide shed, which inside the enclosure is built in masonry and part in wood, as if in summer the wooden part should be removed and the shed should become a porch. From the enclosure intermittent short bleatings can be heard now and again. It must be the little sheep which dream or perhaps sense that it is almost daybreak because of the very bright moonlight. The brightness is intense to an excessive degree and it is increasing more and more as if the planet were coming near the earth or were sparkling because of a mysterious fire.

A shepherd looks out of the door, and lifting one arm to his forehead to shield his eyes, he looks up. It seems improbable that one should protect one's eyes from moonlight. But the moonlight in this case is so bright that it blinds people, particularly those who come out from a dark enclosure. Everything is calm. But

the bright moonlight is surprising. The shepherd calls his companions. They all come to the door: a group of hairy men of various ages. Some are just teenagers, some are already white haired, They comment on the strange event and the younger ones are afraid. One in particular, a boy about twelve years old, starts crying, and the older shepherds jeer at him.

« What are you afraid of, you fool? » the oldest man says to him. « Can't you see that the air is very quiet? Have you never seen clear moonlight? You have always been tied to your mother's apronstrings, haven't you? But there are many things for you to see! Once, I had gone as far as the Lebanon mountains, even farther. High up. I was young, and walking was a pleasure. And I was also rich, then… one night I saw such a bright light that I thought Elijah was about to come back in his chariot of fire. And an old man, he was the old man then – said to me: "A great adventure is about to take place in the world." It was for us a misadventure, because the Roman soldiers came. Oh! Many things you will see, if you live long enough. »

But the little shepherd is no longer listening to him. He looks as if he is no longer frightened, because he leaves the threshold and steals from behind the shoulders of a brawny herdsman, behind whom he had previously sought shelter, and goes out on to the grassy fold in front of the shed. He looks up and walks about like a sleep-walker or one hypnotised by something that compellingly attracts him. At a certain moment he shouts: « Oh! » and remains petrified with his arms slightly stretched out. His mates look at one another dumbfounded.

« But what is the matter with the fool? » says one.

« I will send him back to his mother tomorrow. I don't want mad people as guardians of the sheep » says another.

And the old man who had spoken earlier says: « Let us go and see before we judge him. Call also the others who are sleeping and bring your sticks. It might be a wild animal or some robber… »

They go in, they call the other shepherds and they come out with torches and clubs. They join the boy.

« There, there » he whispers smiling. « Above the tree, look at the light that is coming. It seems to be coming on the ray of the moon. There it is, it is coming near. How beautiful it is! »

« I can only see a rather brighter light. »

« So can I. »

« So can I » say the others.

« No. I see something like a body » says one whom I recognise to be the shepherd who gave the milk to Mary.

« It is… it is an angel! » shouts the boy. « Here he is, he is coming down, he is coming near… Down! On your knees before the angel of God! »

A long and venerable « Oh! » comes from the group of shepherds, who fall down face to the ground and the older they are, the more they appear to be crushed by the refulgent apparition. The young ones are on their knees, looking at the angel who is coming nearer and nearer, and then he stops mid-air above the enclosure wall, waving his large wings, a pearly brightness in the white moonlight surrounding him.

« Do not fear. I am not bringing you misfortune. I announce you a great joy for the people of Israel and for all the people of the world. » The angelic voice is the harmony of a harp and of singing nightingales.

« Today, in the City of David, the Saviour has been born! » In saying so, the angel spreads out his wings wider and wider, moving them as a sign of overwhelming joy, and a stream of golden sparks and precious stones seem to fall from them: a real rainbow describing a triumphal arch above the poor shed.

« … the Saviour, Who is Christ. » The angel shines with a brighter light. His two wings, now motionless, pointed upright towards the sky like two still sails on the sapphire of the sea, seem two bright flames ascending to Heaven.

« … Christ, the Lord! » The angel gathers his sparkling wings and covers himself with them as if they were a coat of diamonds on a dress of pearls, he bows down in adoration, with his arms crossed over his heart, while his head bent down as it is, disappears in the shade of the tops of the folded wings. Only an oblong bright motionless form can be seen for a few moments.

But now he stirs. He spreads out his wings, lifts his head, bright with a heavenly smile, and says: « You will recognise Him from the following signs: in a poor stable, behind Bethlehem, you will find a baby in swaddling clothes, in a manger for animals, because no roof was found for the Messiah in the city of

David. » The angel becomes grave, almost sad, in saying that.

But from the Heavens many angels – oh! how many! – come down, all like him – a ladder of angels descending and rejoicing and dimming the moonlight with their heavenly brightness. They all gather round the announcing angel, fluttering their wings, exhaling perfumes, playing notes in which the most beautiful voices of creation find a recollection, but elevated to uniform perfection. If painting is the expression of matter to become light, here melody is the expression of music to give men a hint of the beauty of God. To hear this melody is to know Paradise, where everything is harmony of love which emanates from God to make the blessed souls happy, and then from them returns to God to say to Him: « We love You! »

The angelical « Glory » spreads throughout the quiet country in wider and wider circles and the bright light with it. And the birds join their singing to greet the early light, and the sheep add their bleatings for the early sun. But, as previously in, the grotto for the ox and the donkey, I love to believe that the animals are greeting their Creator, Who has come down among them to love them both as a Man and as God.

The singing slowly fades away, as well as the light, and the angels ascend to Heaven…

The shepherds come back to reality.

« Did you hear? »

« Shall we go and see? »

« And what about the animals? »

« Oh! Nothing will happen to them! We are going to obey God's word!… »

« But where shall we go? »

« Didn't he say that He was born today? And that they did not find lodgings in Bethlehem? » It's the shepherd who gave the milk, who is speaking now. « Come with me, I know where He is. I saw the woman and I felt sorry for Her. I told them where to go, for Her sake, because I thought they might not find lodgings, and I gave the man some milk for Her. She is so young and beautiful, and She must be as good and kind as the angel who spoke to us. Come. Let us go and get some milk, cheese, lambs and tanned hides. They must be very poor… and I wonder how cold He must be Whose name I dare not mention! And imagine! I spoke to the Mother as I would have spoken to a poor wife!… »

They go into the shed and they come out shortly afterwards, some with little flasks of milk, some with little nets interwoven with esparto containing small whole round cheeses, some with baskets, each containing a little bleating lamb and some with tanned hides.

« I am taking them a sheep. She lambed a month ago. Her milk is very good. It will be useful if the woman should have no milk. She seemed a young girl to me and so pale! A jasmine face in moonlight » says the shepherd who gave the milk. And he leads them.

They set out in the moonlight aided by their torches, after closing the shed and the enclosure. They go along country paths, among thorn-bush hedges stripped by winter.

They go round Bethlehem. They reach the stable not the way Mary came, but from the opposite direction, so that they do not pass in front of the better stables, instead they find this one first. They go near the hole.

« Go in! »

« I wouldn't dare! »

« You go in! »

« No. »

« At least have a look. »

« You, Levi, who saw the angel first, obviously because you are better than we are, look in. » Before they said he was mad… but now it suits them if he dare what they do not.

The boy hesitates, but then he makes up his mind. He goes near the hole, pulls the mantle a little to one side, looks… and remains enraptured.

« What can you see? » they ask him anxiously in low voices.

« I can see a beautiful young woman and a man bending over a manger and I can hear… I can hear a little baby crying, and the woman is speaking to Him in a voice… oh! what a voice! »

« What is She saying? »

« She is saying: “Jesus, little one! Jesus, love of Your Mummy! Don't cry, little Son..”.. She is saying: “Oh! If I could only say to You: 'Take some milk, little one'. But I have not got any yet..”.. She says: “You are so cold, My love! And the hay is stinging You! How painful it is for Your Mummy to hear You crying so, without being able to help You!.”.. She says: “Sleep, soul of Mine! Because it breaks My heart to hear You crying and see Your tears!” and She kisses Him, and She must be warming His little feet with Her hands, because She is bent with Her arms in the manger. »

« Call Her! Let them hear you. »

« I won't. You should call Her, because you brought us here and you know Her! »

The shepherd opens his mouth, but he only utters a faint moaning noise.

Joseph turns round and comes to the door. « Who are you? »

« Shepherds. We brought you some food and some wool. We have come to worship the Saviour. »

« Come in. »

They go in, and the stable becomes brighter because of the light of the torches. The older men push the young ones in front of them.

Mary turns round and smiles. « Come » She says. « Come! », and She invites them with Her hand and Her smile, and She takes the boy who saw the angel and She draws him to Herself, against the manger. And the boy looks, and is happy.

The others, invited also by Joseph, move forward with their gifts and they place them at Mary's feet with few deep-felt words. They then look at the Baby Who is weeping a little and they smile moved and happy.

And one of them, somewhat bolder than the rest, says: « Mother, take this wool. It's soft and clean. I prepared it for my child who is about to be born. But I offer it to You. Lay your Son in this wool. It will be soft and warm. » And he offers the sheep hide, a beautiful hide, well covered with white soft wool.

Mary lifts Jesus, and puts it round Him. And She shows Him to the shepherds, who, kneeling on the hay on the ground, look at Him ecstatically!

They become bolder, and one suggests: « He should be given a mouthful of milk, better still, some water and honey. But we have no honey. We give it to little babies. I have seven children, and I know… »

« There is some milk here. Take it, Woman. »

« But it is cold. It should be warm. Where is Elias? He has the sheep. »

Elias must be the shepherd who gave the milk. But he is not there. He remained outside and is looking from the hole, but he cannot be seen in the dark night.

« Who led you here? »

« An angel told us to come, and Elias showed us the way. But where is he now? » The sheep declares his presence with a bleat.

« Come in. You are wanted. » He enters with his sheep, embarrassed because they all look at him.

« It's you! » says Joseph, who recognizes him, and Mary smiles at him saying: « You are good. »

They milk the sheep and with the hem of a piece of linen dipped into the warm creamy milk, Mary moistens the lips of the Baby Who sucks the sweet cream. They all smile, and even more so, when Jesus falls asleep in the warmth of the wool, with the little bit of linen still between His lips.

« But You can't stay here. It's cold and damp. And… there is too strong a smell of animals. It's not good… it's not good for the Saviour. »

« I know » replies Mary with a deep sigh. « But there is no room for us in Bethlehem. »

« Take heart, Woman. We will look for a house for You. »

« I will tell my mistress » says Elias. « She is good. She will receive You, even if she had to give You her own room. As soon as it is daylight, I will tell her. Her house is full of people. But she will find room for You. »

« For My Child, at least. Joseph and I can lie also on the floor. But for the Little One… »

« Don't worry, Woman. I will see to it. And we will tell many people what we were told. You will lack nothing. For the time being, take what our poverty can give You. We are shepherds… »

« We are poor, too. And we cannot reward you » says Joseph.

« Oh! We don't want it. Even if You could afford it, we would not want it. The Lord has already rewarded us. He promised peace to everybody. The angels said: “Peace to men of good will.” But He has already given it to us, because the angel said that this Child is the Saviour, Who is Christ, the Lord. We are poor and ignorant, but we know that the Prophets say that the Saviour will be the Prince of Peace. And he told us to come and adore Him. That is why He gave us His peace. Glory be to God in the Most High Heaven and glory to His Christ here, and You are blessed, Woman, Who gave birth to Him: You are holy, because You deserved to bear Him! Give us orders as our Queen, because we will be happy to serve You. What can we do for You? »

« You can love My Son, and always cherish the same thoughts as you have now. »

« But what about You? Is there anything You wish? Have You no relatives whom You would like to inform that He has been born? »

« Yes, I have them. But they are far away. They are at Hebron… »

« I will go » says Elias. « Who are they? »

« Zacharias, the priest, and My cousin Elizabeth. »

« Zacharias? Oh! I know him well. In summer I go up those mountains because the pastures are rich and beautiful, and I am a friend of his shepherd. When I know you are settled, I will go to Zacharias. »

« Thank you, Elias. »

« You need not thank me. It is a great honour for me, a poor shepherd, to go and speak to the priest and say to him: “The Saviour has been born.” »

« No. You must say to him: “Your cousin, Mary of Nazareth, has said that Jesus has been born, and that you should come to Bethlehem.” »

« I will say that. »

« May God reward You. I will remember you, Elias, and every one of you. »

« Will You tell Your Baby about us? »

« I certainly will. »

« I am Elias. », « And I am Levi. », « And I am Samuel. », « And I Jonah. », « And I Isaac. », « And I Tobias. », « And I Jonathan. », « And I Daniel. », « And I Simeon. », « My name is John. », « I am Joseph and my brother Benjamin, we are twins. »

« I will remember your names. »

« We must go… But we will come back… And we will bring others to worship Him. »

« How can we go back to the sheep-fold, leaving the Child? »

« Glory be to God Who has shown Him to us! »

« Will You let us kiss His dress? » asks Levi, with an angelic smile.

And Mary lifts Jesus slowly, and sitting on the hay, envelops the tiny little feet in a linen, and offers them to be kissed. And the shepherds bow down to the ground and kiss the tiny feet, veiled by the linen. Those with a beard clean it first; almost everyone is crying, and when they have to go, they walk out backwards, leaving their hearts there…

The vision ends thus, with Mary sitting on the straw with the Child on Her lap and Joseph who, leaning with his elbow on the manger, looks and adores.

Jesus says:

« I will speak today. You are very tired, but have a little more patience. It is the eve of Corpus Christi. I could speak to you about the Eucharist and the saints who became apostles of Its cult, as I spoke to you of the saints who were apostles of the Sacred Heart. But I want to speak to you of something else and of a class of worshippers of My Body who are the forerunners of Its cult. That is: the shepherds. They were the first worshippers of My Body of the Word, Who had become Man.

Once I told you and also My Church says this, the Holy Innocents are the proto-

martyrs of Christ. Now I tell you that the shepherds are the first worshippers of the Body of God. And they have all the qualifications to be the worshippers of My Body, o Eucharistic souls.

Firm faith: they believe the angel promptly and unquestioningly.

Generosity: they give all their wealth to their Lord.

Humility: they approach people, who from the human point of view, are poorer than they, and they do so with a modest attitude that does not humiliate them, and they profess themselves their servants.

Desire: what they are unable to offer, they endeavor to obtain by means of charitable work.

Prompt obedience: Mary wishes to inform Zacharias and Elias goes at once. He does not postpone the matter.

Love finally: they suffer in departing from the grotto and you say: “They leave their hearts there.” And you are right.

But should the same not happen with My Sacrament?

And there is another point, and it is entirely for you: note to whom the angel reveals himself first and who deserves to hear Mary's love effusions. Levi: the boy. God shows Himself to those who have a child's soul and He shows them also His mysteries and allows them to hear His divine words and Mary's. And those with a child's soul have also Levi's holy daring and they say: “Let us kiss Jesus' dress.” They say that to Mary. Because it is always Mary Who gives you Jesus. She is the Bearer of the Eucharist. She is the Living Pyx. Who goes to Mary, finds Me. Who asks Her for Me receives Me from Her. When a creature says to Mary: “Give me Your Jesus that I may love Him”, My Mother's smile causes Heaven's colors to change into a more lively brightness because of its greater delight.

Say, therefore, to Her: “Let me kiss Jesus' dress, let me kiss His wounds.” And dare even more: “Let me rest my head on Your Jesus' Heart, that I may delight in It.” Come. And rest. Like Jesus in His cradle, between Jesus and Mary. »

31. Zacharias' Visit.

8th June 1944.

I see the big room where I have already seen the meeting of the Magi with Jesus and their adoration. I understand that I am in the hospitable house where the Holy Family has been received. And I see Zacharias' arrival. Elizabeth is not there.

The landlady runs out into the lobby to meet the arriving guest and she shows him to a door. She knocks, and then withdraws discreetly.

Joseph opens the door, and he utters a cry of joy when he sees Zacharias. He takes him into a little room, as small as a corridor. « Mary is suckling the Child. She will not be long. Sit down, you must be tired. » And he makes room for his guest on his couch, and sits beside him.

I hear Joseph asking after little John and Zacharias replies: « He is growing as strong as a little colt. But he is teething now and he is suffering a little. That is why we did not want to bring him. It is very cold, and that is why Elizabeth did not come either. She could not leave him without milk. She was very upset, but the season is so rigorous! »

« It is rigorous indeed » replies Joseph.

« The man you sent me told me that you were homeless when He was born. You must have suffered a lot. »

« Yes, quite a lot. But our fears were greater than our discomfort. We were afraid the Child's health might be injured. And we had to stay there for the first days. We lacked nothing, for ourselves, because the shepherds gave the good news to the people of Bethlehem, and many of them brought us gifts. But we had no house, not even a decent room, a bed… and Jesus cried so much, particularly at night, because the wind was blowing in from all directions. I used to light a little fire. Only a little one, because the smoke made Jesus cough… and it was still cold in any case. Two animals do not give out much heat, especially when the cold air comes in from all directions! We had no warm water to wash Him, nor dry clothes to change Him. Yes, He suffered quite a lot! And Mary suffered seeing Him suffer. I suffered… so you can imagine His Mother's anguish! She fed Him with milk and tears, milk and love… Now here it is much better. I had made for Him such a comfortable cradle and Mary had

fitted it with a soft little mattress. But it is in Nazareth! Ah! If He were born there, it would have been different! »

« But Christ was to be born in Bethlehem. It was prophesied. »

Mary comes in, She heard their voices. She is all dressed in white wool. She has taken off the dark dress She was wearing during the journey and in the grotto, and She is all white, as I have seen Her dressed before. She is not wearing anything on Her head, and She is holding Jesus in Her arms: He is sleeping, sated with milk, in His pure white swaddling clothes.

Zacharias stands up reverently and bows down in veneration. He then goes nearer, and looks at Jesus with the greatest respect. He bends down, not so much to see Him better, as to pay Him homage. Mary offers the Child to him, and Zacharias takes Him with such adoration that he seems to be holding up a monstrance. It is in fact the Host that he takes in his hands, the Host already offered and that will be sacrificed after being given to men as a nourishment of love and redemption. Zacharias hands Jesus back to Mary.

They all sit down, and Zacharias explains once again to Mary the reason why Elizabeth has not come and how upset she was. « During the past months she has prepared some linens for Your blessed Son. I have brought them to You. They are downstairs in the waggon. »

He rises and goes out, then comes back with a large parcel and a smaller one. Joseph relieves him of the heavier one and Zacharias starts pulling his gifts from both of them: a soft handwoven woollen blanket, some linens and little dresses. Then from the other one, some honey, some snow-white flour, butter, apples for Mary and cakes baked by Elizabeth and many more little things which are a token of the motherly love of the grateful cousin for the young Mother.

« Please tell Elizabeth that I am very grateful to her, as I am grateful to you, too. I would have been so happy to see her, but I understand the situation. And I would also have loved to see little John… »

« But You will see him in spring. We will come and see You. »

« Nazareth is too far away » remarks Joseph.

« Nazareth? But you must stay here. The Messiah must grow up in Bethlehem. It is David's town. The Most High, through Caesar's will, brought Him to the town in David's land, the holy land of Judaea. Why take Him to Nazareth? You know in what opinion the Jews hold the Nazarenes. This Child is to be in future years the Savior of His people. The capital town must not scorn its King because He comes from a despised land. You know as well as I do how captious the Sanhedrin is and how disdainful its three main castes are… And then, here, near me, I will be able to help you somehow, and put everything I have, not so much in the way of material things, but of moral gifts, at the service of this New-Born Baby. And when He is old enough to understand, I will be very happy to be His teacher, as I will be for my own son, so that later, when He is grown up, He will bless me. We must consider that He is destined for great things and, consequently, He must be in a position to present Himself to the world with all the necessary means to win His game. He will certainly possess Wisdom. But also the simple fact that He was educated by a priest, will make Him more agreeable to the difficult Pharisees and Scribes and will render His mission easier. »

Mary looks at Joseph, and Joseph looks at Mary. Above the rosy innocent head of the Child, sleeping unaware of it all, there is a silent exchange of questions. And they are questions full of sadness. Mary is thinking of Her little house, Joseph is concerned about his work. Here, where only a few days ago they were completely unknown, they must start from scratch. Here they have none of the dear things they left at home, and which they had prepared with so much love for the Child.

And Mary says so: « How can we do that? We have left everything there. Joseph had worked so hard for My Jesus, without sparing labor or money. He worked at night, so that during the day he could work for other people and thus earn enough to buy the best wood, the softest wool, the finest linen, and prepare everything for Jesus. He built beehives, and he even worked as a mason to make certain modifications in the house, so that the cradle could be placed in My room and remain there until Jesus had grown up and the cradle could then be replaced by a bed, because Jesus will stay with Me until He is an adolescent »

« Joseph can go and get what you left there »

« And where will we put it? You know, Zacharias, that we are poor. We have only our work and our home. And they both enable us to live without starving. But here… perhaps we will find some work. But we will always have the problem of a house. This good woman cannot give us hospitality forever. And I cannot sacrifice Joseph more than he has already sacrificed himself for My sake! »

« Oh! Me! It's nothing for me! I am concerned with Mary's grief. Her grief in not living in Her own house… »

Two big tears well from Mary's eyes.

« I think that house must be as dear to Her as Paradise, because of the mystery which was accomplished in it. I speak little, but I understand a lot. If it wasn't for that, I would not be upset. I will work twice as much, that's all. I am young and strong enough to work twice as much as I used to and see to everything. And if Mary does not suffer too much… and if you say that we must do so… well, here I am. I will do whatever you think is best. Provided that it will help Jesus. »

« It will certainly help. Think it over, and you will see the reasons. »

« It is also said that the Messiah will be called Nazarene… » objects Mary.

« True. But at least, until He is grown up, let Him grow up in Judaea. The Prophet says: "And you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, will be the greatest, because out of you will come the Savior." He does not speak of Nazareth. Perhaps that title was given to Him for some reason unknown to us. But this is His land. »

« You say so, you, priest, and we… we listen to you with sad hearts, and we believe you. But how painful it is!… When shall I see that house where I became a Mother? » Mary is weeping, silently. And I understand Her grief. Oh! I do understand. The vision ends on Mary's weeping.

Mary then says:

« I know that you understand. But you will see Me crying more bitterly. For the time being, I want to relieve your spirit by showing you Joseph's holiness. He was a man, that is, he had no other help for his spirit, except his holiness. I had all the gifts of God, in My condition of Immaculate. I did not know I was such. But the gifts were active in My soul, and gave Me spiritual strength. But he was not immaculate. Humanity was in him with all its heavy weight and he had to rise towards perfection with all that burden, at the cost of continuous efforts of all his faculties to reach perfection and be agreeable to God.

Oh! My holy spouse! Holy in everything, also in the most humble things in life. Holy for his angelical chastity. Holy for his human honesty. Holy for his patience, his activity, for his constant serenity, for his modesty, for everything. His holiness shines also in this event. A priest says to him: "You ought to settle here" and he replies, fully aware of the greater hardships he would have to face: "It is nothing for Me. I am concerned with Mary's grief. If it was not for that, I would not be upset. Provided that it will help Jesus." Jesus, Mary: his angelical loves. My holy spouse loved nothing else on earth. And he sacrificed himself to that love.

They elected him protector of Christian families, of workers and many other categories. But he should be appointed protector not only of dying people, of married couples, of workmen, but also of those consecrated to God. Who, of all the people in the world consecrated to the service of God, has consecrated himself as he did, to the service of his God, accepting everything, foregoing everything, bearing everything, fulfilling everything with quickness, with a cheerful mind, a constant humour? There is no one like him.

And I wish to draw your attention to another point, nay two points.

Zacharias is a priest. Joseph is not. But you must note how he, who is not a priest, has a more heavenly soul than the priest. Zacharias thinks in a human way, and in a human way he expounds the Scriptures because he allows himself to be led by his good human sense, and it is not the first time he does so. And he was punished for it. But he relapses, although less gravely. With regard to John's birth he said: "How can that happen, if I am old, and my wife is barren?"

Now he says: "To smooth His way, Christ is to be brought up here." And with that subtle root of pride that persists also in the best people, he thinks that he can be useful to Jesus. Not useful in the sense that Joseph wanted to be, by serving Him, but by teaching Him… God forgave him, because of his good intention. But did the "Master" need teachers?

I endeavored to make him see the truth of the prophecies. But he felt he was more learned than I was and made use of such feeling in his own way. I could

have insisted and outdone him. But this is the other point I wanted to draw your attention to – I respected the priest because of his dignity, not because of his knowledge.

In general, a priest is always enlightened by God. I said: “in general”. He is enlightened when he is a real priest. It is not his robe that consecrates him: it is his soul. To judge whether one is a real priest, one must consider what comes out of his soul. As My Jesus said, the things that sanctify or contaminate come out from the soul, and they characterise the whole behavior of a person. So, when one is a real priest, he is generally inspired by God. We must have a supernatural charity and pray for the others, who are not such.

But My Son has already placed you at the service of this redemption, so I will say no more. Be happy to suffer, so that the number of real priests may increase. And rely peacefully on the word of him who guides you. And believe and obey his advice. Obedience always saves you, even if the advice given to you is not completely perfect.

As you know, we obeyed. And we did well. It is true that Herod confined the slaughter of the children to Bethlehem and its surroundings. But could Satan not have spread and propagated such hatred much farther and wider and have induced all the mighty ones in Palestine to commit a similar crime in order to kill the future King of the Jews? He could have done that and it would have happened in Christ's early days, when the repeated miracles had drawn the attention of both the crowds and of those in power. If such an event had taken place, how could we have crossed the whole of Palestine, to go from Nazareth to Egypt, the hospitable land for persecuted Jews, and make such a journey with a little child, and while persecution was raging? It was easier to flee from Bethlehem, even if the flight was equally painful.

Obedience always saves you. Remember that. And respect for a priest is always a sign of a Christian education. Woe to those priests who lose their apostolic ardour! Also Jesus said that. But woe also to those who think that they are right in despising them! Because they consecrate and hand out the True Bread that descends from Heaven. And that contact makes them holy, just like a sacred chalice, even if they are not totally holy. They will answer to God for it. You must consider them as such and not worry about anything else. You must not be more strict than your Lord Jesus, Who, at their command, leaves Heaven and descends to be raised by their hands. You must learn from Him. And if they are blind, if they are deaf, if their souls are paralyzed and their thoughts are unsound, if they are lepers full of faults in strong contrast with their mission, if they are like corpses in sepulchers, then call Jesus that He may heal them and revive them.

Call Him with your prayers, and your suffering, o victim souls. To save a soul is to predestine one's own soul to Heaven. But to save the soul of a priest is to save a large number of souls, because every holy priest is a net that drags souls to God. And to save a priest, that is to sanctify: re-sanctify, is to create this mystical net. Each prey is a light to be added to your eternal crown.

Go in peace. »

32. Presentation of Jesus in the Temple.

1st February 1944.

I see a couple of people departing from a very modest house. A very young mother comes down an outside staircase holding in her arms a child enveloped in a white cloth.

I recognize our Mother. She is always the same: pale and blonde, agile and so kind in Her behavior. She is dressed in white, with a pale blue mantle and a white veil on Her head. She is carrying Her Child so carefully.

Joseph is waiting for Her at the foot of the steps with a little grey donkey. Joseph is dressed entirely in light brown: both his tunic and his mantle being the same color. He looks at Mary and smiles at Her. When Mary arrives near the little donkey, Joseph places the animal's bridle on his left arm, he takes for a moment the Child, Who is sleeping peacefully, and thus allows Mary to sit more comfortably on the donkey's saddle. He then hands Jesus back to Her and they set out.

Joseph is walking beside Mary, holding the bridle all the time and ensuring that the donkey goes straight on without stumbling. Mary is holding Jesus in Her lap, and lest He might feel cold, She spreads the edge of Her mantle over Him. Joseph and Mary speak very little but they often smile at each other.

The road, which is not a model road, winds along a country made barren by the season of the year. Only a few other travellers meet them on the road or overtake them.

Then I see some houses and the walls around a town. They go in through a gate and start walking on the pavement which is all broken up, and very irregular. Progress is now much more difficult, both because the traffic causes the donkey to stop every moment and because the holes where stones are missing make the poor animal jerk continuously and thus Mary and the Child are also disturbed.

The road is not flat. It is uphill, although but slightly. It is a narrow road running between high houses with small narrow low doors and only a few windows on the road. High above, the sky can be seen peeping with many thin blue strips between the houses, nay between the terraces. Down in the street there are many people and much shouting. They meet other people on foot or riding donkeys or leading loaded donkeys and a crowd following a cumbersome camel caravan. At a certain moment, a patrol of Roman legionaries passes by with a great noise of hooves and arms and they disappear beyond an arch built across a narrow stony road.

Joseph turns left along a wider and more pleasant road. I can see the embattled town walls, with which I am already familiar, at the end of the street.

Mary dismounts from the little donkey near a gate where there is a kind of stall for other donkeys. I say « stall » because it is a kind of shed, or better still, a kind of shed, spread with straw; there are also some poles with rings to which the animals are tied.

Joseph gives some coins to a little man who has gone up to him and with them he buys some hay and he draws a pail of water from a rustic well in the comer. He then feeds the donkey. He joins Mary and they both enter the enclosure of the Temple.

At first, they turn their steps towards an arcade where the merchants are, to whom Jesus later will give a good lashing: the vendors of lambs and doves and the money-changers. Joseph buys two little white pigeons. He does not change any money: he obviously has what is required.

They then make for a side door, with eight steps, as all the doors seem to have, because the centre of the Temple is raised above the surrounding ground. The door opens into a great hall like the doors of our houses in towns, to give you an idea, only this one is larger and more ornate. In the hall there are on the right and on the left two kinds of altars, that is two rectangular constructions, the purpose of which I do not understand at first. They are like low basins, because the internal part is lower than the external rim, which is a few centimeters higher.

A priest approaches them, I do not know whether he was called by Joseph or whether he did so of his own accord. Mary offers Her two little pigeons and since I know their fate, I turn my eyes elsewhere. I watch the decorations of the very heavy portal, of the ceiling and of the hall. But I get the impression, by a side glance, that the priest sprays Mary with some water. It must be water, because I do not see any stains on Her dress. Then Mary, Who had given the priest a handful of coins together with the two pigeons (I had forgotten to mention that), goes into the real Temple, in the company of the priest.

I am watching everything. It is a most ornate place. Sculptured angels' heads, palms and decorations adorn the columns, the walls and the ceiling. Light comes in through strange long narrow windows, obviously without panes, built diagonally with regard to the walls. I suppose the idea is to keep the rain out.

Mary moves forward to a certain point. She then stops. A few meters from Her, there are more steps on top of which there is a kind of altar, beyond which there is another construction.

I now realize that I thought I was in the Temple, instead I was in the part surrounding the real Temple, that is the Holy, beyond which no one can proceed, apparently, except the priests. What I therefore thought was the Temple, is but an enclosed vestibule, which on three sides encircles the Temple, in which the Tabernacle is enclosed. I do not know whether I have made myself understood. But I am neither an architect nor an engineer.

Mary offers the Child, Who has woken up and is turning His innocent eyes towards the priest, with the astonished look of infants a few days old. The priest takes Him in his arms and raises Him, with arms fully stretched out, towards the Temple, standing against the kind of altar placed on top of the steps. The rite is over. The Child is handed back to His Mother and the priest goes away.

There is a group of onlookers. Amongst them a little old man, bent with age and limping, makes his way leaning on a stick. He must be very old, I would say over eighty. He goes near Mary, and asks Her to give him the Child for one

moment. Mary satisfies him, smiling.

Simeon, whom I always thought belonged to the sacerdotal class, and is instead a simple believer, at least according to his garments, takes the Child and kisses Him. Jesus smiles at him with the typical smile of sucklings. He seems to watch him inquisitively, because the old man is crying and laughing at the same time and his tears form a sparkling embroidery running along his wrinkles and beading his long white beard, towards which Jesus stretches His little hands. He is Jesus, but still a child, and whatever moves in front of Him, draws His attention so that He wants to get hold of it to see what it is.

Mary and Joseph smile and so do all the others who praise the beauty of the Child.

I hear the words of the holy old man and I see the astonished gaze of Joseph, the deeply moved look of Mary as well as the glances of the little crowd, partly surprised and moved, partly laughing at the words of the old man. Amongst the latter there are some bearded and conceited members of the Sanhedrin, who shake their heads giving Simeon an ironic pitying look. They must think he is a dotard.

Mary's smile fades into paleness when Simeon mentions sorrow. Although She knows, that word pierces Her soul. She goes closer to Joseph, to be comforted, She presses Her Child to Her breast passionately and like a thirsty soul, She takes in the words of Anna of Phanuel, who being a woman, has mercy on Her suffering and promises Her that the Eternal Father will soothe the hour of sorrow with a supernatural strength. « Woman, He Who gave a Savior to His people, will not lack the power to send His angel to console Your tears. The great women of Israel never lacked the help of the Lord and You are far greater than Judith and Jael. Our God will give You a heart of the most pure gold to withstand the storm of sorrow, so that You will be the greatest woman in Creation: the Mother. And You, Child, remember me in the hour of Your mission. »

And the vision ends here.

2nd February 1944.

Jesus says:

« Two teachings, applicable to everybody, derive from the description given by you.

The former: truth is not revealed to a priest engrossed in rites, but absent with his spirit, it is instead revealed to a simple believer.

The priest, always in contact with Divinity, devoted to what concerns God and to everything which is above the flesh, should have realized at once who was the Child Who was being offered that morning in the Temple. But it was necessary for him to have a living spirit, in order to realize it. A mere robe covering a drowsy spirit, if not a dead spirit, was not sufficient.

The Spirit of God can thunder if It wants, and rouse like a thunderbolt and shake like an earthquake the dullest spirit. It can. But generally, as It is an orderly Spirit, as God is Order in each Person and way of acting, It inspires and speaks, not where there is sufficient merit to deserve its effusion – in which case Its effusions would be most rare and not even you would know their light – but where It sees the "good will" to deserve such effusion.

How is such will exerted? With a life devoted, as far as possible, entirely to God: in faith, obedience, purity, charity, generosity and in prayer. Not in practices: in prayer. There is less difference between night and day than there is between practices and prayer. The latter is communion of the spirit with God, from which you emerge with fresh strength and a decision to belong more and more to God. The former are common habit exerted for various purposes, which are always selfish, and they leave you exactly as you were, nay, they aggravate your burden with the faults of falsehood and sluggishness.

Simeon had such good will. He had not been spared troubles and trials in his life. But he had not lost his good will. Age and misfortunes had not impaired or shaken his faith in the Lord and in His promises, neither did his good will to be more and more worthy of God tire or falter. And God sent Him the ray of the Spirit to guide him to the Temple, that he might see the Light that had come to the world, before his eyes of a faithful servant closed to the light of the sun, awaiting to be reopened to the Sun of God glowing in the Heavens, which I had reopened when I ascended after my Martyrdom.

"Prompted by the Holy Spirit" says the Gospel. Oh! If men only knew what a perfect Friend the Holy Spirit is! What Guide, what Teacher! If they only loved and invoked Him, this love of the Most Holy Trinity, this Light of Light, this

Fire of Fire, this Intelligence, this Wisdom! How much more they would know of what is necessary to know!

Look, Mary; listen, My children. Simeon waited all his long life before "seeing the Light" and before knowing that God's promise was fulfilled. But he never doubted. He never said to himself: "It is useless to persevere in hoping and praying." He just persevered. And he deserved "to see" what neither the priest nor the proud and dull members of the Sanhedrin saw: the Son of God, the Messiah, the Savior in the flesh of a Child Who warmed him and smiled at him. He received the smile of God from the lips of a Child, his first reward for an honest and pious life.

The other lesson: the words of Anna. She also, a prophetess, saw in Me, a new-born Baby, the Messiah. And this is quite natural, considering her prophetic prerogative. But listen to what she says to My Mother, moved by faith and charity. And use her words as a light for your souls that quiver in these days of darkness and in this Feast of Light. "Who gave a Savior will not lack the power to send His angel to console Your tears."

Consider that God gave Himself to obliterate Satan's work in your souls. And will He not be able now to defeat the satans that torture you? Will He not be able to wipe your tears routing these satans and sending you once again the peace of His Christ? Why do you not ask Him with faith? A real overbearing faith, a faith before which the rigour of God, indignant at your many faults, may turn into a smile and He may grant you His forgiveness, which is relief, and His blessing which will be a rainbow in this world submerged in a deluge of blood which you wanted yourselves.

Remember: the Father, after punishing men with the Deluge, said to Himself and to His Patriarch: "Never again will I curse the earth because of man, because his heart contrives evil from his infancy. Never again will I strike down every living thing as I have done." And He has been faithful to His word. He has not sent a Deluge again. But how many times have you said to yourselves and to God: "If we are spared this time, if You save us, we shall never make wars again, never again", and after, you have always made more terrifying ones? How many times, o false men, who have no respect either for God or for your own word? And yet God would help you once again, only if the large mass of the faithful would invoke Him with faith and ardent love.

Lay your worries at the feet of God: you who are too few to counterbalance the many who keep God's rigour alive, you who have remained devoted to Him, notwithstanding the dreadful times which are increasing from day to day. He will send you His angel, as He sent the Savior to the world. Do not be afraid. Be united to the Cross. It has always defeated the snares of the demon, who with the cruelties of men and the sadness of life endeavors to drive to desperation, that is, to separation from God, the hearts he cannot conquer in any other way. »

33. Lullaby of the Virgin.

28th November 1944.

This morning I woke up in the gentlest way. I was still dozing when I heard the most pure voice I have ever heard sing a slow lullaby very sweetly. The song was so slow and archaic that it sounded a Christmas pastoral. I followed the melody and the voice, enjoying them more and more until I awoke completely. I then understood fully what was taking place, and I said: « Hail, Mary, full of Grace! » because it was Mother singing. And She raised Her voice after saying to me: « I greet you, too. Come and be happy! »

And I saw Her… in the house in Bethlehem, in Her room, intent on lulling Jesus to sleep. In the room, there were Mary's loom and some needlework. I think Mary had stopped working to give the Child suck and change His swaddling bands, – I should say His clothes, because He was already a few months old. I would say six, or eight months at most. Perhaps Mary was thinking of resuming Her work after the Child had fallen asleep.

It was evening. The sun was setting and there were many small golden clouds in the clear sky. Some herds were going back to their folds, browsing on the last grass of a flowery meadow and bleating with their heads uplifted.

The Child was about to fall asleep. He seemed a little restless, as if He had teething trouble, or some other minor pain of childhood.

I wrote the song on a piece of paper as well as I could, in the dim light of a very early morning, and I will now copy it.

« Little golden clouds – seem the herds of the Lord

On the meadow full of flowers – another herd is watching.
But if I had all the herds – that exist in the world,
The lambkin dearest to Me – You would always be.
Sleep, sleep, sleep, sleep,
Cry no more…

Many glittering stars – are twinkling in the sky.
May Your sweet gentle eyes – shed no more tears.
Your eyes of sapphire – are the stars of My heart.
Your tears make Me cry – oh! cry no more.
Sleep, sleep, sleep, sleep,
Cry no more…

All the sparkling angels – that in Heaven be,
Form a wreath around You, innocent Child – enraptured by Your face.
But You're crying for Your Mummy – Mummy, Mummy, Mum.
To sing Your lullaby – lulla, lulla, lu.
Sleep, sleep, sleep, sleep,
Cry no more…

The sky will soon be red – and dawn will soon be back,
And Mummy had no rest – to ensure You do not cry.
« Mamma » when awake You'll call Me – « Son » I will reply.
A kiss of love and life – I'll give you with My breast.
Sleep, sleep, sleep, sleep,
Cry no more…

You do need Your Mummy – also if You dream of Heaven.
Come, do come! Under My veil – I will make You sleep.
My breast is Your pillow – Your cradle My arms,
Do not fear, My dear – I'm here with You…
Sleep, sleep, sleep, sleep,
Cry no more…

I'll always be with You – You're the life of My heart
He is sleeping like a flower – Resting on My breast He is sleeping
Be quiet! – His Father perhaps He sees,
And the sight wipes the tears – Of my sweet Jesus.
He Sleeps, sleeps, sleeps, sleeps,
And He cries no more… »

It is impossible to describe the graceful charm of the scene. It is only a mother lulling Her little one. But she is that Mother, and He is that Little One! You can therefore imagine what gracefulness, what love, what purity, what Paradise is in this little, great, sweet scene, the memory of which makes me so happy and is confirmed by the melody I continuously sing, so that you may also hear it. But I do not have the most pure silvery voice of Mary, the virginal voice of the Virgin!… And I will sound like a cracked organ. It does not matter. I will do my best. What a beautiful pastoral it would be, to be sung round the Crib at Christmas!

Mary at first rocked the wooden cradle very slowly. Afterwards, when She saw that Jesus was not calming down, She took Him in Her arms, sitting near the open window, with the cradle beside Her, and swinging lightly to the rhythm of the song, She repeated the lullaby twice, until Jesus closed His little eyes, He turned His head round on to His Mother's breast and fell asleep thus, His little face resting on the cosy warmth of His Mother's breast, one hand also on Her breast near His rosy cheek, the other one relaxed on Her lap. Mary's veil shaded Her Holy Creature.

Then Mary got up most carefully and laid Jesus in the cradle, She covered Him with small linens, She spread a veil to protect Him from flies and the fresh air, and She remained contemplating Her sleeping Treasure. She held one hand over Her heart, while the other was leaning on the cradle, ready to rock it if necessary, and She smiled happily, slightly bent while darkness and silence were falling on the earth and were invading Her little virginal room.

What peace! What beauty! I am so happy!

It is not a grand vision and it will perhaps be considered quite useless in the mass of the other visions, as it does not reveal anything special. I know. But it is a real grace to me and I consider it such, because it makes my spirit placid, pure, loving, as if it were created again by Mother's hands. I think that you will like it as well, in that sense. We are « little children ». Better thus! Jesus likes us. Let the others, who are learned and complicated, think what they like and let them say that we are « childish ». We do not mind, do we?

34. The Adoration of the Wise Men.

28th February 1944.

My internal voice warns me:

« Call the contemplations you are about to receive and which I will tell you, "The Gospels of faith", because they will clarify for you and other people the power of faith and its fruits and will confirm you in the faith in God. »

I see Bethlehem, small and white, gathered like a brood of chickens under the stars...it is night. There is nobody in the streets, as it is so late.

I notice that the night light is increasing; it descends from a sky crowded with stars, which are so beautiful in the eastern sky: they are so bright and large and seemingly so near that it is possible to reach out and touch those flowers sparkling in the velvet of the vault of Heaven. I raise my eyes to see the source of the increasing light. A star of such unusual size that the moon seems small in comparison, is moving forward in the sky of Bethlehem. And all the others seem to vanish and make room for it, as maidservants do when their queen passes by: its brightness is such that it outshines them all. From the sphere, which looks like a huge pale sapphire lit up internally by a sun, a trail departs in which blond topazes, green emeralds, opalescent opals, blood-red flashes of rubies and gentle sparklings of amethysts mingle with the prevailing pale sapphire. All the stones on earth are in the trail that sweeps the sky with a fast and undulating movement as if it were alive. But the prevailing color is the one emanating from the globe of the star: the heavenly pale sapphire hue which comes down and makes the houses, the streets, the ground of Bethlehem, the Savior's cradle, look like blue silver. It is no longer the poor town, which by our standards is smaller than a country village. It is a fantastic town of a fairy tale, all in silver. And the water of the fountains and of the vessels is liquid diamond.

And with a brighter radiation of light the star stops over the little house on the narrowest side of the square. Neither the people dwelling in it, nor the people in Bethlehem see it, because they are all asleep in their closed houses, but the star quickens its shining pulsations and the trail vibrates and wavers faster and faster drawing a kind of semicircle in the sky. And the sky lights up because of the net of stars drawn by the trail, a net full of precious jewels which shine and color all the other stars with the most graceful hues, as if they were communicating their own joy to them.

The little house is transfigured by the liquid fire of gems. The roof of the small terrace, the dark stone steps, the little door, are like a block of pure silver sprayed with diamond and pearl dust. No royal palace on earth has ever had or ever will have a staircase like this one, built to be used by angels and by a Mother Who is the Mother of God. The little feet of the Immaculate Virgin can alight on that white splendor, the little feet which are destined to rest on the steps of God's throne.

But the Virgin does not know. She is awake near Her Son's cradle and is praying. There are splendors in Her soul which outdo the splendor with which the star is decorating material things.

From the main road a cavalcade is approaching. Harnessed horses are led by hand, dromedaries and camels bear riders or are carrying loads. Their hooves make the sound of water that rustles and breaks against the stones of a torrent. When they reach the square, they all stop. The cavalcade, lit up by the star, is a fantasy of splendor. The harnesses of the most rich mounts, the clothes of the riders, their faces, their baggage, everything shines and the light of the star increases the splendor of metals, leathers, silks, gems, coats. Eyes are radiant and mouths smiling because another splendor shines in their hearts: the splendor of a supernatural joy.

While the servants move towards the carvansary with the animals, three members of the caravan dismount from their mounts, which a servant takes away at once, and they walk towards the house. And they prostrate themselves, touching the ground with their foreheads, to kiss the soil. They are three personages of power as is quite obvious from their very rich attire. One of them, of a very dark complexion, who dismounts from a camel, envelops himself in a sciamma (Ethiopian garment) of pure bright silk, held tight to his waist by a precious girdle, from which a dagger or sword hangs with a jewel-studded hilt. Of the other two, who dismount from two splendid horses, one is wearing a beautiful striped robe, the dominant color of which is yellow, fashioned like a long domino with hood and cordon, which looks like a piece of gold filigree owing to the very rich golden embroidery. The third one is wearing a silk shirt puffing out of long large trousers, narrow at the ankles. He is enveloped in a very fine shawl which resembles a flowery garden, so bright are the flowers decorating it. On his head he has a turban held by a little chain covered with diamond settings.

After venerating the house where the Savior is, they rise and go to the caravansary (square and hotel for caravans) where the servants have knocked and had the door opened.

And the vision ends here. It starts again, three hours later, with the scene of the Magi adoring Jesus.

It is daytime now. The sun is shining in the afternoon sky. One of the servants of the three Magi crosses the square and climbs the steps of the little house. He goes in. He comes out and goes back to the hotel.

The three Magi come out, each followed by his own servant. They cross the square. The occasional passers-by turn round to look at the stately personages who are walking very slowly and solemnly. A full quarter of an hour has elapsed since the servant came out and thus the inhabitants of the little house have had time to prepare to receive the guests.

The Magi are even more richly dressed than the night before. Their silks shine, the gems sparkle, a big bunch of precious feathers, covered with even more precious chips, quivers and shines on the head of the Wise Man wearing the turban.

One of the servants is carrying an inlaid coffer, the metal reinforcements of which are all engraved gold; the second servant is holding a beautifully wrought chalice covered with a pure gold lid which is even more finely finished; the third servant has a kind of wide low amphora, also in gold, the cover of which is shaped like a pyramid at the top of which there is a diamond. The gifts appear to be heavy, because the servants are carrying them with some effort, particularly the one with the coffer.

The Magi climb the steps and go in. They enter a room that extends from the road to the back of the house. The little kitchen garden at the back can be seen though a window which is open to the sun. There are doors in the other two walls, and the owners, that is a man, a woman and some boys and younger children cast sidelong glances through them.

Mary is sitting with the Child in Her lap and Joseph is standing near Her. But She also gets up and bows when She sees the Magi entering. She is all dressed in white. She is so beautiful in Her plain white dress which covers Her from Her neck down to Her feet, from Her shoulders to Her slender wrists. She is so beautiful with Her head crowned with Her blond plaits, Her face more rosy for the emotion, with Her eyes smiling so sweetly while Her mouth gives a greeting: « May God be with you », that the three Magi stop for a moment, completely astonished. They then proceed and prostrate themselves at Her feet. And they ask Her to sit down.

They do not sit down, although She asks them to do so. They remain kneeling, relaxing on their heels. Behind them, also on their knees, are the three servants. They are immediately after the threshold. They have placed three gifts they were carrying in front of the Magi, and now they are waiting.

The three Wise Men contemplate the Child, Who I think must be nine to twelve months old. He is so lively and strong. He is sitting on His Mother's lap and smiles and prattles with a shrill voice like a little bird. He is all dressed in white like His Mother, with tiny sandals on His little feet. His dress is a very simple one: a small tunic, from which His restless feet protrude, and His plump little hands which would like to get hold of everything, and above all, a most beautiful little face in which two dark blue eyes shine, and a pretty mouth with dimples at the sides shows its first tiny teeth when it smiles. His pretty little curls are so bright and soft that they seem gold dust.

The oldest of the Magi speaks on behalf of them all. He explains to Mary that one night the previous December, they saw a new star of an unusual brightness appear in the sky. The maps of the sky had never shown or mentioned such a star. Its name was unknown because it had no name. Born out of the bosom of God, it had flourished to tell men a blessed truth, a secret of God. But men had not paid any attention to it, because their souls were steeped in mud. They did not lift their eyes to God neither could they read the words that He writes with stars of fire in the vault of Heaven. May He be blessed for ever.

They had seen it and had striven to understand its meaning. They were happy to give up the little sleep they usually granted themselves and forgetting even their food, they devoted themselves entirely to studying the zodiac. And the conjunctions of the stars, the time, the season, the calculation of the hours passed and of the astronomic combinations had told them the name and secret of the star. Its name: “Messiah”. Its secret: “The Messiah had come to our world.” And they had set out to worship Him. Each of them unknown to the others. Over mountains, across deserts, along valleys and rivers, travelling by night they had come towards Palestine, because the star was moving in that direction. Each of them unknown to the others. For each of them, from three different points on

earth, it was going in that direction. And then they met beyond the Dead Sea. God's will had gathered them there, and they then proceeded together, understanding one another, notwithstanding that each spoke his own language: by a miracle of the Eternal Father they were able to understand and speak the language of each country.

They had gone together to Jerusalem, because the Messiah was to be the King of Jerusalem, the King of the Jews. But over the sky of that city, the star had concealed itself and they felt their hearts breaking with pain and had examined themselves to ascertain whether they had failed to deserve God. But when their consciences reassured them, they had applied to king Herod and had asked him in which royal palace the King of the Jews was born because they had come to adore Him. And the king had gathered the chief priests and the scribes and had asked them where the Messiah might be born. And they replied: « In Bethlehem, in Judah ».

And they had come towards Bethlehem and as soon as they left the Holy City, the star had reappeared to them, and the night before their arrival in Bethlehem its brightness had increased; the whole sky was ablaze. Then the star had stopped over this house engulfing all the light of the other stars in its ray. And they had understood that the Divine New-Born Baby was there. And now they were worshipping Him, offering their gifts, and above all, their hearts, which never cease thanking God for the grace granted to them; neither would they ever stop loving His Son Whose holy human body they had now seen. Later they intened to go back to king Herod, because he also wanted to adore Him.

« In the meantime, here is the gold which befits a king to possess, here is the incense which befits a God, and here, Mother, here is the myrrh because Your Child is a Man as well as God and He will experience the bitterness of the flesh and of human life as well as the inevitable law of death. Our souls, full as they are of love, would prefer not to utter those words and we would rather think that His flesh is also eternal as His Spirit. But, Woman, if our writings and above all our souls are right, He is Your Son, the Savior, the Christ of God and consequently, to save the world, He will have to take upon Himself the evil of the world, of which one of the punishments is death. This myrrh is for that hour. That His holy flesh may not be subject to the rot of putrefaction, but may preserve its integrity until its resurrection. And on account of this gift, may He remember us and save His servants by allowing them to enter His Kingdom. In the meantime that we may be sanctified, will You, Mother, trust Your Little One to our love. That His heavenly blessing may descend upon us, while we kiss His feet. »

Mary, Who has overcome the fright caused by the words of the Wise Man, and has hidden with a smile the sadness of the doleful allusion, offers the Child. She lays Him in the arms of the oldest one, who kisses Him and receives His caress, and he then hands Him over to the other two.

Jesus smiles and plays with the little chains and fringes of the robes of the three Magi and He looks curiously at the open coffer, full of a yellow sparkling substance, and He smiles at the rainbow produced by the sun shining on the brilliant top of the lid of the myrrh.

They then hand back the Child to Mary and they stand up. Mary also gets up. They bow to one another, after the youngest has given an order to the servant, who goes out. The three Men go on speaking for a little while. They cannot make up their minds to depart from the house. Tears shine in their eyes. At last they move towards the door, accompanied by Mary and Joseph.

The Child wanted to get down and give His hand to the oldest of the three, and He walks thus, held by His hands by Mary and the Wise Man, both of whom bend down to steady Him. Jesus walks with a hesitant step, like all children, and He laughs kicking His little feet on the strip of the floor lit up by the sun.

When they reach the threshold--it must not be forgotten that the room is as long as the house--the Magi take leave kneeling down once again kissing Jesus' feet. Mary, bending down over the Child, takes His hand and guides it, in a blessing gesture over the head of each Wise Man. It is already a sign of the cross, traced by Jesus' little fingers, guided by Mary.

The three Men go down the steps. The caravan is already there waiting for them. The horses' studs shine in the setting sun. People have gathered in the little square watching the unusual sight.

Jesus laughs clapping His hands. His Mother has lifted Him up on the wide parapet of the landing and is holding Him against Her breast with Her arm so that He may not fall. Joseph has gone down with the Magi and is holding the stirrup to each of them while they mount their horses and the camel.

Servants and masters are now all on horseback. The starting command is given. The three Men bow down as low as the necks of their mounts in a final gesture

of homage. Joseph bows down. Also Mary bows and then She guides Jesus' hand again in a gesture of goodbye and blessing.

Jesus says:

« And now what shall I tell you, o souls who feel your faith is dying? Those Wise Men from the East had nothing to assure them of the truth. Nothing supernatural. All they had was an astronomic calculaton and their own considerations made perfect by a strictly honest life. And yet they had *faith.* Faith in everything: in science, in their own conscience, in God's goodness.

Science made them believe in the sign of the new star, which could only be "the one" expected by mankind for centuries: the Messiah. Because of their consciences they had faith in the voices of their consciences, which heard heavenly "voices" saying to them: "That is the star announcing the advent of the Messiah." Because of God's goodness, they believed that God would not deceive them, and since their intention was honest, He would help them in every way to reach their aim.

And they were successful. Among so many people fond of studying signs, they were the only ones who understood that sign, because their souls were anxious to know the words of God for an honest purpose, the main care of which was to praise and honor God immediately.

They did not seek any personal advantage. On the contrary, they have to face hardships and meet expenses but they do not ask for any human reward. They only ask God to remember them and save them for eternal life.

As they have no desire for any future human rewards, so they have no human worry, when they decide on their journey. You would have had hundreds of problems: "How will I be able to make such a long journey in countries and among peoples speaking different languages? Will they believe me or will they put me in prison as a spy? What help will they give me to cross the deserts, rivers and mountains? And the heat? And the winds of the highlands? And the malarial fever along stagnant marshes? And the floods and heavy rains? And the different food? And the different languages? And ... and... and..." That is how you reason. But they do not reason like that. With sincere, holy daring they say: "You, o God, can read our hearts and You see the purpose we are aiming at. We trust to Your hands. Grant us the superhuman joy of adoring Your Second Person, Who has become Flesh to save the world."

That is all. And they set out from the far away Indies. Jesus then tells me that when He says the Indies, He means meridional Asia where Turkey, Afghanistan and Persia are located in our geography. From the Mongolian chains of mountains which are the dominions of eagles and vultures, where God speaks with roars of winds and torrents and writes words of mystery on the immense pages of glaciers. From the land where the Nile rises and then flows with its green blue waters to the azure heart of the Mediterranean, neither mountains, nor woods, nor sands, dry oceans more dangerous than the seas, can stop them from proceeding. And the star shines upon them at night, preventing them from sleeping. *When one seeks God, natural habits must yield to superhuman considerations and necessities.*

The star guides them from the north, the east and the south, and by a miracle of God, it proceeds for the three of them towards one point. And by another miracle of God, after many miles it gathers them at that point and by a further miracle, it anticipates the Pentecost Wisdom, bestowing on them the gift of understanding and making themselves understood, as it happens in Paradise, where only one language is spoken: God's.

They are dismayed only for a moment, when the star disappears and since they are humble, because they are really great, they do not think it is due to the wickedness of other people, as the corrupted people of Jerusalem did not deserve to see the star of God. But they think they had failed to deserve God themselves, and they examine themselves with trepidation and contrition ready to beg forgiveness.

But their consciences reassure them. Their souls were accustomed to meditation and each of them had a most sensitive conscience, refined by constant attention, and by sharp introspection, which made of the interior a mirror on which even the slightest faults of daily actions are reflected. Their conscience has become their teacher, a voice that warns and cries not at the least error, but at the least inclination towards errors, at everything human, at the satisfaction of one's "ego". Consequently, when they place themselves before that teacher and that severe clean mirror, they know that it will not lie. It reassures them and gives them heart.

"Oh! How sweet it is to feel that there is nothing against God in us! To feel that He is kindly looking at the soul of His faithful son and blesses him. Faith, trust, hope, strength and patience are increased by such a feeling. The storm is raging

just now. But it will pass, because God loves me and He knows that I love Him, and He will not fail to help me again." That is how those speak who enjoy the peace that comes from an upright conscience, that is the queen of every action of theirs.

I said that they were "humble because they were really great." What happens, instead, in your lives? There a man is never humble not because he is great, but because he is more domineering and makes himself mighty by means of his arrogance and because of your silly idolatry. There are some wretched men who, simply because they are the butlers of some overbearing fellow, or ushers in some office, or officials in some small village, that is, servants of those who employed them, put on the airs of demigods. And they arouse pity!...

The three Wise Men were really great. Firstly, because of their supernatural virtues, secondly because of their science, last because of their wealth. But they feel that they are nothing: dust on the dust of the earth, in comparison with the Most High God, Who with a smile creates the worlds and scatters them like grains of corn to satisfy the eyes of the angels with the jewels of the stars.

They feel they are a mere nothing as compared to the Most High God Who created the planet on which they live and He made it most varied. An Infinite Sculptor of boundless works, with a touch of His thumb, He placed a ring of hills here, the bone structure of mountain ridges and peaks there, like vertebrae of the earth, of this enormous body, the veins of which are the rivers, it basins the lakes, its hearts the oceans, its dresses the forests, its veils the clouds, its decorations the crystal glaciers, its gems the turquoises and emeralds, the opals and the beryls of all the waters that sing, with the woods and the winds, the great chorus of praise to their Lord.

But *they feel they are nothing with regard to their wisdom as compared to the Most High God, from Whom their wisdom comes* and Who gave them more powerful eyes than those two pupils by means of which they see things: the eyes of their souls, which know how to read in things the word not written by human hands, but engraved by God's thought.

And *they feel they are nothing with regard to their wealth:* an atom as compared to the wealth of the Owner of the universe, Who scatters metals and gems in the stars and planets and grants super-natural unexhausted riches to the hearts of those who love Him.

And when they arrive before the poor house, in the poorest town in Judah, they do not shake their heads saying: "Impossible", but they bend their backs, their knees, and above all their hearts and they adore. There, behind that poor wall, there is God. The God they have always invoked, but never had the least hope of seeing. And they invoke Him for the welfare of all mankind, and "their" eternal welfare. Oh! that was their only wish. To see Him, know Him, possess Him in the life where there are no more dawns and sunsets!

He is there, behind that poor wall. Will His heart of a Child, which is still the heart of a God, perceive those three hearts, which prostrated in the dust of the road are crying: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Blessed the Lord our God. Glory to Him in the Highest Heaven and peace to His servants. Glory, glory, glory and blessings."?

They are wondering with loving tremor. And during the whole night and the following morning they prepare with the most ardent prayer their souls for the communion with the Child-God.

They do not go to that altar, which is the virginal lap holding the Divine Host, with their souls full of human worries, as you do. They forget to eat and to sleep, and if they wear the most beautiful robes, it is not for human ostentation, but to honor the King of kings. In royal palaces the dignitaries wear the most beautiful clothes. And should the Magi not go to that King in their best garments? Which greater opportunity is there for them?

Oh! In their far away countries, many a time they had to adorn themselves for men like themselves. To welcome and honor them. It is only fair, therefor, that they should prostrate purples and jewels, silks, and precious feathers at the feet of the Supreme King. It is fair to put at His sweet little feet the fibres of the earth, the gems of the earth, the feathers of the earth, the metals of the earth − they are all His work − so that all these things of the earth may adore their Creator. And they would be happy if the Little Creature should order them to lie down on the ground and become a living carpet for His little baby steps, and if He trampled on them, since He left the stars to come down to them, who are but dust.

They were humble, generous and obedient to the "voices" from Above. They tell them to take gifts to the New-Born King. And they take gifts. They do not say: "He is rich and does not need them. He is God and will not die." They obey. And they are the first to help the Savior in His poverty. *How useful that gold*

will be for Him Who is about to be a fugitive! How meaningful that myrrh is for Him Who will soon be killed! How pious that incense is for Him Who will have to smell the stench of human lewdness raging round His infinite purity!

They were humble, generous, obedient and respectful to one another. Virtues always generate other virtues. From the virtues directed to God, derive the virtues regarding our neighbors. Respect, which is charity. The oldest is entrusted with the task of speaking on behalf of them all, he is the first to receive the Savior's kiss and to hold Him by His little hand. The others will be able to see Him again. He will not, because he is old and the day for his return to God is not far away. He will see Christ after His heart-rending death and will follow Him, together with the other blessed souls, in His return to Heaven. But he will never see Him again in this world. May, therefor, the warmth of His little hand entrusted to his wrinkled one, be a viaticum for him.

There is no envy in the others. On the contrary, their veneration for the old Wise Man increases. He certainly deserved more than they did, and for a longer period of time. The God-Infant knows. The Word of the Father does not speak yet, but every action of His is a word. And may His innocent word be blessed, because it designated him as His favorite.

But, My dear children, there are two more lessons in this vision.

The behavior of Joseph who knows how to keep "his" place. *He is present as the guardian of Purity and Holiness.* But not as the usurper of their rights. It is Mary with Jesus who receives the homage and the words. Joseph rejoices because of Her and does not grieve because he is a secondary figure. *Joseph is a just man: he is the Just Man.* And he is always just. Also at the present moment. The fumes of the feast do not go to his head. *He remains humble and just.*

He is happy for the gifts. Not for himself, but because he thinks that with them he will be able to make his Spouse's and the sweet Child's lives more comfortable. *There is no greed in Joseph.* He is a workman and will continue to work. But he is anxious that "They", his two loves, should be more comfortable. Neither he nor the Magi know that those gifts serve for a flight and a life in exile, when riches vanish like clouds scattered by winds, as well as for their return to their country, where they have lost everything, customers and household furnishings, and where only the walls of their house have been saved, which were protected by God, because there He was united to the Virgin and became Flesh.

Joseph is humble, in fact, although he is the guardian of God and of the Mother of God and Spouse of the Most High, he holds the stirrups of these vassals of God. He is a poor carpenter, because sustained human pressures have deprived David's heirs of their royal wealth. But he is always the offspring of a king, and has the manners of a king. Also of him it must be said: "He was humble, because he was really great."

A last, kind, significant lesson.

It is Mary who takes the hand of Jesus, Who does not yet know how to bless, and She guides it in the holy gesture.

It is always Mary who takes Jesus' hand and guides it. *Even now.* Now Jesus knows how to bless. But sometimes His pierced hand falls down tired and disheartened, because He knows that it is useless to bless. You destroy My blessing. It falls also indignant, because you curse Me. It is Mary then Who removes the disdain from My hand with Her kisses. Oh! the kiss of My Mother! Who can resist that kiss? And then, with Her slender, but lovingly irrestible fingers, She takes My wrist and forces Me to bless. *I cannot reject My Mother, but you must go to Her, and make Her your Advocate.*

She is My Queen, before being yours, and Her love for you makes such allowances that no one can possibly imagine or understand. And even without any word, but only with Her tears, and the memory of My Cross, the sign of which She makes Me trace in the air, She pleads your cause and exhorts Me: "You are the Savior. Therefore save."

That is, My dear children, the "Gospel of faith" in the vision of the scene of the Magi. Meditate on it and imitate it. For your own good. »

35. The Flight into Egypt.

9th June 1944.

My spirit sees the following scene. It is night. Joseph is sleeping in his little bed in his very small room: the peaceful sleep of a man after a hard day's honest and diligent work.

I can see him in the dark room, because a thin ray of moonlight filters in through the window shutters left ajar, either because Joseph is too warm in the little room or because he wants to be woken by the early rays of light at daybreak and get up at once. He is lying on one side and is smiling at some vision he sees in his dream.

But his smile turns into an expression of anxiety. He is now sighing deeply as if he had a nightmare and he awakes with a start. He sits up on his bed, rubs his eyes and looks around. He looks at the little window where the feeble light comes in. It is the dead of night but he grasps his robe which is lying at the bottom of the bed, and still sitting on the bed he pulls it on over the white short-sleeved tunic which he is wearing next to his skin. He pulls the blanket away, puts his feet on the floor and looks for his sandals. He puts them on and ties them. He stands up and goes towards the door facing his bed, not the one at the side of his bed leading into the big room where the Magi were received.

He knocks very gently, a very soft knocking with the tips of his fingers. He must have heard a voice asking him to enter because he opens the door carefully and sets it ajar without making any noise. Before going to the door he has lit a small one-flamed oil lamp, lights his way with it. He goes in. The room is a little larger than his own, and there is a low bed in it, near a cradle, with a night lamp in a corner, the flickering flame of which seems a little star with a soft golden light that allows one to see without disturbing any sleeper.

But Mary is not sleeping. She is kneeling near the cradle in Her light dress and is praying, watching Jesus Who is sleeping peacefully. Jesus is the same ages as I saw Him in the vision of the Magi: a Child about one year old, beautiful, rosy and fair haired. He is sleeping with His curly head sunk in the pillow and a clench-fist under His chin.

« Are You not sleeping? » Joseph asks Her in a low surprised voice. « Why not? Is Jesus not well? »

« Oh, no! He is all right. I am praying. Later I will sleep. Why have you come, Joseph? » Mary speaks, kneeling on the same spot.

Joseph speaks in a very low voice lest he should awaken the Child, but it is an excited voice. « We must go away from here at once. It must be at once. Prepare the coffer and a sack with everything You can put in them. I'll prepare the rest, I'll take as much as I can...We will flee at dawn. I would go even sooner but I must speak to the landlady...»

« But why this flight? »

« I will tell you later. It's because of Jesus. An angel said to me: “Take the Child and His Mother and escape to Egypt.” Don't waste any time. I'm going to prepare what I can. »

There is no need to tell Mary not to waste time. As soon as She heard Joseph mention an angel, Jesus and flight, She understood that Her Creature was in danger and She jumped to Her feet, Her face whiter than wax, holding one hand against Her heart, completely distressed. And She began to move about, quick and agile, laying the clothes in the coffer and in a large sack which She places on Her bed still untouched. Although She is disheartened, She does not lose Her head: She acts quckly but orderly. Now and again, when passing near the cradle, She looks at the Child Who is sleeping calmly.

« Do you need help? » Joseph asks now and again, peeping into the room through the door ajar.

« No, thank you. » replies Mary every time.

Only when Her sack is full, and it is obviously very heavy, She calls Joseph to help Her to close it and take if off the bed. But Joseph does not want and help, he prefers to do it by himself, and he takes the long sack into his little room.

« Shall I take also the woollen blankets? » asks Mary.

« Take as much as you can. We will lose the rest. Do take as much as You can. Things will be useful because...because we will have to stay away for a long time, Mary!... » Joseph is very sad in saying so. And one can easily imagine how Mary feels. She folds Her blankets and Joseph's, sighing deeply. Joseph ties the blankets with a rope and while doing so, he says: « We will leave the quilts and the mats. Even if I take three donkeys I cannot overload them. We will have a long and uncomfortable journey, partly in the mountains and in the desert. Cover Jesus well. The nights will be cold both up in the mountains and in the desert. I have take the gifts of the Magi because they will be very useful down there. I am going to spend all the money I have to buy two donkeys. We cannot send them back, so I will have to buy them. I will go now, without awaiting dawn. I know where to find them. You finish preparing everything. » And he goes out.

Mary gathers a few more things, then, after looking at Jesus, She goes out and comes back with some little dresses which appear to be still damp: perhaps they were washed the day before. She folds them, wraps them up in a cloth, and adds them to the other things. There is nothing else. She looks round and in a corner She sees one of Jesus' toys: a little sheep carved in wood. She picks it up sobbing, and kisses it. On the wood there are traces of Jesus' little teeth and the ears of the little sheep are all nibbled. Mary caresses the thing without any value, a plain piece of light wood, which, however, is of great value to Her, because it tells Her of Joseph's love for Jesus and speaks to Her of Her Child. She adds it to the other things placed on the closed coffer.

Now there is really nothing else. Except Jesus in the little cradle. Mary thinks She ought also to prepare the Child. She goes to the cradle and shakes it a little to wake up the Baby. But He whimpers a little, turns round and continues to sleep. Mary pats His curls gently. Jesus opens His little mouth yawning. Mary bends down and kisses His cheek. Jesus wakes up completely. He opens His eyes, sees His Mother and smiles and stretches His little hands towards Her breast.

« Yes, love of Your Mummy. Yes, Your milk. Before the usual time… But You are always ready to suck Your Mummy's breast, My little holy Lamb! »

Jesus laughs and plays, kicking His little feet out of the blankets, moving His arms happily in a typical childish style, so beautiful to see. He pushes His feet against His Mummy's stomach, He arches His back leaning His fair head on Her breast, and then throws Himself back and laughs, holding with His hands the laces that tie Mary's dress to Her neck, endeavoring to open it. He looks most beautiful in His little linen shirt, plump and as rosy as a flower.

Mary bends down and in that position, looking through the cradle, as if for protection, She smiles and cries at the same time, while the Child prattles, uttering words which are not the words of all little children; among them the word « Mummy » is repeated very clearly. He looks at Her, surprised to see Her crying. He stretches one little hand towards the shiny traces of tears and it gets wet while patting Her face. And, very gracefully, He leans once again on His Mother's breast, He clings to it and pats it with His hand. Mary kisses His hair, takes Him up in Her arms, sits down and dresses Him. His little woollen dress has now been put on Him and His sandals have been tied on His feet. She nurses Him and Jesus avidly sucks His Mother's good milk, and when He feels that only a little is coming from Her right breast, He looks for the left one, laughing while doing so and looking up at His Mother. Then He falls asleep again on Her breast, His rosy round little cheek resting against Her white round breast.

Mary rises very slowly and lays Him on the quilt on Her bed. She covers Him with Her mantle, She goes back to the cradle and folds its little blankets. She wonders whether She ought to take also the little mattress. It's so small. It can be taken. She puts it, together with the pillow, near the other things already on the coffer. And She cries over the empty cradle, poor Mother, persecuted in Her Little Creature.

Joseph comes back. « Are you ready? Is Jesus ready? Have You taken His blankets and His little bed? We can't take His cradle, but He must have at least His little mattress: poor Baby, Whose death they are seeking! »

« Joseph » shouts Mary, while She grasps his arm.

« Yes, Mary, His death. Herod wants Him dead… because he is afraid of Him, that filthy beast, because of his human kingdom he is afraid of this innocent Child. I do not know what he will do when he realizes that He has escaped. But we will be far away by that time. I don't think he will revenge himself by seeking Him as far as Galilee. It would be very difficult for him to find out that we are Galileans, least of all that we are from Nazareth and who we are precisely. Unless Satan helps him to thank him for being his faithful servant. But… if that should happen… God will help us just the same. Don’t cry, Mary. To see You crying is a greater pain for me than having to go into exile. »

« Forgive Me, Joseph. I am not crying for Myself, or for the few things I am losing. I am crying for you… You already have had to sacrifice yourself so much! And now once again you will have no customers, no home. How much I am costing you, Joseph! ».

« How much? No, Mary. You do not cost me. You comfort me. Always. Don't worry about the future. We have the gifts of the Magi. They will serve for the first days. Later I will find some work. A good clever workman will always make his way. You have seen what happened here. I haven't got enough time for all the work I have. »

« I know. But who will relieve your homesickness for your native land? »

« And what about You? Who will relieve Your longing for Your home which is so dear to You? »

« Jesus. Having Him, I have what I had there. »

« And I, having Jesus, have my native land, in which I had hope up to some months ago. I have my God. You can see that I lose nothing of what is dear to me above all things. The only important thing is to save Jesus, and then we have everything. Even if we should never see this sky again, or this country or the even dearer country of Galilee, we shall always have everything, because we shall have Him. Come, Mary, it is dawning. It is time to say goodbye to our hostess and load our things. Everything will be all right. » Mary gets up obediently. She puts on Her mantle while Joseph makes up a last parcel and goes out with it.

Mary lifts the Child gently, envelops Him in a shawl and clasps Him to Her heart. She looks at the walls that have given Her hospitality for some months and She touches them caressingly with one hand. Happy house, that deserved to be loved and blessed by Mary!

She goes out. She goes through Joseph's little room, into the big room. The landlady, in tears, kisses Her goodbye and, lifting the edge of the shawl, she kisses the forehead of the Child Who is sleeping calmly. They go down the outside steps.

The first light of dawn enables them to see faintly. In the dim light, three little donkeys can be seen. The strongest is loaded with the goods and chattels. The other two are saddled. Joseph is busy fastening the coffer and bundles on the pack-saddle of the first one. I can see his carpenter's tools tied in a bundle on top of the sack. After more tears and goodbyes, Mary mounts the little donkey, while the landlady is holding Jesus in her arms, and kissing Him once again. She then hands Him back to Mary. Also Joseph mounts after tying his donkey to the one loaded with the goods, in order to be free to hold the reins of Mary's donkey.

The flight begins while Bethlehem, still dreaming of the phantasmagoric scene of the Magi, is sleeping peacefully, unaware of what is impending over it. And the vision ends thus.

Jesus says:
« And also this series of visions ends thus. With the permission of exacting doctors we have been showing you the scenes which preceded, accompanied and followed My coming. And we did so, not for their own sake, as they are well known, although *they have been distorted by elements superimposed throughout centuries, always as a consequence of the mentality of men, who in order to give greater praise to God – and are therefore forgiven – make unreal what would be so lovely to leave real.*

Such way of seeing things in their reality does not diminish My Humanity or Mary's, neither does it offend My Divinity or the Majesty of the Father or the Love of the Most Holy Trinity. On the contrary, the merits of My Mother and My perfect humility shine brightly and so does the omnipotent kindness of the Eternal Lord. But we have shown you these scenes in order to be able to apply to you and to other people the supernatural meaning deriving from them and give it to you as a rule of life.

The Decalogue is the Law; and My Gospel is the Doctrine that makes the Law clearer for you and more loving to follow. The Law and My Doctrine would be sufficient to make saints of men. But you are so hampered by your humanity – it really overwhelms your souls too much – that you cannot follow My ways and you fall; or you stop disheartened. You go on saying to yourselves and to those who would like to assist you, quoting the examples of the Gospel for you: “But Jesus, but Mary, but Joseph (and so on for all the saints) were not like us. They were strong, they were immediately comforted in their sorrow, also in the little sorrow which they experienced, they did not feel passions. They were already beings out of this world.”

That little sorrow! They did not feel passions!

Sorrow has been our faithful friend and it had all the most varied forms and names.

Passions… do not use a word wrongly, by calling passions the vices which mislead you. *Be sincere and call them “vices”, and capital ones in addition.* It is not true that we did not know them. We had eyes to see and ears to hear, and Satan caused those vices to dance in front of us and around us, showing them to us with their heap of filth in action, or tempting us with his insinuations. But, since we firmly wanted to please God, his filth and insinuations, instead of achieving the purpose intended by Satan, obtained the very opposite. And the

more he worked, the more we took shelter in the light of God, disgusted as we were with the muddy darkness which he showed to the eyes of our bodies and of our souls.

But we did not ignore in our hearts passions, in their philosophical setting. We loved our country, and in our country we loved our little Nazareth above every other town in Palestine. We were fond of our house, of our relatives and friends. Why should we not? *We did not become slaves to our feelings because nothing is to be our master except God.* But our feelings were our good companions. My Mother uttered a cry of joy when, after about four years, She went back to Nazareth and entered Her house, and kissed the walls where Her "yes" had opened Her bosom to receive the Son of God. Joseph joyfully greeted his relatives and his little nephews, who had grown in numbers and in years, and he rejoiced when he saw that his fellow citizens remembered him and they sought him because of his ability.

I Myself appreciated friendship and because of Judas' betrayal, I suffered as for a moral crucifixion. And why not? Neither My Mother nor Joseph ever placed more love for their home or their relatives before the will of God. And I never spared a word, if it was to be said, capable of drawing upon Me the hatred of the Jews and the animosity of Judas. I knew, and I could have brought it about, that some money would be sufficient to subject him to Me. *Not to Me, a Redeemer: to Me, a rich man.* I had multiplied the loaves of bread and if I wanted, I could multiply also money. *But I did not come to obtain human satisfactions to anybody.* Least of all to the ones I had called. *I had preached sacrifice, detachment, a pure life, humble positions.* What kind of a Master would I have been and what Just man, if I had given money to one of them for his mental and physical satisfaction, only because that was the means to keep him?

Those who make themselves "small" are great in My Kingdom. Those who wish to be "great" in the eyes of the world are not suitable to reign in My Kingdom. They are straw for the beds of the demons. *Because the greatness of the world is the antithesis of the Law of God.*

The world calls "great" those who, by means which almost always are illicit, know how to get the best positions and to do so, they use their neighbor as a stool on which they then climb, crushing him. The world calls "great" those who know how to kill in order to reign, and they kill materially or morally, and they usurp positions and countries and fatten themselves, bleeding both individuals and communities. *The world often calls "great" criminals. No. "Greatness" is not to be found in criminality. It is in goodness, in honesty, in love, in justice.* You can see which poisonous fruit your "great ones" offer you, fruit which they have picked in the wicked devilish garden inside them!

I only wish to speak about the last vision, and omit the rest, because in any case, it is useless, as the world does not want to hear the truth concerning it. The last vision clarifies a detail quoted twice in the Gospel by Matthew, a sentence which is repeated twice: "Get up, take the Child and His Mother with you, and escape into Egypt"; "Get up, take the Child and His Mother with you and go back to the land of Israel." And you saw that Mary was by Herself in Her room with the Child.

Mary's virginity after Her delivery and Joseph's chastity have been strongly denied by those who being putrid mud themselves, are not prepared to admit that one like them can be as pure and clear as light. They are wretched people whose souls are so corrupted and their minds so prostituted to the flesh, that they are incapable of thinking that one like them can respect a woman seeing in her not her flesh but her soul, neither can they elevate themselves to live in a supernatural atmosphere, craving not for what is flesh, but only for what is God.

Well, I wish to tell those deniers of the most beautiful things, those worms incapable of becoming butterflies, those reptiles covered with the slaver of their own lewdness, incapable of understanding the beauty of a lily, I wish to tell them that Mary was and remained a virgin, and that only Her soul was married to Joseph, exactly as Her spirit was united only to the Spirit of God by Whose deed She conceived Her Only Son: I, Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of the Father and of Mary.

This is not a tradition embellished afterwards, out of loving respect for the Blessed Virgin Who was My Mother. It is the truth and has been known since early times.

Matthew was not born after centuries. He was a contemporary of Mary. Matthew was not a poor ignorant man brought up in a forest and likely to believe any idle story. He was a clerk in the taxation office, as you would say nowadays, he was an excise man, as we said then. He could see, hear, understand, and tell the truth from the false. Matthew did not hear things reported by third parties. He heard them directly from Mary's lips to Whom he applied for information, prompted by his love for his Master and for the truth.

I do not believe that those repudiators of Mary's inviolability will dare think that She may have lied. My own relatives could have given Her the lie, had there been other children: James, Judas, Simon and Joseph were disciples together with Matthew. Therefore Matthew could have easily compared their versions, had there been more than one account.

But Matthew does not say: “Get up and take your wife.” He says: “Take His Mother.” Before he says: “A virgin betrothed to Joseph”; “Joseph Her spouse”. Neither those repudiators of Purity should tell Me that it was a way of speaking particular to the Jews, as if to say “wife” was a disgrace. No, deniers of Purity. At the very beginning of the Bible we read: “And he will join himself to his wife.” She is called “companion” up to the moment of the sensual consummation of the marriage, and afterwards she is called “wife” in various circumstances and in different chapters. And these are the expressions referred to the wives of the sons of Adam. And so Sarah is called the “wife” of Abraham: “Sarah your wife”. And: “Take your wife and your two daughters” is said of Lot. And in the book of Ruth it is written: “The Moabitess, the wife of Mahalon”. And in the first book of the Kings it is said: “Elkanah had two wives”. And further on: “Elkanah then had intercourse with his wife Hannah”. And again: “Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife”. And again in the Book of the Kings it is said: “Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite, became the wife of David and bore him a son.” And what do you read in the blue book of Tobias, what the Church sings to you at your wedding, to advise you to be holy in your marriage? You read: “Now when Tobias arrived with his wife and his son… ”; and again: “Tobias succeeded in escaping with his son and with his wife.”

And in the Gospels, that is in times contemporary with Christ, when therefore they wrote in a modem style of language, as compared to the ancient kind, and therefore no error of transcription could be suspected, it said and just by Matthew in Chapter 22: “… and the first, after marrying his wife died and left his wife to his brother.”

And Mark at Chapter 10: “The man who divorces his wife…” And Luke called Elizabeth the wife of Zacharias for four times running, and in the eighth Chapter of his Gospel he says: “Johanna, the wife of Chuza”.

As you can see, this name was not a word banished by those who walked in the ways of the Lord, it was not an impure word not worthy of being uttered and least of all written when there was a mention of God and of His wonderful work. And the angel, saying: “The Child and His Mother”, proves to you that Mary was His real Mother. But She was not a wife of Joseph. She remained forever: “The virgin betrothed to Joseph”.

And this is the last teaching of the vision. And it is a halo which shines on the heads of Mary and Joseph. The Inviolate Virgin. The just and chaste man. The two lilies amongst whom I grew up, receiving only the perfume of purity.

I could speak to you, little John, about Mary's grief at being torn away from Her house and Her fatherland. But there is no need for words. You understand and you die of grief. Give Me your sorrow. That is all I want. It is greater than anything else you could give Me. It is Friday today, Mary. Think of My grief and of My Mother's on Golgotha in order to be able to bear your cross. Our peace and love remain with you. »

36. The Holy Family in Egypt.

25th January 1944 (at midnight).

The sweet vision of the Holy Family. The place is in Egypt. I have no doubt because I see the desert and a pyramid.

I see a small house with a single floor, a ground floor, completely white. A poor house of very poor people. The walls are just plastered and whitewashed. There are two doors, one near the other, leading into the only two rooms of the house which, for the time being, I do not enter. The little house is in the middle of a small piece of sandy ground, enclosed by a fence of canes fixed into the ground, a very weak protection against thieves; it can serve only as a protection against cats or stray dogs. On the other hand, who would think of stealing where it is quite visible that there is not even the shadow of riches?

The little piece of ground, enclosed by the cane hedge, has been patiently cultivated as a little garden, notwithstanding that the earth is arid and poor. In order to make the hedge a little thicker and less scanty, they have grown some creepers which appear to be modest convolvuli, only on one side there is a shrub of jasmine in full bloom and a bush of common roses. In the kitchen garden I see some very modest vegetables in the centre under a tall plant which I do not

recognize and which gives some shade to the arid ground and to the little house. A little black and white goat is tied to the plant and it is browsing on the leaves of some branches thrown on the ground.

And nearby on a mat on the ground there is the Child Jesus. I think He must be two years old, or two and a half at the very most. He is playing with some little pieces of carved wood, which look like little sheep or little horses, and with some clear wood shavings, less curly than His golden curls. With His little plump hands He is trying to put those wooden necklaces onto the necks of His little animals. He is quiet and smiling. Very beautiful. His little head is a mass of very thick little golden curls, His skin is clear and slightly rosy, His eyes are live and bright, of a deep blue color. The expression of course, is different, but I recognize the color of the eyes of my Jesus: two beautiful dark sapphires. He is wearing a kind of a long white shirt which must certainly be His tunic, with short sleeves. At present He has nothing on His feet. His tiny sandals are on the mat and they, too, are being used as a toy by the Child, Who is placing His little animals on the mat, and then pulls the sandal by the strap as if it were a little cart. The sandals are very simple: a sole and two straps one of which coming from the point and the other from the heel of the sole. The one coming from the point then splits at a certain point and one length passes through the eyelet of the strap from the heel, then goes round and is tied with the other piece, forming thus a ring at the ankle.

A little farther away, sitting also in the shade of the tree, there is Our Lady. She is weaving at a rustic loom and watching the Child. I can see Her white slender hands moving backwards and forwards throwing the shuttle on the weft while Her foot, shod in a sandal, is moving the pedal. She is wearing a tunic the color of mallow flowers: a rosy violet like certain amethysts. She is bareheaded, and so I can see that Her hair is parted, forming two simple plaits which gather at the nape of Her neck. Her sleeves are long and rather narrow. She has no other ornament except Her beauty and Her most sweet expression. The color of Her face, of Her hair and Her eyes, the form of Her face are always the same every time I see Her. She looks very young now. She looks about twenty years old.

At a certain moment She gets up, and bends over the Child, puts His sandals back on again and ties them carefully. She then pats Him and kisses His little head and His beautiful eyes. The Child prattles and She answers. But I do not understand the words. She then goes back to Her loom; She covers the fabric and the weft With a piece of cloth, picks up the stool on which She was sitting and takes it into the house. The Child follows Her with His eyes without troubling Her when She leaves Him alone.

Obviously Her work is finished, and it is almost evening. In fact, the sun is setting on the barren sand, and a huge fire invades the whole sky behind the far away pyramid.

Mary comes back. She takes Jesus by the hand and lifts Him from His mat. The Child obeys without any resistance. While His Mother picks up His toys and the mat and takes them into the house, He toddles on His well shaped little legs towards the little goat and throws His arms around her neck. The little goat bleats and rubs her head on Jesus' shoulder.

Mary comes back. Now She is wearing a long veil on Her head and is carrying an amphora in Her hand. She takes Jesus by the hand, and they both start walking, turning round the little house towards the other side.

I follow them admiring the gracefulness of the picture. Our Lady adjusts Her step to the Child's, and the Child toddles and trips along beside Her. I can see His rosy heels moving up and down, with the typical grace of children's steps, on the sand of the little path. I notice that His little tunic does not reach down to His feet, but only to half His calf. It is very clean and simple and it is held tight to His waist by a little white cord.

I see that on the front of the house the hedge is broken by a rustic gate, which Mary opens to go out onto the road. It is a poor road at the end of a town or a village, whatever it may be, where it ends up with the country that here is formed of sand and some other houses, as poor as this one, with some scanty kitchen gardens.

I do not see anybody. Mary looks towards the centre of the town not towards the country, as if She were waiting for someone; She then moves towards a vessel or well, whatever it may be, which is some ten meters further up, and on which some palm trees form a shady circle. Over there some green herbs can be seen on the ground.

I can now see a man coming along the road; he is not very tall, but is well built. I recognize Joseph, who is smiling. He looks younger than when I saw him in the vision of Paradise. He may be forty years old at most. His hair and beard are thick and black, his skin is rather tanned, his eyes are dark. An honest pleasant face, inspiring confidence.

When he sees Jesus and Mary, he quickens his step. On his left shoulder he has a kind of saw and a kind of plane, and he is holding in his hand other tools of his trade, not exactly like the ones we use now, but almost similar. He is probably coming back after working in somebody's house. He is wearing a tunic the color of which is between hazel and dark brown; it is not very long – it reaches a good bit up from his ankles – and its sleeves are short. I think he is wearing a leather belt at his waist. It is the proper tunic of a workman. On his feet he has sandals tied at his ankles.

Mary smiles and the Child utters cries of joy and He stretches out the hand which is free. When the three meet, Joseph bends down and offers the Child a fruit which I think is an apple, by its color and shape. He then stretches his arms and the Child leaves His Mother, and cuddles in the arms of Joseph, bending His little head into the cavity of Joseph's neck; he kisses Him, and is kissed by Him. A scene full of loving grace.

I was forgetting to say that Mary had promptly taken Joseph's work tools, to leave him free to embrace the Child.

Then Joseph, who had crouched down to the ground to be at the same height as Jesus, stands up, takes his tools with his left hand and holds little Jesus tight to his strong chest with his right arm. And he moves towards the house, while Mary goes to the fountain to fill Her amphora.

After entering the enclosure of the house, Joseph puts the Child down, takes Mary's loom into the house, and then he milks the goat. Jesus watches all these activities carefully and in particular the closing up the little goat in a little closet in one side of the house.

It is now getting dark. I can see the red of the sunset becoming violet on the sands which seem to be trembling because of the heat. The pyramid looks darker.

Joseph goes into the house, into a room which must be his workshop, the kitchen, the dining room all in one. The other room is obviously the bedroom. But I do not go in there. The fire is lit in a low fireplace. There is a carpenter's bench, a small table, some stools, some shelves with two oil lamps and some kitchenware on them. In a corner, there is Mary's loom. And a great deal of order and cleanliness. A very poor dwelling, but very clean.

And this is a remark I wish to make: in all the visions concerning the human life of Jesus I have noticed that both He and Mary, as well as Joseph and John, are always tidy and clean both in their garments and their bodies. They wear modest' and simple garments, but they are so clean that they look like gentlemen in them.

Mary comes back with the amphora and the door is closed on the rapidly growing dusk. The room is illuminated by a lamp which Joseph has lit and placed on his bench, where he now starts working on some little boards, while Mary is preparing supper. Also the fire illuminates the room. Jesus, with His little hands leaning on the bench and His little head turned upwards, is watching what Joseph is doing. They then sit down at the table after saying their prayers. Obviously they do not bless themselves with the sign of the cross, but they pray. It is Joseph who says the prayers, and Mary answers. I do not understand anything at all. It must be a psalm. But it is said in a language which is entirely unknown to me.

They then sit down at the table. The lamp is now on the table. Mary is holding Jesus in Her lap, and makes Him drink some of the goat's milk, into which She dips some small slices of bread which She has cut off a little round loaf. The crust of the loaf, as well as the inside, is very dark, it looks like rye bread or bread made with barley. It certainly contains a lot of bran, judging by its color. In the meantime, Joseph eats some bread and cheese, a small slice of cheese and a lot of bread. Then Mary sits Jesus on a little stool near Her, and brings some cooked vegetables to the table – they appear to be boiled and dressed as we use them nowadays – and She also eats some of them after Joseph has helped himself. Jesus is nibbling happily at His apple, and He smiles displaying His little white teeth. Their supper ends with some olives or dates. I cannot tell exactly which because they appear to be too light to be olives and too hard to be dates. There is no wine. The supper of poor people.

But there is so much peace in this room that not even the sight of the most solemn royal palace could give me as much. And how much harmony!

Jesus does not speak this evening. He does not explain the scene. He has taught me with the gift of His vision and that is enough. May He be always and equally blessed.

26th January 1944.

Jesus says:
« The things you see teach you and others the lesson. *It is a lesson of humility, resignation and good harmony.* A lesson given as an example to all Christian families, and particularly to the Christian families in this especially sorrowful age.

You have seen a poor house. And what is more saddening, a poor house in a foreign country. Many people, only because they are fairly good Catholics who pray and receive Me in the Holy Eucharist, and *they pray and receive Me for "their" needs, not for the needs of their souls and for the Glory of God* – because only seldom those who pray are not selfish – many people would pretend to have a prosperous, happy, easy material life, well-protected even from the least pain.

Joseph and Mary had Me, True God, as their Son, yet they did not even have the meagre satisfaction of being poor in their own country, where they were known, where at least there was their "own" little house and the problem of a dwelling did not add a harassing thought to their many problems, in the country where, as they were known, it was easier for them to find work and provide for the needs of their lives. *They are two refugees just because they had Me.* A different climate, a different country, so sad in comparison with the sweet countryside of Galilee, a different language, different habits, living amongst people who did not know them, and who generally distrusted refugees and people they did not know. They are deprived of those comfortable and dear pieces of furniture of "their" little house, of so many humble and necessary things they had there, and which did not seem to be so necessary, whereas here, in the void that surrounds them, seem even beautiful like the luxurious things that make the houses of rich people so charming. And they felt nostalgia both for their country and for their home, they worried about the poor things they had left behind, about the little kitchen garden where probably no one would take care of their vines and their figs, and the other useful plants. And they had to provide every day for food, clothes, fire, and for Me, a Child, Whom they could not feed with the same food they took themselves. And they were sad at heart: because of their homesickness, because of the uncertainty of the future, and the lack of trust of people who are reluctant, particularly at first, to accept the offer of work of two unknown people.

And yet, as you have seen yourself, that house is pervaded with serenity, smiles, harmony, and by mutual consent they endeavor to make it more beautiful, even in its scanty little kitchen garden, that it may be more like the more comfortable one they had to leave behind. They have only one thought: that the land may be less hostile and less unpleasant for Me, since I come from God. It is the love of believers and relatives which reveals itself in many ways: from the little goat they purchased with many hours of extra work, to the little toys carved in scraps of wood, to the fruit purchased only for Me, while they denied themselves a morsel of food.

O beloved father of mine on the earth, how loved you have been by God, by God Father in the Most High Heavens, by God Son, Who became the Savior on the earth!

In that house there is no quick temper, no sulkiness, no grim faces, neither is there any reproach against each other, and least of all against the God Who has not loaded them with material wealth. Joseph does not reproach Mary as being the cause of his discomfort, neither does Mary reproach Joseph because he is incapable of procuring greater worldly goods. *They love each other in a holy way, that is all.* And therefore they do not worry about their own comfort, but only about the comfort of their consort. *True love is not selfish. And true love is always chaste, even if it is not perfect in chastity* as the love of the two virgin spouses. *Chastity united to charity yields a suite of other virtues and therefore two people who love each other chastely become perfect.*

The love of Mary and Joseph was perfect. Therefore it was an incentive to every other virtue and in particular to charity towards God, blessed every hour, notwithstanding His holy will is painful for the flesh and the heart, blessed because, above the flesh and above the heart, the spirit was more lively and stronger in the two saints, and they exalted the Lord with gratitude because they had been chosen as guardians of His Eternal Son.

In that house they prayed. You pray too little in your homes, nowadays. The sun rises and sets, you start your work, and you sit at the table without a thought for the Lord, Who has granted you to see a new day, and then to live and see a new night, Who has blessed your work and has made it the means for you to purchase the food, the fire, the clothes, the house which are so necessary for your human lives. Whatever comes from Good God is "good". Even if it is poor and meagre, love gives it flavour and body, the love that allows you to see in the Eternal Creator, the Father Who loves you.

In that house there is frugality and it would be there even if there was plenty money. *They eat to live.* They do not eat to satisfy their gluttony, with the insatiability of gluttons and the whims of epicures who fill themselves to the extent of being sick and squander fortunes on expensive food, without giving one thought to those who are without or with little food, without considering that if they were moderate, many people could be relieved of the pangs of hunger.

In that house they love work, and they would love it even if there was plenty money, *because the working man obeys the command of God and frees himself from vice,* which like tenacious ivy clenches and suffocates idle people, who are like immovable rocks. Food is good, rest is serene, hearts are happy, when you have worked well and you enjoy the resting time between one job and the next one. Neither in the houses nor in the minds of those who love work, can many-sided vice rise. And, in its absence, love, esteem, reciprocal respect prosper and tender children grow in a pure atmosphere and they thus become the origin of future holy families.

Humility reigns in that house. What a lesson of humility for the proud. Mary, from a human point of view, had a thousand reasons to be proud and to be adored by Her spouse. Many women are proud only because they are a little better educated, or of nobler birth, or of a wealthier family than their husbands. *Mary is the Spouse and the Mother of God, and yet She serves – and does not expect to be served – Her consort, and She is full of love for him.* Joseph is the head of the family, judged by God so worthy of being the head of a family, as to be entrusted by God with the guardianship of the Word Incarnate and the Spouse of the Eternal Spirit.

And yet he is anxious to relieve Mary of Her work, and he takes care of the most humble jobs in the house so that Mary may not get tired, not only, but whenever he can he does his best to please Her and make Her house more comfortable and Her little garden more beautiful.

In that house order is respected: supernatural, moral, material. God is the Supreme Head and He is worshipped and loved: supernatural order. Joseph is the head of the family and he is loved, respected and obeyed: moral order. The house is a gift of God as well as the clothes and the furnishings. The Providence of God is shown in everything, of God Who supplied wool to sheep, feathers to birds, grass to meadows, hay to animals, grains and branches to birds, Who weaves the dress of the lily of the valley. The house, the dresses, the furnishings are accepted with gratitude, blessing the divine hand that supplies them, looking after them with respect as gifts of the Lord, without any bad humour because they are poor, without ill use, without abusing Divine Providence: material order.

You did not understand the words they exchanged in the dialect of Nazareth, neither did you understand the words of the prayer. But the things you saw are a great lesson. Meditate on them, you all who now suffer so much because you failed in so many things towards God, also in those things in which the holy Spouses never failed, the Spouses who were my Mother and father.

And you, rejoice remembering little Jesus, smile thinking of His little steps of a child. In a short time you will see Him walking under the Cross. And then it will be a vision of tears. »

37. The First Working Lesson Given to Jesus.

21st March 1944.

I see my little Jesus appear as sweet as a ray of sun on a rainy day. He is a little child about five years old, completely blond and most beautiful in His simple blue dress which reaches down to half His well-shaped calves. He is playing with some earth in the little kitchen garden. He makes little heaps with it and on top He plants little branches as if He were making a miniature forest, with little stones He builds little roads and then He would like to build a little lake at the foot of His tiny hills. He therefor takes the bottom part of an old pot and inters it up to the brim and then fills it with water with a pitcher which He dips into a vessel, which is certainly used either for washing purposes or to water the little garden. But the only result is that He wets His dress, particularly its sleeves. The water runs out of the chipped pot which is probably also cracked and... the lake dries up.

Joseph appears at the door and for some time he stands, very quietly watching the work of the Child and smiles. It is a sight, indeed, that makes one smile happily. Then, to prevent Jesus from getting more wet. he calls Him. Jesus turns

round smiling, and when He sees Joseph, He runs towards him with His little arms stretched out. Joseph with the edge of his short working tunic dries the little hands which are soiled and wet, and kisses them. And then there is a sweet conversation between the two.

Jesus explains His work and His game and the difficulties He met in it. He wanted to make a little lake like the lake of Gennesaret. (I therefor suppose that they have either spoken to Him about it of they had taken Him to see it.) He wanted to make a little one for His own delight. This was Tiberias, there was Magdala, over there was Capernaum. This was the road that took to Nazareth going through Cana. He wanted to launch some little boats in the lake; these leaves are boats, and He wanted to go over to the other shore. But the water runs away...

Joseph watches and takes an interest as if it were a very serious matter. He then proposes to make a small lake, the following day, but not with an old cracked pot, but with a small wooden basin, well coated with pitch and stucco, in which Jesus would be able to launch small real wooden boats which Joseph would teach Him how to make. Just then, he was bringing Him some small working tools, suitable for Him, that He might learn to use them, without any fatigue.

« So I will be able to help you! » Jesus says, smiling.

« So you will help me, and You will become a clever carpenter. Come and see them. »

And they go into the workshop. Joseph shows Him a small hammer, a tiny saw, some very small screwdrivers (chisels?), a plane suitable for a doll, which are all lying on the bench of a budding carpenter: a bench suitable for little Jesus' size.

« See, to saw, You must put this piece of wood like that. You then take the saw like that, and making sure that You do not catch your fingers, You start sawing. Try... »

And the lesson begins. And Jesus, blushing with the effort and pressing His lips together, saws the piece of wood carefully and then planes it, and although it is not perfectly straight, He thinks it is nice. Joseph praises Him and with patience and love teaches Him how to work.

Mary comes back. She had certainly gone out, and She looks in at the door. Joseph and Jesus do not see Her because She is behind them. Mother smiles seeing how zealously Jesus is working with the plane and how loving Joseph is in teaching Him.

But Jesus must have perceived Her smile. He turns round, sees His Mother and runs towards Her, showing Her the little piece of wood not yet finished. Mary admires it, and She bends down to kiss Jesus. She tidies up His ruffled curls, wipes the perspiration on His hot face, and listens with loving attention to Jesus, Who promises to make Her a little stool so that She will be more comfortable when working. Joseph standing near the tiny bench, with one hand resting on his side, looks and smiles.

I have thus been present at the first work lesson of my Jesus. And all the peace of this Holy Family is within me.

Jesus says:

« I have consoled you, My dear soul, with a vision of My childhood, which was happy in its poverty, because it was surrounded by the love of two saints, *the greatest the world ever had.*

They say that Joseph was My foster-father. Oh! If, being a man he could not feed Me with milk, as My Mother Mary did, he worked very hard indeed, to give Me bread and comfort and he had the loving kindness of a real mother. From him I learned − and never had a pupil a kinder teacher − *I learned everything that makes a man of a child, and a man who is to earn his own bread.*

If My intelligence, that of the Son of God was perfect, you must consider and believe that I did not want to deviate from the attributes and attainments of My own age group ostentatiously. Therefore, by lowering My divine intellectual perfection to that of a human intellectual perfection, *I submitted Myself to having a man as My teacher, and to the need of a teacher.* If I learned quickly and willingly, *that does not deprive the just man of the merit of being the person who nourished My young mind with the ideas which are necessary to life.*

Not even now that I am in Heaven can I forget the happy hours I spent beside Joseph, who, as if he were playing with Me, guided Me to the point of being capable of working. And when I look at My putative father, I see once again the little kitchen garden and the smoky workshop, and I still appear to see Mother peep in with Her beautiful smile which turned the place into Paradise and made us so happy.

How much families should learn from the perfection of this couple who loved

each other as nobody else ever loved!

Joseph was the head of the family, and as such, his authority was undisputed and indisputable: before it the Spouse and Mother of God bent reverently and the Son of God submitted Himself willingly. Whatever Joseph decided to do, was well done: there were no discussions, no punctiliousness, no oppositions. His word was our little law. *And yet, how much humility there was in him!* There *never was any abuse of power, or any decision against reason* only because he was the head of the family. *His Spouse was his sweet adviser.* And if in Her deep humility She considered Herself the servant of Her consort, he drew from Her wisdom Full of Grace, light to guide him in all events.

And I grew like a flower protected by vigorous trees, between those two loves that interlaced above Me, to protect Me, and love Me.

No. As long as I was able to ignore the world because of My age, I did not regret being absent from Paradise. God the Father and the Holy Spirit were not absent, because Mary was full of Them. And the angels dwelt there, because nothing drove them away from that house. And one of them, I might say, had become flesh and was Joseph, an angelical soul freed from the burden of the flesh, intent only on serving God and His cause and loving Him as the seraphim love Him. Joseph's look! It was as placid and pure as the brightness of a star unaware of worldly concupiscence. It was our peace, and our strength.

Many think that I did not suffer as a human being when the holy glance of the guardian of our home was extinguished by death. If I was God, and as such I was aware of the happy destiny of Joseph, and consequently I was not sorry for his death, because after a short time in Limbo, I was going to open Heaven to him. *As a Man I cried bitterly in the house now empty and deprived of his presence.* I cried over My dead friend, and should I not have cried over My holy friend, on whose chest I had slept when I was a little boy, and from whom I had received so much love in so many years?

Finally I would like to draw the attention of parents to how Joseph made a clever workman of Me, *without any help of pedagogical learning.* As soon as I was old enough to handle tools, he did not let Me lead a life of idleness, but he started Me to work and *he made use of My love for Mary as the means to spur Me to work.* I was to make useful things for Mother. That is how inculcated the respect which every son should have for his mother and the teaching for the future carpenter was based on that respectful and loving incentive.

Where are now the families in which the little ones are taught to love work as a means of pleasing their parents? Children, nowadays, are the tyrants of the house. They grow hard, indifferent, ill-mannered towards their parents. *They consider their parents as their servants, their slaves. They do not love their parents and they are scarcely loved by them.* The reason is that, while *you allow your children to become objectionable overbearing fellows, you become detached from them with shameful indifference.*

They are everybody's children, except yours, o parents of the twentieth century. They are the children of the nurse, of the governess, of the college, if you are rich people. They belong to their companions, they are children of the streets, of the schools, if you are poor. *But they are not yours. You, mothers, give birth to them and that is all. And you, fathers, do exactly the same.* But a son is not only flesh. He has a mind, a heart, a soul. Believe Me, no one is more entitled and more obliged than a father and a mother to form that mind, that heart, that soul.

A family is necessary: it exists and must exist. There is no theory or progress capable of destroying this truth without causing ruin. A shattered family can but yield men and women who in future will be more perverted, and will cause greater and greater ruin. And I tell you most solemnly that it would be better if there were no more marriages and no more children on the earth, rather than have families less united than the tribes of monkeys, families which are not schools of virtue, of work, of love, of religion, but a babel in which everyone lives on his own like disengaged gears, which end up by breaking.

Broken families. You break up the most holy way of social living and you see and suffer the consequences. You may continue thus, if you so wish. But do not complain if this world is becoming a deeper and deeper hell, a dwelling place of monsters who devour familes and nations. *You want it. Let it be so.* »

38. Mary the Teacher of Jesus, Judas and James.

29th October 1944.

Jesus says:

« Come, little John, and see. Held by My hand which will lead you, come back

to the years of My childhood. And what you see will have to be included in the Gospel of My boyhood, where I want also the vision of the Family's stay in Egypt to be put. You will put them in this order: the Family in Egypt, then the first working lesson given to the Child Jesus, then this one which you are about to describe, the scene of My majority (promised today, 25th November), lastly the vision of Jesus among the doctors in the Temple at His twelfth Feast of Passover. What you are now going to see is not without a reason. On the contrary it enlightens details of My early years and relationship among relatives. And it is a present for you, in the feast of My Regality, as you feel the peace of the house in Nazareth being transfused into you whenever you see it. Write. »

I see the room where they usually take their meals and where Mary works at Her loom or needlework. The room is near Joseph's workshop and I can hear the sound of his working. Here instead there is silence. Mary is sewing some strips of wool which She has certainly woven Herself; they are about a metre and a half wide and twice as long and I think they will be used to make a mantle for Joseph.

From the door which opens onto the kitchen garden, ruffled hedges of little daisies can be seen; their color is violet blue and they are commonly called « Maries » or « starry Sky ». I do not know their botanical name. They are in full bloom and consequently it must be autumn. But the green is still thick and beautiful on the plants and from two beehives leaning against a sunny wall, bees are flying in the bright sunshine buzzing and dancing, going from a fig-tree to the vines, and then to a pomegranate-tree full of its round fruits, some of which have already burst from excessive growth and show the strings of juicy rubies, lined up inside the green-red casket divided into yellow sections.

Jesus is playing under the trees with two children who are about His own age. They have curly hair, but they are not blond. One, on the contrary, is very dark: a little head of a little black lamb which makes the skin of his little round face look even whiter, and two most beautiful large, wide open blue violet eyes. The other is less curly and his hair is dark brown, his eyes are brown and his complexion darker, but with a pinkish hue on his cheeks. Jesus' little blond head looks like a blaze of light. They are playing in perfect harmony with some little carts on which there are… various articles: leaves, little stones, wood shavings, little pieces of wood. They must be playing at shops, and Jesus is the one who buys things for His Mummy, to Whom He takes now one thing, then another one. Mary accepts all the purchases with a smile.

Then the game changes. One of the two children proposes: « Let us play at the Exodus from Egypt. Jesus will be Moses, I will be Aaron, and you… Mary. »

« But I am a boy! »

« It does not matter. It's just 'the same. You are Mary, and you shall dance before the golden calf, and the golden calf is that beehive over there. »

« I'm not going to dance. I am a man and I do not want to be a woman. I bin a faithful believer and I am not going to dance before an idol. »

Jesus interrupts them: « Don't let us play that part. Let us play this other one: when Joshua is elected Moses' successor. So there will be no terrible sin of idolatry and Judas will be happy to be a man and My successor. Are you happy? »

« Yes I am, Jesus. But then You will have to die, because Moses dies afterwards. But I do not want You to die; You have always been so fond of me. »

« Everybody dies… but before dying I shall bless Israel, and since you are the only ones here, I shall bless the whole of Israel in you. »

They agree. Then there is an argument: whether the people of Israel, after so much travelling, still had the same carts which they had when leaving Egypt. There is a difference of opinion.

They apply to Mary. « Mummy, I say that the Israelites still had the carts. James says they didn't. Judas does not know who is right. Do you know? »

« Yes, My Son. The nomadic people still had their carts. They repaired them when they stopped to rest. The weaker people travelled in them and also the foodstuffs, and the many things which were necessary for so many people were loaded into them. With the exception of the Ark, which was carried by hand, everything else was on the carts. »

The question is now solved. The children go down to the bottom of the orchard and from there, singing psalms, they come towards the house. Jesus is in front and He is singing some psalms in His gentle silvery voice. Behind Him, there come Judas and James holding a little cart which has been elevated to the rank of Tabernacle. But since they have to play also the part of the people, in addition to Aaron's and Joshua's, with their belts they have tied to their feet other

miniature carts, and thus they proceed very seriously as if they were real actors.

They cover the whole length of the pergola, they pass in front of the door of Mary's room and Jesus says: « Mummy, hail the Ark when it passes by. » Mary stands up smiling, and She bows to Her Son Who passes by, radiant in the bright sunshine.

Then Jesus clambers up the side of the mountain that forms the boundary of the house, or rather the garden; He stands up straight on top of the little grotto, and speaks to… Israel. He repeats the orders and the promises of God, He appoints Joshua as the leader, calls him, and then Judas in his turn climbs up the cliff. He encourages and blesses him. He then asks for a… tablet (it is a large fig leaf) and He writes the canticle and reads it. It is not quite complete, but contains a large part of it, and He seems to be reading it from the leaf. He then dismisses Joshua who embraces Him crying, and He then climbs further up, right up to the edge of the cliff. And from there He blesses the whole of Israel, that is the two who are prostrated on the ground, He then lies down on the short grass, closes His eyes and… dies.

Mary, who has been watching from the doorstep smiling, when She sees Him lying still on the ground shouts: « Jesus, Jesus! Get up! Don't lie down like that! Your Mummy does not want to see You dead! »

Jesus gets up smiling, runs towards Her, and kisses Her. Also James and Judas come. They also receive Mary's caresses.

« How can Jesus remember that canticle which is so long and difficult and all those blessings? » asks James.

Mary smiles and answers: « His memory is very good and He pays a lot of attention when I read. »

« I too, at school, pay attention. But then I get sleepy with all the hubbub… shall I never learn then? »

« You will learn, be good. »

There is a knock at the door. Joseph walks quickly across the orchard and the room and opens it.

« Peace to you, Alphaeus and Mary! »

« And to you, and blessings. »

It is Joseph's brother with his wife. A rustic cart, drawn by a strong donkey, is outside in the street.

« Did you have a good trip? »

« Very good. And the children? »

« They are in the garden with Mary. »

But the children have already come to greet their mother. Also Mary comes, holding Jesus by the hand. The two sisters-in-law kiss each other.

« Have they been good? »

« Very good, and very dear. Are the relatives all well? »

« Yes they all are. They send You their regards, and they have sent You many presents from Cana. Grapes, apples, cheese, eggs, honey. And… Joseph? I have found just what you wanted for Jesus. It is on the cart, in the round basket. » Alphaeus' wife smiles. She bends over Jesus Who is looking at her with His eyes wide open, she kisses Him on those two strips of blue sky and says: « Do you know what I have for you? Guess. »

Jesus thinks, but He cannot guess. I doubt whether He does it deliberately, to give Joseph the joy of giving Him a surprise. Joseph in fact comes in, carrying a large round basket. He lays it down on the floor in front of Jesus, unties the rope which is holding the lid on, he lifts it… and a little white sheep, a real flock of foam, appears sleeping in the very clean hay.

Jesus utters an « Oh! » of surprise and happiness and He is about to rush towards the little animal, but then He turns round and runs to Joseph, who is still bent down as before, He embraces him, and kisses him, thanking him.

The two little cousins look with admiration at the little creature, which is now awake and is lifting its little rosy head bleating, looking for its mother. They take it out of the basket, they offer it a handful of clover. It browses while looking around with its mild eyes.

Jesus continues saying, « For me! For me! Thank you, father! »

« Do you like it so much! »

« Oh! Very much! White, clean… a little lamb… Oh! » and He throws His little arms round the sheep's neck, He lays His blond head on its little head and remains thus, happy.

« I brought two, also for you » says Alphaeus to his sons. « But they are dark. You are not quite so tidy as Jesus and your sheep would always be untidy, if they were white. They will be your herd, you will keep them together and so you will no longer be loitering in the streets, you two little rascals, throwing stones at each other. »

The children run to the cart and look at the other two little animals which are more black than white. Jesus has stayed behind with His sheep. He takes it into the garden, gives it water to drink and the little pet follows Him as if it had known Him forever. Jesus beckons it. He calls it « Snow » and the little lamb replies bleating happily.

The guests are sitting at the table and Mary offers them bread, olives and cheese. She also puts a jug on the table with cider or water sweetened with honey, I do not know exactly which, I see that it is a very pale color.

They speak while the children are playing with the three little animals that Jesus wanted gathered together so that He can give water and a name also to the others. « Yours, Judas, will be called “Star” because it has that mark on its forehead. And the name of yours will be “Flame” because it has the blazing colors of certain withering heathers. »

« Agreed. »

The elder people are talking and Alphaeus says: « I hope I have solved the matter of the boys' quarrels. I got the idea from your request, Joseph. I said to myself: “My brother wants a little sheep for Jesus, that He may have something to play with. I will get two, also for those naughty boys, to keep them quiet a little, and avoid continuous arguments with other parents with regard to bruised heads and skinned knees. What with the school and what with the sheep, I will manage to keep them quiet.” But this year You also will have to send Jesus to school. It is time. »

« I will never send Jesus to school » says Mary resolutely. It is most unusual to hear Her talk thus and above all to hear Her talk before Joseph.

« Why? The Child must learn to be ready in good time to pass His exam when He comes of age… »

« The Child will be ready. But He will not go to school. That is quite definite. »

« You will be the only woman in Israel to do that. »

« I will be the only one. But that is what I am going to do. Isn't that right, Joseph? »

« Yes, that's correct. There is no need for Jesus to go to school. Mary was brought up in the Temple, and She knows the Law as well as any doctor. She will be His Teacher. That's what I want, too. »

« You are spoiling the Boy. »

« You cannot say that. He is the best boy in Nazareth. Have you ever heard Him cry, or be naughty, or be disobedient, or lack respect? »

« No. That's true. But He will do all that if You continue to spoil Him. »

« You do not necessarily spoil your children just because you keep them at home. To keep them at home implies loving them with good common sense and wholeheartedly. And that is how we love our Jesus, and since Mary is better educated than a teacher, She will be Jesus' Teacher. »

« And when Your Jesus is a Man, He will be like a silly little woman frightened even of flies. »

« He will not. Mary is a strong woman, and She will give Him a manly education. I am not a coward, and I can give Him man-like examples. Jesus is a creature without any physical or moral faults. He will grow, therefore, upright and strong, both in His body and in His spirit. You can be sure of that, Alphaeus. He will not be a disgrace to the family. In any case, that is what I have decided, and that is all. »

« Perhaps Mary has decided, and you… »

« And if it were so? Is it not fair that two, who love each other, should have the same thoughts and the same wishes, so that each may accept the wishes of the other as if they were his own? If Mary should wish silly things, I would say to Her: “No.” But She is asking for something which is full of wisdom, and I agree, and I make it my own. We love each other, we do as we did the first day, and we shall go on doing so as long as we live. Is that right, Mary? »

« Yes, Joseph. And let us hope it will never happen, but when one should die without the other, we will still go on loving each other. »

Joseph pats Mary on the head as if She were a young daughter and She looks at him with Her serene loving eyes.

Her sister-in-law interferes: « You are quite right. I wish I could teach! Our children at school learn evil and good. At home they only learn what is good. But I do not know whether… if Mary… »

« What is it you want, My dear sister-in-law? Speak freely. You know that I love you and I am happy when I can do something that pleases you. »

« I was thinking… James and Judas are only a little older than Jesus. They are already going to school… for what they have learned!… Jesus instead already knows the Law so well… I would like… eh, I mean, if I asked You to take them as well, when You teach Jesus? I think they would behave better and be better educated. After all, they are cousins, and it is only fair that they should love one another like brothers. Oh! I would be so happy! »

« If Joseph wants, and your husband agrees, I am quite willing. It is the same to speak to one as to speak to three. And it is a joy to go through the whole Bible. Let them come. »

The three children, who have come in very quietly, are listening and are awaiting the final decision.

« They will drive You to despair, Mary » says Alphaeus.

« No! They are always good with Me. You will be good if I teach you, will you not? »

The two boys move near Mary, one on Her left side, the other on Her right, they place their arms around Her shoulders, they lean their little heads on Her shoulders, and they promise all the good in the world.

« Let them try, Alphaeus, and let Me try. I am sure you will not be dissatisfied with the test. They can come every day from the sixth hour until evening. It will be enough, believe Me. I know how to teach without tiring them. You must hold their attention and let them relax at the same time. You must understand them, love them, and be loved by them, if you wish to get good results. And you will love Me, will you not? »

Two big kisses are the answer.

« See? »

« I see. I can only say: “Thank You.” And what will Jesus say, when He sees His Mummy busy with others? What do you say, Jesus? »

« I say: “Happy those who listen to Her and build their dwelling near Hers.” As for Wisdom, happy are those who are My Mother's friends, and I am happy that those whom I love are Her friends. »

« But who puts such words on the lips of the Child » Alphaeus asks, astonished.

« Nobody, brother. Nobody in this world ».

The vision ends here.

Jesus says:

« And Mary was My teacher and the teacher of James and Judas. *That is why we loved one another like brothers,* not only because of our relationship, but for our science and the fact that we had grown up together, like three shoots supported by one pole only: My Mother. There was no other doctor in Israel like My sweet Mother. Seat of Wisdom, and of true Wisdom, She taught us for the world, and for Heaven. I say: “She taught us” because *I was Her pupil exactly as My cousins.* And *the “seal” was kept on the secret of God against Satan's investigations, and it was safeguarded by the appearance of a normal life.* Did you enjoy this sweet scene? Now be in peace. Jesus is with you. »

39. Preparations for Jesus' Coming of Age and Departure from Nazareth.

25th November 1944.

I have received a promise from Him. I was saying to Him: « Jesus, I would like to see the ceremony of Your majority! » And He replied: « I will give it to you as first thing as soon as we can be “ourselves” without upsetting the mystery. And you will put it after the scene of My Mother, My teacher and the teacher of

Judas and James, shown to you recently (29th October). You will put it between this one and the Dispute in the Temple. »

19th December 1944.

I see Mary bending over a tub, rather an earthenware vessel, in which She stirs something that steams in the cool clear air which fills the kitchen garden in Nazareth.

It must be the depth of winter, because, with the exception of the olive-trees, all the plants and trees are bare and look like skeletons. High above, the sky is very clear and there is beautiful sunshine. But it does not mitigate the bitterly cold wind that shakes the bare boughs and the little green-grey branches of the olive-trees.

Our Lady is wearing a heavy dark-brown dress, which is so dark that it is almost black, and She has tied in front of it a rough piece of cloth, like an apron, to protect it. She takes out of the vessel the stick with which She was stirring its contents and I can see some beautiful ruby-red drops dripping from it. Mary looks at them, She wets Her finger with them, checks the color against Her apron and seems satisfied.

She goes into the house and then comes out with a lot of skeins of snow-white wool. She dips them patiently and carefully into the vat, one by one.

While She is busy doing that, Her sister-in-law, Mary of Alphaeus, comes in, and she is coming from Joseph's workshop. They greet each other, and start conversing.

« Is it coming all right? » asks Mary of Alphaeus.

« I hope so. »

« That Gentile lady assured me that it is exactly the color, and that is exactly how they do it in Rome. She gave it to me only because of You, because of the embroidery work You did for her. She said that not even in Rome is there anyone who can embroider so well. You must have become blind doing it… »

Mary smiles and shakes Her head as if to say: « It was a mere trifle! »

Her sister-in-law looks at the last skeins of wool, before handing them over to Mary. « How beautifully You have spun them! They are so thin and smooth that they look like hair. You do everything so well. And You are so quick! Will these last ones be of a lighter color? »

« Yes, they are for the tunic. The mantle is darker. »

The two women work together at the vat. They then pull out the skeins of a beautiful purple color and they run quickly to dip them into the ice-cold water that fills the little vessel under the thin spring of water that tumbles babbling softly. They rinse them over and over again, then they lay the skeins on canes which they fasten to the branches of the trees.

« They will dry very well and rapidly in this wind » says Her sister-in-law.

« Let us go to Joseph. There is a fire in there. You must be frozen » says Our Blessed Lady. « It was very kind of you to help Me. I did it very quickly, and without working so much. I am very grateful to you. »

« Oh! Mary! What would I not do for You! To be near You is a great joy. And then… all this work is for Jesus. And He is such a dear, Your Son!… I will feel that He is also my Son, if I help You with His feast when He comes of age. »

The two women go into the workshop, which is full of the smell of planed wood, as is usual in carpenters' workshops.

And the vision comes to a halt… to start again with Jesus, Who is now twelve years old, setting out for Jerusalem.

He looks most handsome, and has grown so well that He looks like a younger brother of His very young Mother. He already reaches up to Her shoulders with His blond curly head, His hair is no longer short as in the first years of His life, but long down to His ears, and looks like a small golden helmet fully wrought in bright curls.

He is dressed in red: a beautiful light ruby-red. A long tunic hangs down to His ankles so that only His sandal clad feet can be seen. His tunic is loose, with long wide sleeves. Round His neck, at the end of His sleeves, at the hems, there is a Greek fret woven color on color, and it is most beautiful…

(When copying the vision, wait for the remainder which will be in a new copy-book).

20th December 1944.

I see Jesus with His Mother going into the dining room (let us call it so), in Nazareth.

Jesus is a handsome young boy, twelve years old, tall, well built, strong but not fat. He looks older than His years, because of His complexion. He is already tall, in fact He reaches up to the shoulders of His Mother. His face is the rosy round face of a child and later, in His youth and then in His manhood, it will get thinner and thinner and it will become colorless, the color of certain very delicate alabasters with a hue of yellowish pink.

Also His eyes are still the eyes of a child. They are large, wide open when looking, with a sparkle of joy lost in the seriousness of His glance. Later they will not be so wide open… His eyelashes will cover half of them to conceal the excessive wickedness which is in the world, from the Pure and Holy One. Only when working miracles, they will be open and bright, even brighter than now… to cast out demons and death, to heal diseases and sins. And they will no longer have that sparkle of happiness mingled with seriousness… death and sin will be more and more present and close, and with them the knowledge, also the human knowledge of the uselessness of His sacrifice, because of the unwillingness and aversion of man. Only in most rare moments of joy, when He is with faithful believers and particularly with pure people, mostly children, will His holy mild kind eyes shine again with happiness. But now He is at home with His Mother, in front of Him there is Saint Joseph who is smiling lovingly, and there are His little cousins who admire Him, and His aunt Mary of Alphaeus who is patting Him… He is happy. My Jesus needs love to be happy. And in this moment He has it.

He is dressed in a loose woollen tunic which is a light ruby red color. It is soft, perfectly woven in its compact thinness. Round the neck, in the front, at the ends of the long wide sleeves and at the bottom of the tunic which hangs down to the ground, so that only His feet can be seen, there is a Greek fret which is not embroidered, but woven in a darker color into the ruby of the tunic. He is wearing new sandals which appear to be very well made, they are not just the usual soles tied to the feet by means of straps of leather. His tunic must be the work of His Mother because Her sister-in-law admires it, and praises it.

His lovely blond hair is already somewhat darker than when He was a little boy, with auburn reflections in the curls ending under His ears. They are no longer the soft graceful curls of His childhood. It is not yet the wavy long hair of His manhood, reaching down to His shoulders, ending there in a soft, big curl. But it already resembles more the latter in its color and style.

« Here is our Son » says Mary lifting Her right hand which is holding Jesus' left one. She seems to be introducing Him to everybody and confirming the paternity of the Just man who is smiling. And She adds: « Bless Him, Joseph, before leaving for Jerusalem. There was no ritual blessing for His first step in life, because it was not necessary for Him to go to school. But now that He is going to the Temple to be proclaimed of age, please bless Him. And bless Me with Him. Your blessing… » (Mary sobs softly) « will fortify Him and give Me strength, to detach Myself a little more from Him… »

« Mary, Jesus will always be Yours. The formality will not affect our mutual relationship. Neither will I contend with You for this Son, so dear to us. No one deserves, as You do, to guide Him in life, o my Holy Spouse. »

Mary bends down and takes Joseph's hand and kisses it. She is the respectful, loving spouse of Her consort!

Joseph receives the sign of respect and love with dignity, he then lifts the hand which She has kissed and lays it on the head of his Spouse and says to Her: « Yes. I bless You, o Blessed One, and I bless Jesus with You. Come to me, my only joys, my honor and essence of my life. » Joseph is solemn. With his arms stretched out and the palms of his hands turned down above the two heads which are bent down, both equally blond and holy, he pronounces his blessing: « May the Lord look upon You and bless You. May He have mercy on You and give You peace. May the Lord give You His blessing.. » And then he says: « And now let us go. The hour is favorable for the journey. »

Mary takes a wide dark brown mantle and She drapes it on the body of Her Son. How She caresses Him in doing so!

They go out, they close up the house. They set off. Other pilgrims are going in the same direction. Outside the village the women separate from the men. The children go where they like. Jesus stays with His Mother.

The pilgrims go along through the country which is so beautiful in the happiest springtime, and they sing psalms most of-the time. The meadows are fresh and the crops are fresh, and the leaves on the trees have just begun to bloom. You can hear men singing -in the fields along the roads and birds singing their songs

of love among the branches of the trees. Clear streams reflect like mirrors the flowers on the banks, while little lambs are jumping about near their mothers… Peace and happiness under the loveliest April sky. The vision ends thus

40. Jesus Examined in the Temple When He Is of Age.

21st December 1944.

The Temple on a feast day. People going in and coming out of the enclosure gates, crossing yards, halls and porches, disappearing in this or that building on the various floors, which form the bulk of the Temple.

Also the group of Jesus' family go in singing psalms in low voices. All the men are in front, the women come behind. Other people have joined them, perhaps from Nazareth, perhaps their friends in Jerusalem. I do not know. Joseph, after worshipping the Most High with all the others at the point, obviously, where men were allowed to do so, (the women stopped on a lower landing), parts from the rest and with his Son goes back through some yards, he then moves to one side and enters a vast room which looks like a synagogue. I do not know why. Were there synagogues also in the Temple? He speaks to a Levite and the latter disappears behind a striped curtain, then comes back with some elder priests, I think they are priests, they are certainly masters in the knowledge of the Law, and they are therefore appointed to examine the believers.

Joseph introduces Jesus. First of all, they both bow down deeply to the ten doctors, who have sat down with dignity on low wooden stools. « Here » he says, « this in my Son. Three months and twelve days ago He reached the age which the Law prescribes to become of age. And I want Him to comply with the prescriptions of Israel. I would ask you to note that His constitution proves that He is no longer in His childhood or minority. And I ask you to examine Him kindly and fairly, to judge that what I here, His father, have stated, is the truth. I have prepared Him for this hour and for this dignity of son of the Law. He knows the precepts, the traditions, the decisions, the customs of the fringes and the phylacteries, He knows how to say the daily prayers and blessings. Therefore, since He knows the Law in Itself and in its three branches of Halascia, Midrasc and Aggada, He can behave as a man. Therefore I wish to be free from the responsibilities of His actions and of His sins. From now on, He must be subject to the precepts and He must pay Himself the penalty for His failures towards them. Examine Him. »

« We Will. Come forward, Child. What is Your name? »

« Jesus of Joseph, from Nazareth. »

« A Nazarene… can You therefore read? »

« Yes, rabbi, I can read the words which are written and those which are construed in the words themselves. »

« What do you mean? »

« I mean that I understand also the meaning of the allegory or of the symbol which is hidden under the appearance, as a pearl does not appear but it is inside an ugly closed shell. »

« A clever answer and a very wise one. We seldom hear that on the lips of adults; in a child, and a Nazarene in addition!… »

The attention of the ten has been awakened. Their eyes do not lose for an instant the beautiful blond Child, Who is looking at them sure of Himself, without boldness, but also without fear.

« You honour Your master, who, certainly, was deeply read. »

« The Wisdom of God was gathered in his just heart. »

« But listen to that! You are a happy man, father of such a Son! »

Joseph, who is at the end of the room, smiles and bows down.

They give Jesus three different rolls saying: « Read the one closed with the golden ribbon. »

Jesus opens the roll and reads. It is the Decalogue. But after the first few words, one of the judges takes the roll from Him saying: « Go on by heart. » Jesus continues so sure of Himself, that He seems to be reading. Every time He mentions the Lord, He bows down deeply.

« Who taught You that? Why do You do that? »

« Because that Name is holy and it is to be pronounced with a sign of internal and external respect. Subjects bow down to their king, who is king only for a short time and he is dust. To the King of kings, the Most High Lord of Israel, Who is present even if He is only visible to the spirit, shall not every creature bow down since every creature depends on Him with eternal subjection? »

« Very clever! Man: we advise you to have your Son educated either by Hillel or Gamaliel. He is a Nazarene… but His answers give us hope that He will become a new great doctor. »

« My Son is of age. He will decide according to His own will. If His decision is an honest one, I will not oppose it. »

« Listen, Child. You said: “Remember to sanctify feast days. Not only for yourself, but also for your son and your daughter, your servant and your maidservant, even for your horse it is said that they must not work on Sabbaths.” Now tell me: if a hen lays an egg on a Sabbath or a sheep lambs on a Sabbath, will it be legal to use the fruit of its womb, or will it be considered as an opprobrium? »

« I know that many rabbis, Shammai is the last of them and is still alive, say that an egg laid on a Sabbath is against the precept. But I think that there is a difference between man and animals or whoever fulfills a natural act, such as giving birth. If I compel a horse to work I am responsible for its sin, because I force it to work with a whip. But if a hen lays an egg which has matured in its ovary or a sheep lambs a little one on a Sabbath, because it is ready to be born, no, such a deed is not a sin, neither is the egg laid or the lamb born on a Sabbath a sin in the eyes of God. »

« But why, if every kind of work is a sin on Sabbaths? »

« Because to conceive and give birth correspond to the will of the Creator and comply with the laws which He gave to every creature. Now, the hen does nothing but obey the law according to which after so many hours of growth an egg is complete and ready to be laid, and the sheep also obeys the laws laid by Him Who created everything, according to which laws twice a year when springtime is on the meadows in bloom, and when the trees in the forest lose their leaves and men muffle themselves up because of the intense cold, sheep should mate so that later they may give milk, meat and nourishing cheese, in the opposite seasons of the year, that is in the months when the toil for the crops is harder or the bleakness is more painful because of frostbite. If therefore a sheep, when its time is up, gives birth to a little lamb, oh! little lamb can certainly be sacred also on an altar, because it is the fruit of the obedience to the Creator. »

« I would not examine Him any further. His wisdom is greater than the wisdom of grown up people and is really surprising. »

« No. He said that He is capable of understanding also the symbols. Let us hear Him ».

« First, let Him say a psalm, the blessings and the prayers. »

« Also the precepts. »

« Yes. Repeat the Midrasciot. »

Jesus repeats a long litany of « Don't do this… don't do that… » without any hesitation. If we were still obliged to keep all those limitations, rebels as we are, I am sure that no one would be saved…

« That is enough. Open the roll with the green ribbon. »

Jesus opens it, and He is about to read.

« Further on, yes, further on. »

Jesus obeys.

« That is enough. Now read and explain it, if You think there is a symbol. »

« In the Holy Word, it is seldom missing. It is we who cannot see and apply it. I read: Fourth Book of the Kings, Chapter twenty-two, Verse ten: “Then Shaphan, the secretary, informed the king saying: 'Hilkiah, the High Priest, has given me a book'; and Shaphan read it aloud in the king's presence. On hearing the contents of the Law of God, the king tore his garments, and gave the following…” »

« Read after all the names. »

« “… the following order: 'Go and consult Yahweh, on behalf of me and the people, on behalf of the whole of Judah, about the contents of this book that has been found. Great indeed must be the anger of Yahweh blazing out against us because our ancestors did not obey what this book says, by practising everything written in it…” »

« That is enough. This happened many centuries ago. Which symbol do You find in an event of ancient history? »

« I find that time cannot be related to what is eternal. And God is eternal and our soul is eternal, and the relation between God and our soul is also eternal. Therefore the thing that gave rise to a punishment then, is the same thing that gives rise to punishment now, and the effects of the fault are the same. »

« That is? »

« Israel is no longer acquainted with the Wisdom, which comes from God. It is to Him, and not to poor men, that we must apply for light, and it is not possible to have light if there is no justice and loyalty to God. That is why men sin, and God, in His anger, punishes them. »

« We are no longer acquainted? But what are You saying, Child? And the six hundred and thirteen precepts? »

« The precepts exist, but they are mere words. We know them but we do not practise them. That is why we are not acquainted with them. This is the symbol: every man, in every period of time, must consult the Lord to know His will and comply with it to avoid drawing His anger on himself. »

« The Child is perfect. Not even the trap of the tricky question has upset Him in His reply. Let us take Him to the real synagogue »

They go into a larger and more splendid room. The first thing they do there is to shorten His hair. His big curls are picked up by Joseph. They then tighten His red tunic with a long band turned several times round His waist, they tie some little fringes to His forehead, arm and mantle. They fix them on with a kind of studs. They then sing psalms, and Joseph praises the Lord with a long prayer invoking all blessings on his Son.

The ceremony is over. Jesus goes out with Joseph. They go back to where they came from, they join their male relatives, they buy and offer a lamb; then, with the slaughtered victim, they reach the women.

Mary kisses Her Jesus. It seems She has not seen Him for years. She looks at Him, now that He is more manly in His clothes and in the style of His hair, She pats Him…

They go out and it all ends here.

41. The Dispute of Jesus with the Doctors in the Temple.

28th January 1944.

I see Jesus. He is an adolescent. He is dressed in a tunic which I think is made of white linen, and it reaches down to His feet. Over it, He is wearing a pale red rectangular piece of cloth. He is bare headed, His long hair reaches down to half His ears and it is somewhat darker in hue than when I saw Him as a child. He is a strong boy and very tall for His age, which is still relatively young, as is obvious from His countenance.

He looks at me smiling and stretches His hands towards me. But His smile is already like the one I see in Him when He is a Man: mild but rather serious. He is by Himself. I do not see anything else for the time being. He is leaning against a low wall on a minor road which is all uphill and downhill, littered with stones and has a ditch in the middle which in bad weather must turn into a rivulet. But at present it is dry because the day is lovely.

I also seem to be going near the low wall and I look around and down, as Jesus is doing. I see a group of houses irregular in formation.

Some of the houses are tall, others are low, and they are scattered in all directions. They look like a handful of little white stones thrown down on dark soil: the comparison is a poor but good one. The streets and the lanes are like veins in all that whiteness. Here and there I see some plants protruding from the walls. Many are in bloom while others are already covered with new leaves. It must be springtime.

On my left, there is the massive structure of the Temple, on three sets of terraces covered with buildings and towers and yards and porches. In the centre, the highest most solemn and rich building rises with its, round domes, which shine in the sun as if they were covered with copper or gold. It is all enclosed by an embattled wall, the merlons of which are like those of a stronghold. A tower higher than the others, built over a rather narrow climbing road, commands a clear view of the huge building. It looks like a stern sentry.

Jesus stares at the place. He then turns round, leans back once again against the wall, as He had done before and looks at a hillock which is in front of the

building, a hillock crowded with houses at its base, while the rest of it is bare. I see that a street ends over there in an arch, beyond which there is nothing but a road paved with square stones, which are loose and uneven. They are not too large, not like the stones of the Roman consular roads: they rather resemble the classic stones of the old pavements in Viareggio (I do not know whether there are any still left) but they are not joined together. A really rough road. Jesus' face becomes so serious that I look at the hillock endeavouring to find the cause of His sadness. But I do not see anything special. It is a bare hillock and nothing else. Instead I lose Jesus because when I turn round, He is no longer there. And I fall asleep with that vision.

… When I awake with its memory in my heart, after I have recovered some of my strength and my mind is at peace, because they are all asleep, I find myself in a place which I have never seen before. There are yards and fountains and porches and houses, or rather pavilions, because they look more like pavilions than houses. There is a large crowd of people dressed in the ancient style of the Jews, and there is a lot of bawling. When I look round I realise I am inside the large building which Jesus was looking at, because I see -the embattled wall surrounding it, the tower watching over it and the imposing building that rises in the centre, and round which there are beautiful and large porches, where many people are intent on activities.

I understand that I am in the enclosure of the Temple in Jerusalem. I see Pharisees in long flowing dresses, priests dressed in linen and wearing precious plates at the top of their chests and on their foreheads and with other sparkling points here and there on their varied robes, which are very wide and white, tied to their waists by precious belts. There are also others with fewer decorations, but they must still belong to the sacerdotal caste and are surrounded by younger disciples. I realise that they are the doctors of the Law.

Among all these people I am lost, because I do not know why or what I am doing there. I go near a group of doctors where they have just started a theological dispute. Many people do the same. Amongst the « doctors » there is a group headed by one whose name is Gamaliel and by another old and almost blind man who is supporting Gamaliel in the dispute. This man, whose name I hear is Hillel (I am writing it with an 'h' because I hear an aspiration at the beginning of the name) seems to be a teacher or relative of Gamaliel, because the latter treats him with familiarity and respect at the same time. Gamaliel's group is more broad-minded, whereas another group, and it is more numerous, is led by one whose name in Shammai, and is noticeable for its conservative, resentful intolerance which the Gospel has clarified so well.

Gamaliel, surrounded by a compact group of disciples, is speaking of the coming of the Messiah, and founding his observations on Daniel's prophecy, he states that the Messiah must have already been born, because the seventy prophesied weeks, from the time the decree of the reconstruction of the Temple was issued, expired some ten years before. Shammai opposes him stating that, if it is true that the Temple has been rebuilt, it is also true that the slavery of Israel has increased and the peace, which He Whom the prophets called « Prince of Peace » was to bring, is quite far from being in the world and in particular is far from Jerusalem. The town is in fact oppressed by an enemy who is so bold as to exert his domination inside the enclosure of the Temple, dominated by the Antonia Tower, full of Roman legionaries, ready to put down with their swords any riot which may break out for the independence of the country.

The dispute, full of captious objections, is dragged on endlessly. All the doctors show off their learning, not so much to beat their opponents as to display themselves to the admiration of the listeners. Their aims are quite obvious.

From the close group of the believers the clear voice of a boy is heard: « Gamaliel is right. »

There is a stir in the crowd and in the group of doctors. They look for the interrupter. But it is not necessary to search for him, because he does not hide. He makes his way through the crowd and goes near the group of the « rabbis ». I recognise my Jesus adolescent. He is sure of Himself and openhearted, His eyes are sparkling with intelligence.

« Who are You? », they ask Him.

« I am a son of Israel, who has come to fulfill what the Law prescribes. »

His bold and frank reply is appreciated, and it gains Him smiles of approval and favour. They take an interest in the young Israelite.

« What is Your name? »

« Jesus of Nazareth. »

The feeling of benevolence fades away in Shammai's group. But Gamaliel, more benignly, continues his conversation with Hillel. It is indeed Gamaliel who with

respect suggests to the old man: « Ask the boy something. »

« On what do You base Your certainty? » asks Hillel. (I will now put the names in front of the replies for the sake of brevity and clarity.)

Jesus: « On the prophecy which cannot be wrong about the time and the signs which took place at the time it came true. It is true that Caesar dominates us, but the world and Palestine were in such peace when the seventy weeks expired, that it was possible for Caesar to order the census in his dominions. Had there been wars in the Empire and riots in Palestine, he would not have been able to do so. As that time was completed, so the other period of sixty-two weeks plus one from the completion of the Temple is also being completed, so that the Messiah may be anointed and the remainder of the prophecy may come true for the people who did not want Him. Can you doubt that? Do you not remember the star that was seen by the Wise Men from the East and stopped over the sky in Bethlehem of Judah and that the prophecies and the visions, from Jacob onwards, indicate that place as the one destined as the birthplace of the Messiah, son of the son of Jacob's son, through David who was from Bethlehem? Do you not remember Balaam? “A Star will be born of Jacob”. The Wise Men from the East, whose purity and faith opened their eyes and ears, saw the Star and understood its Name: “Messiah”, and they came to worship the Light which had descended into the world. »

Shammai, glaring at Him: « Do you mean that the Messiah was born in Bethlehem-Ephrathah at the time of the Star? »

Jesus: « I do. »

Shammai: « Then he no longer is. Don't you know, Child, that Herod had all the born of woman, from one day up to the age of two years, slaughtered in Bethlehem and surroundings? You, Who are so wise in the Scriptures, must know also this: “A voice is heard in Ramah… it is Rachel weeping for her children.” The valleys and the hills in Bethlehem, which gathered the tears of the dying Rachel, were left full of tears, and the mothers have wept again on their slaughtered children. Amongst them, there certainly was the Mother of the Messiah. »

Jesus: « You are wrong, old man. The weeping of Rachel turned into a hosanna, because there, where she gave birth to “the son of her sorrow”, the new Rachel has given the world the Benjamin of the Heavenly Father, the Son of His right hand, Him Who is destined to gather the people of God under His sceptre and free it from the most dreadful slavery. »

Shammai: « How can that be, if He was killed? »

Jesus: « Have you not read about Elijah? He was carried off by the chariot of fire. And could the Lord God not have saved his Immanuel that He might be the Messiah of his people? He, Who parted the sea in front of Moses that Israel might walk on dry ground towards its land, could He not have sent His angels to save His Son, His Christ, from the ferocity of man? I solemnly tell you: the Christ is alive and is amongst you, and when His hour comes, He will show Himself in His power » Jesus, in saying these words, which I have underlined, has a sharp sound in His voice which fills the air. His eyes are brighter than ever, and with the gesture of command and promise He stretches out His right arm and hand and lowers them as if He were swearing. He is a boy, but is as solemn as a man.

Hillel: « Child, who taught you these words? »

Jesus: « The Spirit of God. I have no human teacher. This is the Word of the Lord Who speaks to you through My lips. »

Hillel: « Come near us that I may see You, Child, and my hope may be revived by Your faith and my soul enlightened by the brightness of Yours. »

And they make Jesus sit on a high stool between Gamaliel and Hillel and they give Him some rolls to read and explain. It is a proper examination. The people throng and listen.

Jesus reads in His clear voice: « Be consoled, my people. Speak to the heart of Jerusalem and call to her that her time of service is ended… A voice cries in the wilderness: “Prepare a way for the Lord…then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed…” »

Shammai: « See that, Nazarene. It refers here to an ended slavery, but never before have we been slaves as we are now. And there is the mention of a precursor. Where is he? You are talking nonsense. »

Jesus: « I tell you that the admonition of the Precursor should be addressed to you more than anyone else. To you and those like you. Otherwise you will not see the glory of the Lord, neither will you understand the word of God because meanness, pride and falsehood will prevent you from seeing and hearing. »

Shammai: « How dare You speak to a master like that? »

Jesus: « I speak thus. And thus I shall speak even to My death, because above Me there are the interests of the Lord and the love for Truth of which I am the Son. And I add, rabbi, that the slavery of which the Prophet speaks, and of which I am speaking, is not the one you think, neither is the royalty the one you consider. On the contrary, by the merits of the Messiah *man will be made free from the slavery of Evil, which separates him from God, and the sign of Christ will be on the spirits, freed from every yoke and made subjects of the eternal kingdom.* All the nations will bend their heads, o household of David, before the Shoot born of you and which will grow into a tree that covers the whole world and rises up to Heaven. And in Heaven and on the earth every mouth will praise His Name and bend its knee before the Anointed of God, the Prince of Peace, the Leader, before Him *Who by giving Himself* will fill with joy and nourishment every disheartened and famishing soul, before the Holy One *Who will establish an alliance between Heaven and earth.* Not like the Covenant made with the Elders of Israel when God led them out of Egypt, treating them still as servants, *but infusing a heavenly paternity into the souls of men* with *the Grace instilled once again by the merits of the Redeemer,* through Whom *all good people will know the Lord* and *the Sanctuary of God will no longer be demolished and destroyed.* »

Shammai: « Do not blaspheme, Child! Remember Daniel. He states that after the death of Christ, the Temple and the Town will be destroyed by a people and a leader who will come from afar. And You hold that the sanctuary of God will no longer be demolished! Respect the Prophets! »

Jesus: « I solemnly tell you that there is Someone Who is above the Prophets, and you do not know Him and you will not know Him because you do not want to. And I tell you that what I said is true. *The true Sanctuary will not be subject to death. But like its Sanctifier it will rise to eternal life and at the end of the world it will live in Heaven.* »

Hillel: « Listen to me, Child. Haggai says: "…The One Expected by the nations will come… great then shall be the glory of this house, and of this last one more than of the previous one." Does he perhaps refer to the Sanctuary of which You are speaking? »

Jesus: « Yes, master. That is what he means. Your honesty leads You towards the Light and I tell you: when the sacrifice of Christ is accomplished, you shall have peace because you are an Israelite without wickedness. »

Gamaliel: « Tell me, Jesus. How can the peace of which the Prophets speak be hoped for, if destruction is going to come to this people by war? Speak and enlighten also me. »

Jesus: « Do you not remember, master, what those said who were present on the night of Christ's birth? *That the angels sang: "Peace to men of good will" but this people is not of good will and will not have peace.* It will not acknowledge its King, the Just Man, the Saviour, because they expect Him to be a king with human power, *whereas He is the King of the spirit.* They will not love Him, because they will not like what Christ preaches. Christ will not defeat their enemies with their chariots and their horses, *He will instead defeat the enemies of the soul, who endeavour to imprison in hell the heart of man which was created for the Lord.* And this is not the victory which Israel is expecting from Him. Your King will come, Jerusalem, riding a "donkey and a colt", that is, the just people of Israel and the Gentiles. But I tell you, that the colt will be more faithful to Him and will follow Him preceding the donkey and will grow in the ways of Truth and Life. *Because of its evil will, Israel will lose its peace and suffer for centuries and will cause its King to suffer and will make Him the King of sorrow of Whom Isaiah speaks.* »

Shammai: « Your mouth tastes of milk and blasphemy at the same time, Nazarene. Tell me: where is the Precursor? When did we have him? »

Jesus: « He is. Does not Malachi say: "Here I am going to send My messenger to prepare the way before Me; and the Lord you are seeking will suddenly enter His Temple, and the angel of the Covenant Whom you are longing for"? *Therefore the Precursor immediately precedes Christ.* He already is, as Christ is. *If years should elapse between him who prepares the ways for the Lord and Christ, all the ways would become obstructed and twisted again.* God knows and arranges beforehand that the Precursor should precede the Master *by one hour only.* When you see this Precursor, you will be able to say: "The mission of Christ is beginning." And I say to you: Christ will open many eyes and many ears when He comes this way. But He will not open yours or those of people like you, because you will be putting to death Him Who is bringing you Life. But when the Redeemer sits on His throne and on His altar, higher up than this Temple, higher than the Tabernacle enclosed in the Holy of the Holies, higher up than the Glory supported by the Cherubim, maledictions for the deicides and

life for the Gentiles will flow from His thousands and thousands of wounds, because He, o master who are unaware of it, is not, I repeat, is not the king of a human kingdom, *but of a spiritual Kingdom and His subjects will be only those who for His sake will learn to regenerate in the spirit* and, like Jonah, after being born, *will learn to be born again, on other shores: "The shores of God",* by means of a spiritual regeneration which will take place through Christ, Who will give humanity true Life. »

Shammai and his followers: « This Nazarene is Satan! »

Hillel and his followers: « No. This child is a Prophet of God.

Stay with me, Child. My old age will transfuse what I know into Your knowledge and You will be Master of the people of God. »

Jesus: « I solemnly tell you that if there were many like you, salvation would come to Israel. But My hour has not come. *Voices from Heaven speak to Me and in solitude I must gather them until My hour comes.* Then with My lips and My blood I will speak to Jerusalem, and the destiny of Prophets stoned and killed by her, will also be My destiny. But above My life there is the Lord God, to Whom I submit Myself as a faithful servant, to make of Myself a stool for His glory, waiting that He will make the world a stool at the feet of Christ. *Wait for Me in My hour. These stones shall hear My voice again and vibrate hearing My last word.* Blessed are those who in that voice will have heard God and believed in Him because of it. To them Christ will give that kingdom which your selfishness imagines to be a human one, whereas it is a heavenly one and therefore I say: *"Here is Your servant, Lord, Who has come do to Your will. Let it be consummated, because I am eager to fulfill it."* »

And here, with the vision of Jesus with His face burning with spiritual ardour and raised to Heaven, His arms stretched out, standing upright in the midst of the astonished doctors, the vision ends. (and it is 3:30 of the 29th).

29th January 1944.

I have here two things to tell you and which will certainly be of interest to you. I had decided to write them as soon as I came out of my stupor. But as there is something more urgent, I will write them later. […]

What I wanted to tell you at the beginning is this. Today you were asking me how I had been able to find out the names of Hillel, Gamaliel and of Shammai. It is the voice that I call « the second voice » which tells me these things. A voice even less audible than Jesus' and the voices of other people who dictate. These are voices, I have told you and I repeat it, which my spiritual hearing perceives as being identical to human voices. I hear them as kind or angry voices, strong or weak, joyful or sad, as if one spoke very close to me. The « second voice », instead, is like a light, an intuition that speaks in my spirit. « In » not « to » my spirit. It is an indication.

So, while I was approaching the group of the disputant parties and I did not know who was the illustrious personage who was disputing so heatedly beside an old man, this internal "something" said to me: "Gamaliel – Hillel". Yes. First Gamaliel and then Hillel. I have no doubt about it. While I was wondering who they were, the internal monitor pointed out the third unpleasant individual to me, just as Gamaliel was calling him by name. And I was thus able to learn who was the man with the pharisaic appearance.

Today this internal monitor makes me understand that I was seeing the universe after its death. The same happens many times in visions. It is this monitor who makes me understand certain details which I would not be able to grasp by myself and which are necessary for comprehension. I do not know whether I have made myself clear.

But I am stopping because Jesus is beginning to speak. […]

22nd February 1944.

Jesus says:
« Little John, be patient. There is something else. And let us do it to please your spiritual Director and complete the work. I want this work to be handed in tomorrow: Ash Wednesday. I want you to complete this task because… I want you to suffer with Me.

Let us go back, far back. Let us go back to the Temple where I, a twelve year old boy, am disputing. Nay, let us go back to the roads which take one to Jerusalem and from Jerusalem to the Temple.

See Mary's distress, when She realised, after the groups of men and women had gathered together, *that I was not with Joseph.*

She does not reproach Her spouse bitterly. Every woman would have done that. You do so for much less, forgetting that man is still the head of the family. But the pain that appears on Mary's face pierces Joseph's heart more than any bitter reproach. Mary does not give vent to dramatic outbursts. You do so for much less because you love to be noticed and pitied. But Her repressed sorrow is so obvious: She starts trembling, Her face turns pale, Her eyes are wide open and thus She arouses pity more than any outburst of tears and cries.

She is no longer tired or hungry. And yet the journey was a long one and She has not taken any food for so many hours! But She leaves everything: the bed She was preparing and the food which was ready to be handed out. And She goes back. It is night, it is dark. It does not matter. Every step takes Her back to Jerusalem. She stops the caravans and pilgrims and questions them. Joseph follows Her and helps Her. A long day's walk back to Jerusalem and then the feverish search in town.

Where, where can Her Jesus be? *And by God's provision for many hours She will not know where to look for Me. To look for a child in the Temple does not make sense.* What could a child be doing in the Temple? At most, if he had got lost in town and his little steps had brought him back there, he would have cried for his mother and thus would have attracted the attention of people and of the priests, who would have taken the necessary steps to find the parents by means of announcements left at the gates. But there was no announcement. No one in town knew anything of this Child. Beautiful? Blond? Strong? There are so many like that! It is too little to enable anyone to say: "I saw Him. He was there or there!"

Then, after three days, *the symbol of three other days of future anguish,* Mary, exhausted, enters the Temple, walks along the yards and the halls. Nothing. She runs, the poor Mother, whenever She hears the voice of a child. Even the bleating of the lambs give Her the impression that She hears Her Creature weeping and looking for Her. But Jesus is not weeping. He is teaching. All of a sudden, from beyond the barrier of a large group of people, She hears His voice saying: "These stones will vibrate…" She endeavours to make Her way through the crowd, and succeeds after much effort. There is Her Son, standing in the midst of the doctors with His arms stretched out.

Mary is the Prudent Virgin. But this time anxiety overcomes prudence. It is a hurricane that demolishes everything. She runs to Her Son, embraces Him, lifting Him off the stool and putting Him down on the ground and She exclaims: *"Oh! Why have You done this to us? For three days we have been looking for You. Your Mummy is dying with pain, Son. Your father is exhausted with fatigue. Why, Jesus?"*

You do not ask "why" of Him Who knows. "Why" He behaved in a certain way. You do not ask those with a vocation "why" they leave everything to follow the voice of God. I was Wisdom and I knew. I was "called" to a mission and I was fulfilling it. Above the earthly father and mother there is God, the Divine Father. His interests are above ours, His affections are superior to everything else. And I tell My Mother.

I finish teaching the doctors with the lesson to Mary, the Queen of doctors. And She has never forgotten it. The sun began to shine again in Her heart now that She had Me, humble and obedient, beside Her, but My words are deeply rooted in Her mind. There will be much sunshine and many clouds will gather in the sky during the next twenty-one years I will still be on the earth. And great joys and many tears will alternate in Her heart during the next twenty-one years. *But never again will She ask: "My Son, why have You done this to us?"*

Oh, insolent men, learn your lesson.

I directed and enlightened the vision, because you, little John, are not able to do anything further.

Now pay attention to what I say. I want this booklet to be made up as follows:

First sorrow: Presentation in the Temple. Second sorrow: stay in Egypt. Third sorrow: Jesus lost in the Temple. Fourth sorrow: the death of St. Joseph. Fifth sorrow: My departure from Nazareth.

Then the dictation dated 10th February 1944. Sixth sorrow: the description of the vision dated 13th February (4 points: the synagogue, the house in Nazareth, Jesus' sermon in the synagogue, the conversation with His Mother after escaping from Nazareth). Seventh sorrow: the vision dated 14th February. Then the dictation dated 15th February. Then the dictation dated 16th February. Eighth sorrow: the supper at Passover. Ninth sorrow: the Passion, taking the vision dated 11th February 1943 and connecting it with the one dated 18th February. Tenth sorrow: the burial of Jesus (19th February). Then the vision and dictation dated 21st February. Vision and dictation dated 22nd February as far as the point indicated. The other dictation on the finding of Jesus in the Temple is to be

put in its place in the third sorrow.

First the Father will make the usual booklet for himself and for you and you will correct it so that there is not even one error in it. Then he will make the copies he wants for other people. Of course each vision is to be accompanied by its dictation. The Father wanted everything for Easter. I wanted it as preparation for Easter and I am having it handed to you today, because it is already 4:30 p.m. of Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent.

Set to work, children and may you be blessed. And may those be blessed who will accept the gift with simple hearts and faith. The fire which the Father wished today will light up in them. The world will not change in its cruelty. It is too corrupt. But they will be comforted and they will feel the thirst for God, the incentive to holiness, rise within themselves.

Go in peace, little John. Your Jesus thanks you and blesses you. »

42. The Death of Saint Joseph.

5th February 1944, 1:30 p.m.

This vision appears to me imperiously, while I am busy correcting the copy-book, and precisely the dictation on pseudo-religions of present days. I will write it as I see it.

I see the inside of a carpenter's workshop. It looks as if two of the walls are formed by rocks, as if the builders had taken advantage of natural grottos converting them into rooms of a house. Here the northern and western walls are indeed the rocky ones, whereas the other two walls, the southern and eastern ones, are plastered, just like ours.

On the northern side, in the recess of the rock, they have built a rustic fireplace, on which there is a little pot with some paint or glue, I do not know exactly which. The wall there is so black that it seems to be covered with tar, because of the firewood which has been burnt there for many years. A hole in the wall, with a big large tile on top of it, takes the place of a chimney for letting out the smoke. But it must have performed its duty very badly, because the other walls have also been blackened by the smoke, and even now there is a smoky mist all over the room.

Jesus is working at a large carpentry bench. He is planing some boards which He then rests against the wall behind Him. He then takes a kind of stool, clamped on two sides by a vice, He frees it from the vice, and He looks to see whether the job is perfect, He examines it from every angle, He then goes to the chimney, takes the little pot and stirs the contents with a little stick or brush, I am not sure; I can only see the part protruding from the pot and which is like a little stick.

Jesus is wearing a rather short tunic, the color of which is dark hazelnut: the sleeves are rolled up to His elbows, and He is wearing a kind of apron on which He wipes His fingers after touching the little pot.

He is by Himself. He works diligently, but peacefully. No abrupt or impatient movement. He is precise and constant in His work. Nothing annoys Him: neither a knot in the wood which will not be planed, nor a screwdriver (I think it is a screwdriver) which falls twice from the bench, nor the smoke floating in the room which must irritate His eyes.

Now and again He raises His head and looks towards the southern wall, where there is a closed door, and He listens. At a certain moment He opens a door which is on the eastern side and opens on to the road, and He looks out. I can see a small portion of the dusty little road. He seems to be waiting for someone. He then goes back to His work. He is not sad, but very serious. He closes the door again and goes back to work.

While He is busy making something, which I think is part of a wheel, His Mother comes in. She comes in by the southern door. She rushes towards Jesus. She is dressed in dark blue and is bareheaded. Her simple tunic is held tight at Her waist by a cord of the same color. She is worried when She calls Her Son, and leans with both Her hands on His arm in an attitude of prayer and sorrow. Jesus caresses Her, passing His arm over Her shoulder and comforts Her. He leaves His work, takes His apron off and goes out with Her.

I suppose you would like to know the exact words they said. Very few were spoken by Mary: « Oh! Jesus! Come, come. He is very ill! » They are uttered with trembling lips and tears shining in Her reddened and tired eyes. Jesus says only: « Mother! » but that word means everything.

They go into the adjoining room, full of bright sunshine coming from a door open onto the little kitchen garden, which is also full of light and green, and

where doves are fluttering around near the clothes hanging out to dry and blowing in the wind. The room is poor but tidy. There is a low bed, covered with small mattresses, (I say mattresses because they are thick and soft things, but the bed is not like ours). On it leaning on many cushions, there is Joseph. He is dying. It is obvious from the livid paleness of his face, his lifeless eyes, his panting chest, and the total relaxation of all his body.

Mary goes to his left-hand side, takes his wrinkled hand now livid near its nails, rubs it, caresses it, kisses it, She dries with a small piece of cloth the perspiration that forms shiny lines at his temples; She wipes a glassy tear in the comer of his eye; She moistens his lips with a piece of linen dipped into a liquid which I think is white wine.

Jesus goes to his right-hand side. He lifts quickly and carefully the body which has sunk, He straightens him onto the cushions which He then adjusts together with Mary. He caresses the forehead of the dying man and endeavors to encourage him.

Mary is weeping softly, without any noise, but She is weeping. Her large tears run down Her pale cheeks, right down to Her dark blue dress, and they look like bright sapphires.

Joseph recovers somewhat, and stares at Jesus, he takes His hand as if he wanted to say something and also to receive strength, for the last trial, from the divine contact. Jesus bends over that hand and kisses it. Joseph smiles. He then turns round and with his eyes he looks for Mary and smiles also at Her. Mary kneels down near the bed endeavoring to smile. But She does not succeed and She bends Her head. Joseph lays his hand on Her head with a chaste caress that looks like a blessing.

Only the fluttering and cooing of the doves, the rustling of the leaves, the warbling of the water can be heard outside, and the breathing of the dying man in the room.

Jesus goes round the bed, takes a stool and makes Mary sit on it, once again calling Her simply: « Mother ». He then goes back to His place and takes Joseph's hand into His own once again. The scene is so real that I can't help crying because of Mary's pain.

Then Jesus bending over the dying man, whispers a psalm. I know it is a psalm, but just now I cannot tell which one. It begins thus:

« “Look after me, o Lord, because I hoped in You…
In favor of his friends who live on his earth
he has accomplished all my wishes in a wonderful way…
I will bless the Lord Who is my advisor…

The Lord is always before me.
He is on my right-hand side that I may not fall.
Therefore my heart exults and my tongue rejoices
and also my body will rest in hope.

Because You will not abandon my soul
in the dwelling place of the dead,
neither will You allow Your friend to see corruption.
You will reveal the path of light to me
and will fill me with joy showing me Your face.” »

Joseph cheers up a little and with a more lively look he smiles at Jesus and presses His fingers. Jesus replies to the smile with a smile of His own and to the pressure on His fingers with a caress. And still bending over His putative father, He goes on softly:

« “How I love your Tabernacles, o Lord.
My soul yearns and pines for the courts of the Lord.
Also the sparrow has found a home
and the little dove a nest for its young.

I am longing for your Altars, Lord.
Happy those who live in Your house…
happy the man who finds his strength in You.

He inspired into his heart the ascents
from the valley of tears to the chosen place.
O Lord hear my prayer…
O God, turn Your eyes and look at the face of Your Anointed…” »

Joseph sobbing, looks at Jesus and makes an effort to speak as if to bless Him. But he cannot. He obviously understands, but has an impediment in his speech. But he is happy and looks at his Jesus with liveliness and trust. « “Oh! Lord” », goes on Jesus.

« “You have favored Your own country,

You brought back the captives of Jacob…
Show us, o Lord, Your mercy and bring us back Your Savior.
I want to listen to what the Lord is saying to me.

He will certainly speak of peace to His people,
for His friends and for those who convert their hearts to Him.
Yes, His saving help is near…
and the glory will live in our country.

Love and loyalty have now met,
righteousness and peace have now embraced.
Loyalty reaches up from the earth
and righteousness leans down from Heaven.

Yes, the Lord Himself bestows happiness
and our soil gives its harvest.
Righteousness will always precede Him
and will leave its footprints on the path."

You have seen that hour, father and you have worked for it. You have cooperated in the formation of this hour and the Lord will reward you for it. I am telling you » adds Jesus, wiping a tear of joy which slowly runs down Joseph's cheek.

He then resumes: « "O Lord, remember David and all his kindness.

How he swore to the Lord: I will not enter my house,
nor climb into the bed of my rest, nor allow my eyes to sleep,
nor give rest to my eyelids, nor peace to my temples
until I have found a place for the Lord, a home for the God of Jacob…
Rise, o Lord and come to Your resting place,
You and Your Ark of holiness

(Mary understands, and She bursts into tears).

May Your priests vest in virtue and Your devote shout for joy.
For the sake of Your servant David,
do not deprive us of the face of Your Anointed.

The Lord swore to David and will remain true to His word:
'I will put on your throne the fruit of your womb'.

The Lord has chosen His home…
I will make a horn sprout for David,
I will trim a lamp for My Anointed."

Thank you, My father on My-behalf and on behalf of My Mother. You have been a Just father to Me and the Eternal Father chose you as the guardian of His Christ and of His Ark. You have been the lamp trimmed for Him and for the Fruit of the holy womb you have had a loving heart. Go in peace, father. Your Widow will not be helpless. God has arranged that She must not be alone. Go peacefully to your rest. I tell You. »

Mary is crying with Her face bent down on the blankets (they look like mantles) which are stretched on Joseph's body, which is now getting cold. Jesus hastens to comfort him because he is breathing with great difficulty and his eyes are growing dim once again.

« "Happy the man who fears the Lord
and joyfully keeps His commandments…
His righteousness will last forever.
For the upright He shines like a lamp in the dark,
He is merciful, tender-hearted, virtuous…
The just man will be remembered forever.
His justice is eternal and his power will rise and become a glory…"

You, father, will have that glory. I will soon come to take you, with the Patriarchs who have preceded you, to the glory which is waiting for you. May your spirit rejoice in My word.

"Who lives in the shelter of the Most High,
lives under the protection of the God of Heaven."

You live there, o father.

"He rescued me from the snares of fowlers and from rough words.
He will cover you with His wings
and under His feathers you will find shelter.
His truth will protect you like a shield
and you need not fear the terrors of night…

No evil will come near you because
He ordered His angels to guard you wherever you go.

They will support you on their hands
so that you may not hurt your foot against stones.

You will tread on lions and adders,
you will trample on savage lions and dragons.
Because you have hoped in the Lord,
He says to you, o father, that He will free you and protect you.

Because you have lifted your voice to Him, He will hear you,
He will be with you in your last affliction,
He will glorify you after this life,
showing you even now His Salvation."

And in future life, He will let you enter, because of the Savior Who is now comforting you and Who very soon, oh! I repeat it, He will come very soon and hold you in His divine embrace and take you, at the head of all the Patriarchs, where the dwelling place has been prepared for the Just man of God who was My blessed father.

Go before Me and tell the Patriarchs that the Savior is in the world and the Kingdom of Heaven will soon be opened to them. Go, father. May My blessing accompany you. »

Jesus has raised His voice to reach the heart of Joseph, who is sinking into the mists of death. His end is impending. He is panting very painfully. Mary caresses him, Jesus sits on the edge of the little bed, embraces him and draws to Himself the dying man, who collapses, and passes away peacefully.

The scene is full of a solemn peace. Jesus lays the Patriarch down again and embraces Mary, Who at the last moment, broken-hearted, had gone near Jesus.

Jesus says:

« I exhort all wives who are tortured by pain, to imitate Mary in Her widowhood: to be united to Jesus. Those who think that Mary's heart did not suffer any afflictions are mistaken. My Mother did suffer. Let that be known. She suffered in a holy way, because everything in Her was holy, but She suffered bitterly.

Those who think that Mary did not love Joseph deeply, only because he was the spouse of Her soul and not of Her flesh, are also mistaken. Mary did love Joseph deeply, and She devoted thirty years of faithful life to him. Joseph was Her father, Her spouse, Her brother, Her friend, Her protector.

Now She felt as lonely as the shoot of a vine when the tree to which it is tied is cut down. It was as if Her house had been struck by thunder. It was splitting. Before it was a unit in which the members supported one another. Now the main wall was missing and that was the first blow to the Family and a sign of the impending parting of Her beloved Jesus.

The will of the Eternal Father Who had asked Her to be a spouse and a Mother, was now imposing upon Her widowhood and separation from Her Creature. But Mary utters, shedding tears, one of Her most sublime remarks: "Yes. Yes, Lord, let it be done to Me according to Your word."

And to have enough strength for that hour, She drew close to Me. Mary was always united to God in the gravest hours of Her life: in the Temple, when She was asked to marry, at Nazareth when She was called to Maternity, again at Nazareth when shedding the tears of a widow, at Nazareth in the dreadful separation of Her Son, on Calvary in the torture of seeing Me dying.

Learn, you who are crying. Learn, you who are dying. Learn, you who are living to die. Endeavor to deserve the words I said to Joseph. They will be your peace in the struggle of death. Learn, you who are dying, to deserve to have Jesus near you, comforting you. And if you have not deserved it, dare just the same, and call Me near you. I will come. With My hands full of graces and consolation, My Heart full of forgiveness and love, My lips full of words of absolution and encouragement.

Death loses its bitterness if it takes place between My arms. Believe Me. I cannot abolish death, but I can make it sweet for those who die trusting in Me.

Christ, on His Cross, said on behalf of you all: "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit." He said that in His agony, thinking of your agonies, your terrors, your errors, your fears, your desire for forgiveness. He said it with His Heart pierced by extreme torture, before being pierced by the lance, a torture that was more spiritual than physical, so that the agonies of those who die thinking of Him might be relieved by the Lord and their spirits might pass from death to eternal Life, from sorrow to joy, forever.

This, My little John, is your lesson for today. Be good and do not be afraid. My

peace will always flow into you, through My words and through contemplation. Come. Just think that you are Joseph who has Jesus' chest as a cushion, and Mary as a nurse. Rest between us, like a child in his cradle. »

43. Conclusion of the Private Life.

10th June 1944.

Mary says:
« Before handing in these notebooks, I wish to add My blessing.

Now, only if you wish so, with a little patience, you can have a complete collection of the private life of My Jesus. From the Annunciation to the moment that He leaves Nazareth to start His public life, you have not only the dictations, but also the illustration of the facts that accompanied the family life of Jesus.

The infancy, childhood, adolescence and youth of my Son are only briefly mentioned in the vast picture of His life as described in the Gospels. There He is the Master. Here He is the Man. He is the God Who humiliates Himself for the sake of man. And He works miracles also in the humility of a common life. He works them in Me, because I feel that My soul reaches perfection by the contact with My Son Who is growing in My womb. He works them in the house of Zacharias by sanctifying the Baptist, by helping the labor of Elizabeth and by giving speech and faith back to Zacharias. He works them in Joseph opening his spirit to the light of such a sublime truth which he could not understand by himself, although he was just. And after Me, Joseph is the most blessed by this shower of divine gifts.

Consider how much progress he makes, I mean spiritual progress, from the moment he comes into My house to the moment of the flight into Egypt. At the beginning he was but a just man of his times. Then by successive steps, he becomes the just man of Christian times. He acquires faith in Christ and he relies so securely on that faith that from the sentence he pronounced at the beginning of the journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem: “What shall we do?”, a sentence which reveals the whole man with his human fears and his human worries, he passes on to hope. In the grotto, before the birth, he says: “It will be better tomorrow.” Jesus Who is approaching already fortifies him with this hope which is one of the most magnificent gifts of God. And from this hope, when he is sanctified by the contact with Jesus, he progresses on to daring. He always wanted to be guided by Me because of the venerable respect he felt for Me. Now he manages himself both spiritual and material matters, and as head of the Family, he decides when there is a decision to be taken. Not only, but in the painful hour of our flight, after that months of union with the Divine Son had filled him with holiness, it is he who comforts My affliction and says to Me: “Even if we should have nothing else, we shall always have everything, because we shall have Him.”

My Jesus works His miracles of grace in the shepherds. The Angel goes where the shepherd is, whom a fleeting meeting with Me predisposes to Grace and leads him to Grace that he may be saved by It for eternal life.

He works them wherever He passes, both when in exile and when He came back to His little country in Nazareth. Because wherever He was, holiness spread out like oil on a linen fabric and the perfume of flowers in the air, and whoever was affected, if he was not a demon, became eager for holiness. Wherever this eagerness is, there is the root of eternal life, because who wants to be good will reach goodness and goodness leads to the Kingdom of God.

You have now the holy Humanity of My Son, seen through details which reflect different moments, from the beginning to the end. And if Father M. deems it useful, he can collect the various episodes into a unit in an orderly way, without any gap.

We could have given you everything in one lot. But Providence decided that it was better so. For your sake, My dear-soul. With every dictation we have given you the medicine for the wounds which were to be inflicted on you. We gave it to you in advance, in order to prepare you. During a hailstorm nothing seems capable of protecting you. But it is not so. Humanity, which is sleeping buried under spiritual waters, is made to surface by the storm, which brings to the surface also the gems of a supernatural doctrine. Those gems had fallen into your hearts and are just waiting for the storm so that they may appear on the surface again and say to you: “We are here as well. Do not forget us.”

Further, My dear soul, this procedure was not only the design of Providence, it was based also on kindness. In your present dejection, how could you have watched certain visions and listened to certain dictations? They would have wounded you to the extent of making you unable to carry out your mission of “mouthpiece”. So we gave them first, avoiding to break your heart, because we are kind, and we used visions and words suitable to your sufferings, so that your

grief would not grow into torture. Because we are not cruel, Mary. And we always act so that you may receive solace from us, not dismay and increased sorrow. All we need is that you trust us. It is enough if you say with Joseph: "If Jesus is left with me, I have everything" and we will come with heavenly gifts to comfort your spirits. I do not promise you human gifts or human comfort. I promise you the same consolations as Joseph had: supernatural ones. Because, everybody should know, the gifts of the Wise Men, in the dire necessities of poor refugees, vanished as fast as lightning when we purchased a home and the bare essential household implements necessary for life, and the food which is also essential for life and could be procured only out of that source of income, until such time as we found work. Jewish communities have always helped one another. But the community gathered in Egypt was formed almost exclusively of persecuted refugees, who therefore were almost as poor as we, who had come to join them. And a little share of that wealth, which we were anxious to keep for our Jesus when adult, and we had spared out of the expenses for settling in Egypt, was most useful for our return and just sufficient to reorganise our house and the workshop in Nazareth upon our return. Because times change, but human greed is always the same and it takes advantage of other people's necessities to suck its part in the most exorbitant way.

No. The fact that we had Jesus with us did not procure us any material wealth. Many amongst you expect that, when they are hardly united to Jesus. They forget what He said: "Set your hearts on things of the spirit." All the rest is unnecessary. God provides also food. For men as well as for birds. Because He knows that you need food while your flesh is the tabernacle of your soul. But first of all ask for His grace. First of all ask for things for your spirit. The rest will be given to you in addition.

All Joseph had from his union with Jesus, from a human point of view, were worries, fatigue, persecutions, starvation. He had nothing else. But as he aimed only at Jesus, all this was turned into spiritual peace and supernatural joy. I would like to take you to the point where My Spouse was when he said: "Even if we should have nothing else, we shall always have everything, because we have Jesus."

I know, your heart is broken. I know, your mind is becoming obscured. I know, your life is wasting away. But, Mary!… Do you belong to Jesus? Do you want to belong to Him? Where, how did Jesus die? My dear child, weep, but persevere bravely. Martyrdom does not consist of the form of torture, but in the constancy with which the martyr endures it. Thus death from a weapon is martyrdom and likewise moral grief is martyrdom, if it is suffered for the same purpose. You are suffering for My Son's sake. Whatever you do for your brothers is still love for Jesus Who wants them to be saved. Thus your suffering is martyrdom. Persevere in it. Do not wish to do anything by yourself. The pressure of pain is too severe and thus it is not possible for you to have sufficient strength to be your own guide and control your human nature preventing it from weeping: all you need do is to let grief torture you without rebelling against it. It is enough for you to say to Jesus: "Help me!" What you cannot do, He will do in you. Remain in Him, always in Him. Do not wish to come out of Him. If you do not want, you will not come out and even if your sorrow is so deep as to prevent you from seeing where you are, you will always be in Jesus.

I bless you. Say with Me: "Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit." Let it always be your cry, until you will repeat it in Heaven. May the grace of the Lord always be with you. »

THE FIRST YEAR OF THE PUBLIC LIFE

44. Farewell to His Mother and Departure from Nazareth.

9th February 1944, 9:30 a.m. (begun during Holy Communion)

I see the interior of the house in Nazareth: a room which looks like a dining lounge, where the members of the Family take their meals and rest during the day. It is a very small room with a plain rectangular table near a chest, which is set against one of the walls. The chest also serves as a seat. Near the other walls there is a loom and a stool, and there are two more stools with a kind of bookcase on top of which there are oil lamps and other objects. A door is open onto the kitchen garden. It must be almost evening, because only some faint sun-rays are visible in the upper foliage of a tall tree, which is beginning to grow verdant in its first leaves.

Jesus is sitting at the table. He is eating, and Mary is serving Him, coming and going from a little door, which leads into the room where there is a fireplace, the light of which can be seen through the halfopen door.

Two or three times Jesus tells Mary to sit down… and to eat with Him. But She does not want to, She shakes Her head, smiling sadly. After serving some boiled vegetables as a first course, She brings in some roast fish and then some rather soft cheese, like fresh cheese, round shaped, like the stones which can be seen in the beds of torrents, and some small dark olives. Some small, flat round loaves of bread -about the size of a plate – are already on the table. The bread is rather dark brown as if the bran had not been removed from the flour. Before Jesus there is an amphora with water, and a goblet. He is eating in silence, looking at His Mother sadly, but lovingly.

It is very obvious that Mary is sad at heart. She comes and goes, purely to occupy Herself. Although it is still daylight, She lights a lamp and puts it near Jesus, and while stretching out Her arm doing so, She subtly caresses Her Son's head. She then opens a nutbrown haversack, which I think is made of pure hand-woven wool, and therefore water-resistant, She searches inside it, goes out into the little kitchen garden, walks to the far end, where there is a kind of store-room. She comes out with some rather withered apples which have certainly been preserved from the previous summer, and She puts them into the haversack. She then takes a loaf of bread and a piece of cheese and puts them also into the haversack, although Jesus remarks that He does not want them, as there is already enough food in the satchel.

Mary then comes once again near the table, at the shorter side, on Jesus' left hand, and looks at Him eating. She looks at Him with love and adoration. Her face is more pale than usual and seems aged by pain; Her eyes are ringed, and thus seem bigger, an indication of tears already shed. They also seem clearer than normal, as if they were washed by the tears welling up within, ready to stream down Her face: two sorrowful tired eyes.

Jesus, Who is eating slowly, evidently against His will, only to please His Mother, and is more pensive than usual, lifts His head and looks at Her. Their eyes meet, and He notices that Hers are full of tears, and lowers His head to leave Her free to weep. He only takes Her slender hand which She is resting on the edge of the table. He takes it in His own left hand, lifts it to His cheek, rests His cheek on it and then rubs it against His face to feel the caress of the poor trembling little hand, which He kisses on its back with so much love and respect.

I see Mary taking Her free hand, Her left one, to Her mouth, as if to stifle a sob, and She then wipes with Her fingers a big tear, which has fallen from Her eye and is streaming down Her face.

Jesus resumes eating and Mary goes out quickly into the kitchen garden, where it is now almost dark, and She disappears. Jesus leans His left elbow on the table, rests His forehead on His hand, absorbed in thought. He stops eating.

He then listens and gets up. He also goes out into the kitchen garden, and after looking around, He moves towards the right-hand side of the house, and through an opening in the rocky wall, He goes into what I recognize as the carpenter's workshop. It is now very tidy, without any boards or shavings lying about, and also the fire is out. There is the large working bench, all the tools are laid aside, and there is nothing else.

Mary is weeping, bent over the bench. She looks like a child. Her head is resting on Her folded left arm and She is crying silently, but very grievously. Jesus enters quietly and approaches Her so softly, that She realizes He is there, only when He lays His hand on Her lowered head, calling Her « Mother! »: in His voice there is the sound of a gentle loving reproach.

Mary lifts Her head and looks at Jesus through a veil of tears, and with both hands joined She leans on His right arm. Jesus wipes Her face with the hem of His large sleeve and then He embraces Her, clasping Her to His heart and kissing Her forehead. Jesus is majestic, He looks more manly than ever, whilst Mary looks more like a little girl, except for Her sorrow-stricken face.

« Come, Mother » Jesus says to Her, and holding Her close to Himself with His right arm, He walks into the kitchen garden, where they sit down on a bench against the wall of the house. The kitchen garden is now silent and dark, apart from the moonlight and the light coming from the house. The night is serene.

Jesus is speaking to Mary. At first I do not understand the words which are just whispered, and Mary nods Her head in assent.

Then I hear: « And get Your relatives to come. Don't stay here alone. I will be happier, Mother, and You know how I need peace of mind to fulfill My mission. You will not lack My love. I will come quite often and I will inform You in case I cannot come home when I am back in Galilee. Then You will come to Me, Mother. This hour was to come. It began when the Angel appeared to You; it is now striking, and we must live it, Mother, must we not? After we have overcome the trial, we shall have peace and joy. First, we must cross this desert

as our Ancestors did, before entering the Promised Land. But the Lord God will help us as He helped them. And He will grant us His help as a spiritual manna to nourish our souls in the difficult moment of the trial. Let us say the Our Father together… » Jesus and Mary stand up and they look up to Heaven: two living victims shining in the darkness.

Jesus, slowly but with a clear voice, says the Lord's Prayer, stressing the words. He emphasizes the words: « Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done » spacing the two sentences from the others. He prays with His arms stretched out, not exactly crosswise, but as priests do when they say: « The Lord be with you. » Mary's hands are joined.

They then go back into the house, and Jesus, Whom I have never seen drink wine, from out of an amphora on the bookcase, pours some white wine into a goblet, and He puts it on the table. He then takes Mary by Her hand and makes Her sit beside Him and drink some of the wine, into which He dips a small slice of bread, which He gives Her to eat. His insistence is such that Mary yields. Jesus drinks the remaining wine. He then clasps His Mother to His side, and holds Her thus close to His heart. Neither Jesus nor Mary was lying down as was customary in rich banquets in those times, but they were sitting at the table as we do. They are both silent, waiting. Mary caresses Jesus' right hand and His knees, Jesus pats Mary's arm and Her head.

Then Jesus rises, and so does Mary. They embrace and kiss each other very fondly and repeatedly. They always seem to be on the point of separating and parting, but each time Mary embraces Her Creature over and over again. She is Our Lady, but She is still a mother, a mother who must part from Her Son, and is fully aware of the final destination of His departure. Do not tell me that Mary did not suffer! Before I had some slight misgivings, now I do not believe it at all.

Jesus takes His dark blue mantle, puts it on His shoulders, and Pulls the hood on to His head. He arranges His haversack across His back, in order to be free when walking. Mary helps Him, and She delays endlessly in sorting His tunic, mantle and hood, caressing Him in the meantime.

Jesus goes towards the door, after making a sign of blessing in the room. Mary follows Him and at the open door they kiss each other once again.

The road is silent and solitary, white in the moonlight. Jesus starts walking away. He turns round twice to look at His Mother, Who is leaning against the doorpost, paler than the moon's rays, Her eyes sparkling with silent tears. Jesus moves farther and farther away along the narrow white road. Mary is still weeping against the doorpost. Then Jesus disappears round a bend of the road.

His Evangelical journey, which will end on Golgotha, has just begun. Mary goes into the house shedding tears and closes the door. She also has started Her journey which will take Her to Golgotha.

And for us…

Jesus says:

« This is the fourth sorrow of Mary, Mother of God. The first, was the presentation in the Temple; the second, the flight into Egypt; the third, the death of Joseph; the fourth, My separation from Her. As I knew the desire of your spiritual Father, yesterday evening I told you that I will hasten the description of “our” sorrows, so that they may be known. But, as you see, some of My Mother's had already been illustrated. I explained the flight before the Presentation, because it was necessary to do so on that day. I know. You understand and you will explain the reason to the Father verbally.

I have planned to alternate your contemplations and My consequent clarifications, with true and proper dictations, to comfort you and your spirit, granting you the beatitude of seeing, and also because in this way the difference in style between your composing and Mine will be obvious.

Further, with so many books dealing with Me and which, after so many revisions, changes and fineries have become unreal, I want to give those who believe in Me a vision brought back to the truth of My mortal days. I am not diminished thereby, on the contrary I am made greater in My humility, which becomes substantial nourishment for you, to teach you to be humble and like Me, as I was a man like you and in My human life I bore the perfection of a God. I was to be your Model, and models must always be perfect.

In the contemplations I will not keep a chronological order corresponding to that of the Gospels. I will select the points which I find more useful on that day for you or for other people, following My own line of teaching and goodness.

The lesson of the contemplation of My separation is addressed especially to

those parents and children, whom God's will calls to renounce one another for the sake of a greater love. It also applies to all those who have to face a painful renouncement.

How many such sorrowful situations you find in your lives! They are thorns on the earth and they pierce your hearts, I know. But for those who accept them with resignation – mind, I am not saying: “for those who wish them and accept them with joy”, which is already perfection; I am saying: “with resignation” – they become eternal roses. But only few people resign themselves to accepting them. Like restive little donkeys, you recalcitrate against the Father's will, and you jib, and you even try at times to hit good God with spiritual kicks and bites, that is, with rebellion and blasphemy.

And do not say: “I had but this good thing and God took it away. I had but this affection, and God took it away!.” Also Mary, a gentle woman, with perfect love, (because in the Virgin Full of Grace also affections and sensations were perfect), also Mary had but one good thing, and one love on the earth: Her Son. The only thing left to Her. Her parents had died a long time before. Joseph had died some years earlier. Only I was left to love Her and make Her feel She was not alone. Her relatives, because of Me, of Whose divine origin they were not aware, were somewhat hostile to Her, because they considered Her a mother incapable of imposing Herself on Her Son, Who did not behave according to good common sense, and turned down marriage proposals which could bring prestige to the family, as well as material help.

Her relatives reasoned according to common sense, to human sense – you call it good sense, but it is only human sense, that is selfishness – and they would have liked My life to comply with their usage. After all, they were always afraid that one day they might get into trouble because of Me, as I had already dared express certain ideas which they considered too idealistic and thought they might irritate the Synagogue. Hebrew history was full of teachings on the fate of Prophets. The Prophet's mission was not an easy one, and often brought about death for the prophet and trouble for his kinsfolk. And there was always the fear that one day they might have to take care of My Mother.

They were therefore irritated by the fact that She did not oppose Me in anything, nay, She seemed to be in perpetual adoration in front of Her Son. This conflict was to increase in the three years of My public life, when it culminated with open reproaches every time they met Me in the midst of crowds and were ashamed of what they considered My mania for vexing the powerful classes. And they rebuked Me and My poor Mother!

Mary was aware of the moods of Her relatives and was able to foresee their future tempers – they were not all like James, Judas and Simon or their mother Mary of Clopas – but although She knew what Her lot was going to be during the three years of My Public life, and was aware of Her destiny and Mine at the end of the three years, She did not recalcitrate, as you do. She cried. And which mother would not have cried because of the separation from a son who loved her as I loved Mine, or because of the prospect of long days devoid of My presence in a solitary house, or because of the dreary outlook of a Son doomed to butt against the malice of guilty people who took vengeance for their guilt by offending the Blameless One to the extent of killing Him?

She cried because She was the Co-Redeemer, and because She was the Mother of mankind who were being born once again to God. And She had to cry for all the mothers who are not able to turn their motherly sorrows into a crown of eternal glory.

How many mothers there are in the world, from whose arms death snatches their creatures! How many mothers there are, whose sons are torn away from their sides by a supernatural will! As the Mother of all Christians, Mary cried for all Her daughters, and in Her sorrow of a bereft Mother, She cried for all Her sisters. And She cried for all Her sons, who, born of woman, were to become apostles of God or martyrs for God's sake, because of their loyalty to God or because of man's cruelty.

My Blood and My Mother's tears are the mixture that fortifies those destined to a heroic fate, obliterates their imperfections and the sins they committed because of their weakness and, in addition to martyrdom, in whatever way suffered, it grants them the peace of God and then the glory of Heaven, if they suffered for God.

The missionary fathers find that mixture to be a flame that warms them in the regions covered by perpetual snow, and they find it to be a dew when the sun is scorching. Mary's tears originate 'from Her charity, and they gush out from Her heart of a lily. They therefore possess the fire of virginal Charity, the Spouse of Love, and the scented freshness of virginal Purity, like the drops of water which gather in the chalice of a lily on a dewy night.

Our mixture is found by those consecrated in the desert of a well understood monastic life: it is a desert because it only lives in communion with God, whilst all other affections fade away and become pure supernatural charity: towards relatives, friends, superiors and inferiors.

It is found by those consecrated to God in the world, in the world that neither understands nor loves them, a desert also for them, as they live in it as if they were alone, so much are they misunderstood and mocked for My sake.

Our mixture is found by My dear "victims", because Mary is the first victim for Jesus' love, and with Her hands of a Mother and a Doctor, She gives Her followers Her tears which refreshen and urge to a greater sacrifice. Holy tears of My Mother!

Mary prays. She does not object to praying because God had given Her sorrows. Remember that. She prays together with Jesus. She prays to the Father: Ours and yours. The first "Our Father" was said in the kitchen garden in Nazareth to console Mary's pain, to offer "our" wills to the Eternal Father, when a period of greater and greater sacrifices was about to begin for us, culminating with the sacrifice of My life and My Mother's acceptance of the death of Her Son. And although we had nothing for which the Father should forgive us, just out of humility, we, the Faultless Ones, begged the Father's pardon that we might proceed worthily in our mission, after being forgiven and absolved of even a sigh. Because we wanted to teach you that the more you are in the grace of God, the more your mission is blessed and fruitful. We also wanted to teach you to respect God and be humble. Before God the Father, although a perfect Man and a perfect Woman, we felt we were nothing and we begged forgiveness. Exactly as we asked for our "daily bread".

Which was our bread? Oh! Not the bread made by the pure hands of Mary and baked in our little oven, for which I had so often prepared bundles of sticks and brushwood. Also that bread is necessary while man is on the earth. But "our" daily bread was to fulfill, day by day, our part of the mission: we begged God to grant us that every day, because to fulfill the mission that God gives us is the joy of "our" day, isn't it, My little John? You also say that a day is lost, as if it did not exist, if the Lord's bounty gives you a day without your mission of sorrow.

Mary prays together with Jesus. It is Jesus Who justifies you, My children. It is I Who make your prayers fruitful and agreeable to the Father. I said: "Anything you ask for from the Father, He will grant in My name", and the Church enhances her prayers saying: "Through Jesus Christ Our Lord." When you pray, be always united to Me. I will pray for you in a loud voice, drowning your human voices with My voice of Man-God. I will take your prayers in My pierced hands and I will raise them to the Father. They will thus become victims of infinite value. My voice mingled with yours, will rise like a filial kiss to the Father and the purple of My wounds will make your prayers valuable ones. Be in Me if you want to have the Father in you, with you, for you.

You ended the narration saying: "And for us…" and you intended to say: "for us who are so ungrateful to those Two Who have climbed Calvary for us." You were quite right in writing those words. Add them every time I show you one of our sorrows. Let them be like the church bell that rings and calls men to meditate and repent.

It is enough now. Rest. May peace be with you. »

45. Jesus Is Baptised in the Jordan.

3rd February 1944, at night.

I see a bare, flat country, without any villages or vegetation. There are no cultivated fields, but a few odd plants are growing here and there in clusters, like vegetable families, where the deep soil is less parched. Imagine that the arid waste land is on my right-hand side, with my back turned to the north, and the harsh area stretches southwards.

On my left instead, l can see a river with very low banks, flowing slowly from north to south. The very slow flowing water makes me understand that there are no falls in the level of the riverbed and that it flows in such a flat country as to form a depression. The movement of the water is just sufficient to avoid the formation of marshes. The river is so shallow that the bottom can be seen: I would say the water is a metre deep, or a metre and a half, at most. It is as wide as the river Arno in the S. Miniato-Empoti area: about twenty metres. However, I am not good at estimating. And yet its color is blue with a light green hue near the banks, where on the humid soil, there is a strip of thick green vegetation, very pleasant to look at: the sight of the stony, sandy bleakness of the ground

tying before it is, instead, a very monotonous one indeed.

The internal voice, which I told you I hear and tells me what I must take note of and know, is now warning me that I am looking at the Jordan valley. I am calling it a valley, because that is the name used to indicate the place where a river flows, but here it is incorrect to call it so, because a valley presupposes the presence of mountains, but I do not see any mountains in the neighborhood. In any case, I am near the Jordan, and the waste land on my right is the desert of Judah.

If it is correct to call a desert a place where there are no houses or man's works, it is not so according to our idea of a desert. There are none of the undulating sands of the desert, as we understand it, but only bare ground strewn with stones and rubble, like alluvial grounds after a flood. There are hills in the distance.

And yet, near the Jordan, there is a great peace, something special and unusual, as one often feels on the shores of Lake Trasimeno. It is a place which seems to be full of memories of angels' flights and celestial voices. I cannot describe exactly what I feel. But I feel that I am in a place that communicates with my soul.

While I am watching these things, I notice that the right bank of the Jordan (in respect to me) is becoming crowded with people. There are many men dressed in different fashions. Some seem ordinary people, some rich, and there are some who appear to be Pharisees, because their tunics are adorned with fringes and braids.

In the midst of them, standing on a rock, there is a man whom I recognize at once to be the Baptist, although it is the first time I have seen him. He is speaking to the crowds, and I can assure you that his sermon is not a sweet one. Jesus called James and John the Sons of thunder. Well then, what should we call this impetuous orator? John the Baptist deserves the names of thunder-bolt, avalanche, earthquake, so impetuous and severe he is in his speech and gestures.

He is announcing the Messiah and exhorting the people to prepare their hearts for His coming, eradicating all obstructions and rectifying their thoughts. But it is a violent and harsh speech. The Precursor does not possess the light hand Jesus used to cure the wounds of hearts. He is a doctor who lays the wound bare, scrutinizes it and cuts it mercilessly.

While I am listening – I am not repeating the words, because they are related by the Evangelists, but here they are amplified in impetuosity – I see my Jesus proceeding along a path, which is at the edge of the grassy shady strip coasting the Jordan. This rustic road – it is more a path than a road – seems to have been opened by the caravans and the people who throughout years and centuries, passed along it to reach a point where it is easy to wade, because the water is very shallow. The path continues on the other side of the river, and disappears from sight in the green strip of the other bank.

Jesus is alone. He is walking slowly, coming forward, behind the Baptist. He approaches noiselessly and listens to the thundering voice of the Penitent of the desert, as if He also were one of the many who came to John to be baptized and purified for the coming of the Messiah. There is nothing to distinguish Jesus from the others. His clothes are those of common people, but He has the bearing and handsomeness of a gentleman. There is no divine sign discriminating Him from the crowd.

But it would appear that John perceives a special spirituality emanate from Him. He turns round, and at once identifies the source of the emanation. He descends impulsively from the rocky pulpit and moves quickly towards Jesus, Who has stopped a few yards away from the crowd and is leaning against the trunk of a tree.

Jesus and John stare at each other for a moment: Jesus, with His very sweet blue eyes; John with his very severe black flashing ones. Seen from nearby, one is the antithesis of the other. They are both tall – their only resemblance – for all the rest, they differ immensely. Jesus is fair haired. His hair is long and tidy, His face is white ivory, His eyes blue, His garment simple, but majestic. John is hairy: his straight, black hair falls unevenly onto his shoulders, his sparse dark beard covers his face almost completely, but his cheeks, hollowed by fasting, are still noticeable, his feverish eyes are black, his complexion is dark, tanned by the sun and weather-beaten, his body is covered with hairs, he is half- naked in his camel-hair garment, which is tied to his waist by a leather belt and covers his trunk, reaching down to his thin sides, whilst his right side is uncovered and bare, completely weather- beaten. They look like a savage and an angel, seen close together.

John, after scrutinizing Him with his piercing eyes, exclaims:

« Here is the Lamb of God. How is it that my Lord comes to me? »

Jesus replies calmly: « To fulfill the penitential rite. »

« Never, my Lord. I must come to You to be sanctified, and You are coming to me? »

And Jesus, laying His hand on the head of John, who had bowed down in front of Him, replies: « Let it be done as I wish, that all justice may be fulfilled and your rite may become the beginning of a higher mystery and men may be informed that the Victim is in the world. »

John looks at Him with his eyes sweetened by tears and precedes Jesus towards the bank of the river. Jesus takes off His mantle and tunic, and is left with a kind of pair of short trousers. He then descends into the water, where there is John, who baptizes Him, pouring on His head some water from the river by means of a cup, tied to his belt. It looks like a shell or a half pumpkin dried and emptied.

Jesus is really the Lamb. A Lamb in the whiteness of His flesh, in the modesty of His gestures, in the meekness of His look. While Jesus climbs on to the bank and after putting on His clothes concentrates on praying, John points Him out to the crowd and testifies that he recognized Him by the sign that the Spirit of God had shown him as an infallible means to identify the Redeemer.

But I am enraptured in watching Jesus pray, and I can only see His bright figure against the green of the river bank.

Jesus says: « John did not need any sign for himself. His soul, which had been presanctified in his mother's womb, possessed that penetration of supernatural intelligence which all men would have had, if Adam had not sinned. If man had persevered in grace, innocence and loyalty to his Creator, he would have seen God through external appearance. In Genesis it is said that God used to speak to the innocent man in an informal way, and that man did not faint hearing His voice, neither was he deceived in discernning it. Such was the destiny of man: to see and understand God exactly as a son does his father. Then man sinned and he no longer dared look at God, he was no longer able to see and understand God. And now he is less and less able to do so.

But John, My cousin John, had been purified from fault, when the Full of Grace lovingly embraced Elizabeth who, after being barren, had become pregnant. The little child had leapt out of joy in her womb, because he felt the scales of sin falling from his soul, as a scab falls off a wound when the tatter is healed. The Holy Spirit, Who had made Mary the Mother of the Savior, started His mission of salvation on that child about to be born, through Mary, the living Tabernacle of Incarnate Salvation: the child was destined to be united to Me not so much by his blood, as by the mission, by which we were like the lips that express a word. John was the lips, I the Word. He was the Precursor both in the Gospel and in martyrdom; I, by means of My divine perfection, made perfect both the Gospel which John had started, and martyrdom, suffered to defend the Law of God.

John did not need any sign. But a sign was necessary for the darkness of spirit of other people. On what would John base his statement, but on an undeniable proof evident to the eyes and ears of backward and dull listeners?

Neither did I need to be baptized. But the wisdom of the Lord had chosen that moment and way for our meeting. And leading John out of his cave in the desert and Me from My home, He united us in that hour to open the Heavens above Me and He descended Himself, a divine Dove, on Him Who was to baptize men with that Dove, and His announcement was heard descending from Heaven, more powerful than the angel's, because it came from My Father: “This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.” So that man should have no excuse or doubt in following or not following Me.

The manifestations of Christ have been numerous. The first, after His Birth, was the Magi's; the second was in the Temple, the third on the bank of the Jordan. Then there was an endless number of them, which I will let you know, because My miracles are manifestations of My divine nature, down to the last ones: My Resurrection and Ascension into Heaven.

My fatherland was full of My manifestations. Like seed scattered to the four winds, they took place in every social condition and place in life: to shepherds, powerful people, scholars, skeptical men, sinners, priests, rulers, children, soldiers, Jews and Gentiles.

And they take place even now. But, as in the past, the world does not accept them. It does not accept the present manifestations and forgets the past ones. Well, I will not give up. I will repeat Myself to save you and to persuade you to have faith in Me.

Do you know, Mary, what you are doing? Or rather, what I am doing, in showing you the Gospel? Making a stronger attempt to bring men to Me. You

yearned for it with your fervent prayers. I will no longer confine Myself to words. They tire men and detach them. It is a fault, but it is so. I will have recourse to visions, also of My Gospel, and I will explain them to make them more attractive and clear. I give you the comfort of seeing them. I give everybody the possibility of wishing to know Me. And if it is of no avail, and like cruel children they should throw away the gift without understanding its value, you will be left with My present, and they with My indignation. I shall be able once again to repeat the old reproach: "We played for you and you would not dance; we sang dirges and you would not weep." But it does not matter. Let them, the inconvertible ones, heap burning coals on their heads and let us turn to the little sheep seeking to become acquainted with their Shepherd. It is I, and you are the staff leading them to Me. »

As you can see, I have hastened to add these details which, being trifling matters, had escaped my notice, and were wanted by you. Today, reading the booklet, I noticed a sentence which may be a guide for you.

This morning you were saying that you cannot make my descriptions known because of their style and since I am terrified at the very thought of being known, I was very happy about it. But do you not think that that is against what the Master says in the last dictation in the booklet? « The more careful and precise you are (in describing what I see) the greater the number of those who will come to Me. » This implies that the description must be known, otherwise how can there be a number of souls going to Jesus, thanks to them? I am drawing your attention to this point, then you can do what you think is best, because, as far as I am concerned, I am indifferent. Nay, humanly speaking. I share your opinion. But in this case it is not a human matter and also the human side of the mouthpiece must disappear. Also in today's dictation Jesus says: « … in showing you the Gospel I make a stronger attempt to bring men to Me. I will no longer confine Myself to words… I will have recourse to visions and I will explain them to make them more attractive and clear. » So?

In the meantime, as I am a poor nonentity and by myself I retire to myself, I tell you that your remark has upset me, and the Envious One avails himself of the situation: I was so upset that I thought I should no longer describe what I see, but I should write the dictations only. He whispers in my ear: « You can see it yourself! Your famous visions serve no purpose whatsoever, except to make you pass off as mad. Which you really are. What is it that you see? The shams of your agitated mind. It takes much more to deserve to see Heaven! » He has tortured me all day today with his corrosive temptation. I can assure you that I have not suffered so much because of my bitter physical pain as I suffered and am suffering because of this. He wants to drive me mad. This Friday is a Friday of spiritual temptation for me. I am thinking of Jesus in the desert and of Jesus at Gethsemane…

I will not give up as I do not want this cunning demon to laugh, and fighting against him and against my weaker spiritual part, I am writing to you to inform you of my present joy and to assure you that, as far as I am concerned, I should be quite happy if Jesus deprived me of this gift of seeing, which is my greatest joy, providing He continues to love me and have mercy on me.

46. Jesus Is Tempted in the Desert by the Devil.

24th February 1944. Thursday following Ash Wednesday.

I see the solitary land which I already saw on my left-hand side in the vision of Jesus' baptism in the Jordan. But I must be some way inside the desert, because I neither see the beautiful, blue, slow flowing river, nor the green strips of vegetation which coast its banks, and are nourished by its waters. There is nothing here but solitude, stones and such a parched earth that it has become a yellowish dust, raised now and again by the wind in small eddies, which are so hot and dry that they seem to be the breath of a feverish mouth. And they are very troublesome because of the dust penetrating nostrils and throats. There are a very few small thorny bushes, strangely surviving in so much desolation. They look like small forelocks of surviving hair on a bald head. Above, there is a merciless blue sky; below, arid land; around, stones and silence. That is what I see as far as nature is concerned.

Leaning against a huge piece of overhanging rock which, because of its shape, forms a kind of a grotto, there is Jesus sitting on a stone that has been taken into the cave. That is how He protects Himself from the scorching sun. And my internal adviser informs me that the stone, on which He is now sitting, is also His kneeling-stool and pillow, when He takes a few hours rest, enveloped in His

mantle, under a starry sky in the chill air of the night. Near Him, there is the haversack which I saw Him take before departing from Nazareth. It is all He has. And from the way it is folded, I realise it has been emptied of the little food Mary had Put into it.

Jesus is very thin and pale. He is sitting with His elbows resting on His knees, His forearms forward, His hands joined and His fingers interlaced. He is meditating. Now and again He looks up and around, then looks at the sun, almost perpendicular in the blue sky. Now and again, particularly after looking around and at the sun, He closes His eyes and leans on the rock sheltering Him, as if He were seized by dizziness.

I see Satan's ugly face appear. He does not show himself in the features we imagine him: horns, tail etc. He looks like a bedouin enveloped in his robe and in a large mantle that resembles a domino. He is wearing a turban on his head and its white flaps fall along his cheeks, down to his shoulders protecting them. Thus only a very small dark triangle of his face can be seen, with thin, sinuous lips, very black hollow eyes, full of magnetic flashes. Two eyes that penetrate and read into the bottom of your heart, but in which you can read nothing, or one word only: mystery. The very opposite of Jesus' eyes, also so magnetic and fascinating, which read in your heart, but in which you can also read that in His heart there is love and bounty for you. Jesus' eyes caress your soul. Satan's are like a double dagger that stabs and burns you.

He approaches Jesus: « Are you alone? »

Jesus looks at him, but does not reply.

« How did You happen to be here? Did You get lost? »

Jesus looks at him again, and is silent.

« If I had water in my flask, I would give You some. But I have none myself. My horse died, and I am now going on foot to the ford. I will get a drink there, and I will find someone who will give me some bread. I know the road. Come with me. I'll take You there. »

Jesus does not even look at him.

« You are not answering? Do You know that if You stay here, You will die? The wind is already beginning to blow. There will be a storm. Come. »

Jesus clenches His hands in silent prayer.

« Ah! It is You, then? I have been looking for You for such a long time! And I have been watching You for so long. Since You were baptised. Are You calling the Eternal? He is far away. You are now on the earth, in the midst of men. And I reign over men. And yet, I feel sorry for You, and I want to help You, because You are so good, and You have come to sacrifice Yourself for nothing. Men will hate You because of Your goodness. They understand nothing, but gold, food and pleasure. Sacrifice, sorrow, obedience are words more arid for them than the land around us here. They are more arid than this dust. Only snakes can hide here, waiting to bite, and jackals waiting to tear to pieces. Come with me. It is not worthwhile suffering for them. I know them better than You do. »

Satan has sat down in front of Jesus and he scrutinises Him with his dreadful eyes, and smiles at Him with his snakelike mouth. Jesus is always silent, and is praying mentally.

« You don't trust me. You are wrong. I am the wisdom of the earth. I can be Your teacher and show You how to triumph. See, the important thing is to triumph. Then, once we have imposed ourselves and we have enchanted the world, then we can take them wherever we want. But first, we must be as they wish us to be. Like them. We must allure them, making them believe that we admire them and follow their thoughts.

You are young and handsome. Start with a woman. One must always start from her. I made a mistake inducing her to be disobedient. I should have advised her differently. I would have turned her into a better instrument, and I would have beaten God. I was in a hurry. But You! I will teach You, because one day I looked at You with angelical joy, and a fraction of that love is still left in me, but You must listen to me, and make use of my experience. Find yourself a woman. Where you do not succeed, she will. You are the new Adam: You must have Your Eve.

In any case, how can You understand and heal the diseases of the senses, if You do not know what they are? Don't You know that that is where the seed is, from which the tree of greediness and arrogance sprouts? Why do men want to reign? Why do they want to be rich and powerful? To possess woman. She is like a lark. She will be attracted only by something sparkling. Gold and power are two sides of the mirror that draw woman, and are the causes of evil in the world. Look: in a thousand different crimes, there are at least nine hundred that take

root in the lust of possessing a woman or in the passion of a woman, burning with a desire that man has not yet satisfied, or can no longer satisfy. Go to a woman if You want to know what life is. And only then, You will be able to cure and heal the diseases of mankind.

Women, You know, are beautiful! There is nothing nicer in the world. Man has brains and strength. But woman! Her thought is a perfume, her touch is the caress of flowers, her grace is like wine, pleasant to drink, her weakness is like a hank of silk, or the curl of a child in a man's hand, her caress is a strength which is poured over our own strength, and inflames it. Sorrow, fatigue, worries are forgotten when we lie near a woman, and she is in our arms like a bunch of flowers.

But what a fool I am! You are hungry and I am talking to You of women. Your energy is exhausted. That is why that fragrance of the earth, that flower of creation, the fruit that gives and excites love, seems without any value to You. But look at these stones. How round and smooth they look, gilded by the setting sun! Don't they look like loaves? Since You are the Son of God, all You have to say is: “I want” and they will become sweet-smelling bread, just like the loaves housewives are now taking out of their ovens for the supper of their families. And these arid acacias, if You only Wish so, will they not be filled with sweet fruit and dates as sweet as honey? Eat Your fill, Son of God. You are the Master of the earth. The earth is bowing down to put itself at Your feet and appease Your hunger.

Don't You see that You are turning pale and unsteady at the mention of bread. Poor Jesus! Are You so weak that You cannot even work a miracle? Shall I work it for You? I am not Your equal, but I can do something. I will do without any strength for a whole year, I will gather it all together, but I want to serve You, because You are good, and I always remember that You are my God, even if now I have forfeited calling You so. Help me with Your prayers, that I may… »

« Be quiet! “Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.” »

The devil starts with anger. He grinds his teeth, and clenches his fists. But he controls himself, and turns his grinding into a smile.

« I understand. You are above the necessities of the earth and You are disgusted at making use of me. I deserved it. But come, then, and see what there is in the House of God. You will see how even priests do not refuse to come to a compromise between the spirit and the flesh. After all, they are men, and not angels. Work a spiritual miracle. I will take You up to the pinnacle of the Temple and You will undergo a transfiguration and become most handsome. You will then call the cohorts of angels and will tell them to form a footrest for Your feet with their interlaced wings, and to let You down, thus, into the main yard. So that people may see You, and remember that God exists. One must show oneself now and again, because man's memory is so weak, particularly with regard to spiritual matters. You can imagine how happy the angels will be in forming a protection for Your feet and a ladder for You to descend! »

« It is said: “You must not put the Lord your God to the test.” »

« You understand that Your apparition would not change anything and the Temple would continue to be a market full of corruption. Your divine wisdom is aware that the hearts of the ministers of the Temple are nests of vipers, that tear and are torn to pieces for the sake of prevailing. They are subdued only by human power.

Well, then, come. Adore me. I will give You the earth. Alexander, Cyrus, Caesar, all the great rulers, past or present, will be like the leaders of miserable caravans as compared with You, as You shall have the kingdoms of the world under Your sceptre. And with the kingdoms, all the wealth, all the beautiful things on earth, women, horses, armies and temples. You will be able to raise Your Sign everywhere when You are the King of kings and the Lord of the world. You will then be obeyed and respected both by the people and by the priesthood. All classes will honour and serve You, because You will be the Powerful One, the Only One, the Lord.

Adore me for one moment only! Appease this thirst of mine for being worshipped! It ruined me, but it is still left in me, and I am parched by it. The flames of hell are like a fresh morning breeze as compared to this fierce ardour burning inside me. It is my hell, this thirst. One moment, one moment only, Christ. You are so good! One moment of joy for the eternally Tortured One! Let me feel what it is like to be god, and I will be a devoted, obedient servant for all Your life and all Your enterprises. One instant, one instant only, and I will no longer torture You! » And Satan falls on his knees, imploring.

Jesus, instead, stands up. He has lost weight because of the long days of fast,

and He now looks taller. His face is terribly severe and potent. His eyes are two burning sapphires. His voice is like thunder: it reverberates in the cave of the huge stone, and spreads over the stony, desolate plain when He cries: « Be off, Satan. It is written: “You must worship the Lord your God, and serve Him alone.” »

Satan, with a cry of fearful torture and indescribable hatred, springs to his feet, a dreadful sight in his furious, smoky figure. And he disappears with a last cursing yell.

Jesus is tired, and sits down, leaning back with His head resting on the stone. He looks exhausted. He is perspiring. But angels come to blow gently with their wings in the closeness of the cave, thus purifying and refreshing the air. Jesus opens His eyes, and smiles. I do not see Him eat. I would say that He is nourished by the aroma of Paradise, and is reinvigorated by it.

The sun has set in the west. He takes His empty haversack and in the company of the angels who, flying above His head, emit a mild light while it is getting dark very rapidly, He starts walking eastwards, or rather north-eastwards. He has resumed His usual expression, His step is steady. The only remaining sign of His long fast is a more ascetic look on His pale, thin face and in His eyes, enraptured in a joy which does not belong to this world.

Jesus says:

« Yesterday you had no strength, which is My will, and you were, therefore, half-alive. I let your body rest and I made you fast the only way which is burdensome to you: depriving you of My word. Poor Mary! You kept Ash Wednesday. You tasted an ashen flavour in everything because you were without your Master. I did not let you perceive Me, but I was there.

This morning, as our anxiety is reciprocal, when you were half asleep, I whispered to you: “Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi, dona nobis pacem” and I made you repeat it many times and I repeated it to you many times. You thought that I was going to speak about that. No. First there is the subject which I showed you and upon which I will comment for you. Then this evening I will illustrate this other one.

As you have seen, kindness is always Satan's disguise when he presents himself. He looks like an ordinary person. If souls are careful, and above all, if they are in spiritual contact with God, they perceive the warning that makes them cautious and prepares them to fight the devil's snares. But if souls are distracted, separated from God by an overwhelming sensuality, and are not assisted by prayer, which joins them to God and pours strength into the hearts of men, then they seldom perceive the snares hidden under the innocent appearance and they fall into the trap. It is then very difficult for them to free themselves.

The two most common means adopted by Satan to conquer souls are sensuality and gluttony. He always starts from material things. Once he has dismantled and subdued the material side, he attacks the spiritual part.

First the morals: thoughts with their pride and greed; then the spirit, obliterating not only its love – which no longer exists when man replaces divine love with other human loves – but also the fear of God. Then man surrenders his body and soul to Satan, only for the sake of enjoying what he wants, and enjoying it more and more.

You saw how I behaved. Silence and prayer. Silence. Because if Satan performs his work of a seducer and comes round us, we must put up with the situation without any foolish impatience or cowardly fears. We must react with resolution to his presence, and with prayer to his allurements.

It is useless to debate with Satan. He would win, because he is strong in his dialectics. Only God can beat him. And so you must have recourse to God, that He may speak for you, through you. You must show Satan that Name and that Sign, not so much written on paper or engraved on wood, but written and engraved in your hearts. My Name, My Sign. You should answer back to Satan, using the word of God, only when he insinuates that he is like God. He cannot bear that.

Then after the struggle, there comes victory and the angels serve and defend the winner from Satan's hatred. They restore him with celestial dews, with the Grace that they pour with full hands into the heart of the faithful son, with a blessing that caresses his soul.

One must be determined to defeat Satan, and have faith in God, and in His help. Faith in the power of prayer, and in the Lord's bounty. Then Satan can do no harm.

Go in peace. This evening I will gladden you with the remainder. »

47. Jesus Meets John and James.

25th February 1944.

I see Jesus walking along the green strip of vegetation that borders the Jordan. He has gone back to the same place where He was baptised. He is near the ford that apparently was well known and commonly used to cross to the other bank towards Perea. But the place, which was so crowded before, is now deserted. There are only a few travellers, going on foot, or riding donkeys or horses.

Jesus does not seem to be aware of them. He proceeds along His way, northwards, absorbed in His thoughts. When He reaches the ford, He meets a group of men of different ages, who are discussing animatedly, and then they part, some southwards, some northwards.

Amongst those going northwards, I see John and James. John is the first to see Jesus, and he points Him out to his brother and companions. They talk a little amongst themselves, and then John starts walking quickly to reach Jesus. James follows him, walking a little slower. The others do not show any interest. They walk slowly, while discussing.

When John is near Jesus, about two or three metres behind Him, he shouts: « Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world! »

Jesus turns round, and looks at him. There are now only a few steps between them. They look at each other: Jesus with His serious, scrutinising look, John with his pure eyes smiling in his beautiful, youthful face, that looks like the face of a girl. He is about twenty years old, and on his rosy cheeks there is only the sign of a blond down, like a golden veil.

« Whom are you looking for? » asks Jesus.

« For You, Master. »

« How do you know I am a Master? »

« The Baptist told me. »

« Well then, why do you call Me Lamb? »

« Because I heard him call You so one day, when You were passing by, just over a month ago. »

« What do you want from Me? »

« I want You to tell us words of eternal life and to comfort us. »

« But who are you? »

« I am John of Zebedee, and this is James, my brother. We are from Galilee, and we are fishermen. But we are also disciples of John. He spoke words of life to us and we listened to him, because we want to follow God, and deserve His forgiveness doing penance and thus prepare our hearts for the coming of the Messiah. You are the Messiah. John said so, because he saw the sign of the Dove descending on You. He said to us: “Here is the Lamb of God.” I say to you: “Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world, give us peace, because we no longer have anyone who may guide us, and our souls are upset.” »

« Where is John? »

« Herod has taken him. He is in prison, at Machaerus. The most faithful amongst his disciples have tried to free him. But it is not possible. We are coming from there. Let us come with You, Master. Show us where You live. »

« Come. But do you know what you are asking for? Who follows Me will have to leave everything: his home, his relatives, his way of thinking, also his life. I will make you My disciples and My friends, if you wish so. But I have neither wealth nor protection. I am poor, and I shall be even poorer, to the extent of not having a place where I may rest My head and I will be persecuted by My enemies, even more than a lost sheep is pursued by wolves. My doctrine is even more rigid than John's, because it forbids also resentment. And My doctrine is concerned not so much with external matters, as it is with the soul. You must be re-born if you want to be My disciples. Are you willing to do that? »

« Yes, Master. Only You have words that can give us light. They descend upon us, and where there was darkness and desolation because we had no guide, they shed light and sunshine. Come, then. Let us go. I will teach you on our way. »

Jesus says:

« The crowd that met Me was a large one. But only one recognized Me. He, whose soul, mind and flesh were pure and free from all lewdness.

I insist on the value of purity. Chastity is always the source of clear ideas. Virginity refines and then preserves intellectual and emotional sensitiveness, elevating it to such a perfection that only a virgin can experience.

There are many ways of being a virgin. By compulsion, and this applies particularly to women, when no one ever proposed to them. The same should apply to men. But it does not. And that is bad, because only heads of families, with unhealthy minds and often diseased bodies, can be born of youth soiled with lust before time.

There is wanted virginity, that is the virginity of those who consecrate themselves to the Lord with the ardour of their souls. A beautiful virginity! A sacrifice pleasing to God! But they do not all persist in their purity like lilies which stand upright on their stalks, looking towards Heaven, unaware of the mud on the ground, open to the kisses of God's sun and His dews.

Many are faithful only in a material way. But they are unfaithful in their thoughts, which regret and wish for what they sacrificed. They are virgins only by half. If their flesh is intact, their hearts are not. Their hearts ferment, boil, exhale fumes of sensuality, the more refined and reproved, the more it is the invention of a mind that caresses, nourishes and continually enlarges the images of satisfactions, illicit even for those who are free, more than illicit for those consecrated to God.

Then you have the hypocrisy of the vow. Its appearance is there, its essence is not. And I tell you that between those who come to Me with their lilies broken by the brutality of a tyrant, and those who come with their lilies materially intact, but covered with the slaver of a sensuality they have caressed and cultivated to fill their hours of solitude, I will call “virgins” the former, and “non virgins” the latter. I will give the former the crown of virgins and a double crown of martyrs, because of their flesh which has been wounded and of their hearts which have been ulcerated by a mutilation *they did not want.*

The value of purity is such that, as you have seen, the first thing Satan was anxious about, was to deceive Me about impurity. He knows very well that sensual sins dismantle the soul and make it an easy prey to other sins. Satan's efforts aimed at this capital point, in order to defeat Me.

Bread, hunger, are the material forms for the allegory of appetite, of *the appetites* that Satan takes advantage of for his own purpose. The food he offered Me to make Me fall intoxicated at his feet is quite a different thing! Greed would have followed, then avarice, power, idolatry, blasphemy and the abjuration of the divine Law. But that was the first step to catch Me. Exactly as he did to injure Adam.

The world sneers at pure people. Those who are guilty of lewdness strike them. John the Baptist is the victim of the lust of an obscene couple. But if there is still some light in the world, this is due to the pure of the world. They are the servants of God, they understand God and repeat God's words. I said: “Happy the pure in heart, they shall see God.” Also in this world: since the fumes of sensuality do not perturb their hearts, they “see” God, they hear Him, they follow Him and they show Him to other people.

John of Zebedee is a pure soul. He is the Pure One amongst My disciples. A soul as beautiful as a flower in an angelical body! He calls Me with the words of his first master and asks Me to give him peace. But he already has peace in his heart because of his purity, and I loved him because of his purity, to which I entrusted My teachings, My secrets, and the most dear Creature I had.

He was My first disciple, who loved Me from the very first instant he saw Me. His soul had melted with Mine from the day he saw Me passing near the Jordan and he saw the Baptist pointing to Me. Even if he had not found Me later, when I came back from the desert, he would have looked for Me until he found Me, because who is pure, is humble and anxious to be taught in the science of God, and like the water that flows to the sea, he goes towards those he knows to be masters in the celestial doctrine. »

Jesus says also:

« I did not want you to speak about the sensual temptation of your Jesus. Even if your internal voice had made you understand Satan's motive in attracting Me towards sensuality, I preferred to speak of it Myself. Think no more about it. It was necessary to mention it. Go on now. Leave Satan's flower on its sands. Follow Jesus as John did. You will be walking among thorns, but as roses you will find the drops of blood of Him Who shed them for you, to defeat the flesh also in you.

I will forestall a remark as well. In his Gospel, John mentioning his meeting with Me says: "And the following day". It would therefore appear that the Baptist pointed Me out the day after My baptism and that John and James followed Me at once. But that conflicts with what the other Evangelists said about the forty days spent in the desert. But you should read as follows: "(John having already been arrested), *one day, later,* the two disciples of John the Baptist, the ones to whom he had pointed Me out saying: 'Here is the Lamb of God', on seeing Me again, called Me and followed Me." After I had come back from the desert.

And we went back together to the shores of the lake of Galilee, where I had taken shelter to begin evangelising from there, and the two – after being with Me during the whole journey and then for one day in the hospitable house of a friend of My relatives – spoke of Me to the other fishermen. But it was the initiative of John, whose will to do penance had made his soul, already so limpid owing to his purity, a masterpiece of pellucidity in which the Truth was clearly reflected, bestowing on him also the holy daring of the pure and generous, who are never afraid of stepping forward, wherever they see that there is God, and truth and doctrine and the way of God. How much I loved him for that simple, heroical feature of his! »

48. John and James Speak to Peter about the Messiah.

12th October 1944.

A most clear dawn over the Lake of Galilee. The sky and the water sparkle with rosy flashes, not very different from the mild ones shining on the walls of the little orchards of the lake-village, where fruittrees,

with their unkempt, luxuriant foliage, seem to rise from the orchards and peep at the little lanes, bending over them.

The village is beginning to awaken: women start going to the fountain or to the washing place, while fishermen unload the baskets of fish, or haggle over prices, in very loud voices, with merchants who have come from other villages, while others carry the fish to their houses. I called it a village, but it is not a very small one. It is rather a modest place, at least what I see of it, but it is quite large and spreads generally along the lake.

John comes out of a little street and goes quickly towards the lake. James follows him, but much more calmly. John looks at the boats which are already on the shore, but cannot see the one he is looking for. He sees it while it is still about one hundred yards from the beach, manoeuvring to enter the harbour, and holding his hands at the sides of his mouth, he shouts at the top of his voice, a long « Oh-e! », which must be their usual call. When he sees that they have heard him, he gesticulates with both his arms, obviously meaning: « Come, come. »

The men in the boat, not knowing what is the matter, lay on the oars, and the boat moves faster than it did with the sail, which they have struck, probably to gain time. When they are about ten meters from the shore, John does not wait any longer. He takes off his mantle and his long tunic, and throws them on the shore, takes off his sandals, lifts his undertunic and holds it with one hand almost against his groin, then goes into the water to meet the boat arriving.

« Why did you two not come? » asks Andrew. Peter, sulkily, does not say one word.

« And why did you not come with me and James? » John replies to Andrew.

« I went fishing. I have no time to waste. You disappeared with that man…»

« I beckoned you to come. It is Him. You should hear His words!… We stayed with Him all day until late at night. We have now come to say to you: "Come."»

« Is it really Him? Are you sure? We only saw Him then, when the Baptist pointed Him out to us. »

« It is Him. He did not deny it. »

« Anyone can say what suits him to impose himself on dupes. It is not the first time… » mumbles Peter, dissatisfied.

« Oh, Simon! Don't say that! He is the Messiah! He knows everything! He hears you » John is grieved and dismayed at Simon Peter's words.

« Sure! The Messiah! And He showed Himself to you, James and Andrew! Three poor ignorant fishermen! The Messiah will need much more than that!

And He hears me! Eh! My poor boy. The first sunshine of spring has damaged your brains! Come on, come and do some work. That's much better. And forget such fairy tales! »

« I'm telling you. He is the Messiah! John said holy things, but He speaks of God. Who is not Christ cannot speak such words. »

« Simon, I am not a boy. I am old enough and I am composed and thoughtful. You know that. I did not speak much, but I listened a lot during the hours we spent with the Lamb of God and I can tell you that really He can but be the Messiah! Why don't you believe? Why do you not want to believe? You may not believe, because you have not heard Him. But I believe Him. We are poor and ignorant? Well, He says that He has come to announce the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, of the Kingdom of peace, to the poor, humble and little ones before the great ones. He said: "The great ones already have their delights. They are not enviable delights when compared with the ones I have come to bring you. The great ones are already capable of understanding by means of their culture. But I have come to the 'little' ones of Israel and of the world, to those who weep and hope, to those who seek Light and are hungry for the real Manna, to whom learned men do not give light and food, but only burdens, darkness, chains, contempt. And I call the 'little ones'. I have come to turn the world upside down. Because I will lower what is now held high, and I will raise what is now held in contempt. Let those who want the truth and peace, who want eternal life, come to Me. Those who love Light, let them come to Me. I am the Light of the world." Did He not say that, John? » James has spoken in a calm, gentle voice.

« Yes, and He said: "The world will not love Me. The great world will not love Me, because it is corrupted by vices and idolatry. Nay, the world will not want Me, because as it is the offspring of Darkness, it does not love the Light. But the earth is not made only of the great world. There are on it also those who, mixed with the world, are not of the world. There are people who are of the world because they have been imprisoned in it, like fish in a net." He said exactly that, because we were speaking on the shore of the lake and He was pointing to some nets which were being dragged to the shore with fish in them. Nay, He said: "See. None of those fish wanted to be caught in the net. Also men, intentionally, would not like to fall prey to Mammon. Not even the most wicked who, blinded by pride, do not believe they have no right to do what they do. Their real sin is pride. All the other sins grow from it. Those who are not completely wicked, would like even less to fall prey to Mammon. But they fall because of their frivolity and because of a weight that drags them to the bottom, and which is Adam's sin. I have come to remove that sin, and while awaiting the hour of Redemption, to give those who believe in Me a strength such that will enable them to free themselves from the snares that trap them and will make them free to follow Me, the Light of the world." »

« Well then, if He said that, we must go to Him at once. » Peter, with his impulsiveness, which is so genuine and I like so much, has decided at once, and is already acting accordingly, hastening to unload the boat which has already reached the shore: the fishermen have almost beached it, unloading nets, ropes and sails. « And you, silly Andrew, why did you not go with them?!… »

« But… Simon! You reproached me because I did not persuade them to come with me… You have been grumbling all night, and now you rebuke me because I did not go?! »

« You are right… But I did not see Him… you did… and you must have seen that He is not like us… He must have something compelling!… »

« Oh! Yes. » John says. « His face! His eyes! What beautiful eyes, aren't they, James?! And His voice! … Oh! What a voice! When He speaks, you seem to be dreaming of Heaven. »

« Quick, quick. Let's go and see Him. And you, (addressing the other fishermen) take everything to Zebedee and tell him to do as he thinks best. We will be back this evening in time to go fishing. »

They all get dressed and set out. But Peter, after a few yards stops and gets hold of John's arm and asks him. « Did you say that He knows everything, and hears everything?… »

« Yes, I did. Just think that when we saw the moon high up in the sky, I said: "I wonder what Simon will be doing now", and He said: "He is casting his net and he cannot set his mind at rest because he has to do it all by himself, since you did not go out with the twin boat in such a good evening for fishing… he does not know that before long he will be fishing with different nets and catching different fish." »

« Holy Mercy! It's true! Well, He will also have heard… also that I called Him little less than a liar… I can't go to Him! »

« Oh! He is so good. He certainly knows what you thought. He already knew. Because when we left Him saying that we were coming to you, He said: “Go. But don't let the first words of contempt discourage you. Who wants to come with Me must be able to make headway against the sneering words of the world and the prohibitions of relatives. Because I am above blood and society, and I triumph over them. And who is with Me will also triumph forever.” And He also said: “Don't be afraid to speak. The man who hears will come, because he is a man of good will.” »

« Is that what He said? Well, I'll come. Speak, speak of Him, while we are going. Where is He? »

« In a poor house; they must be His friends. »

« Is He poor? »

« A workman from Nazareth. So He said. »

« And how does He live now, if He does not work any longer? »

« We did not ask Him. Perhaps His relatives help Him. »

« It would have been better if we had brought some fish, some bread and fruit… something. We are going to consult a rabbi, because He is like… He is more than a rabbi, and we are going empty-handed! Our rabbis don't like that… »

« But He does. We had but twenty pennies between us, James and I, and we offered Him them, as is customary with rabbis. He did not want them. But since we insisted so much, He said: “May God reward you with the blessings of the poor. Come with Me” and He gave them to some poor people: He knew where they lived. And when we asked Him: “Master, are You not keeping anything for Yourself?” He replied: “The joy of doing the will of God and serving His glory”. We also said: “You are calling us, Master. But we are all poor. What shall we bring You?”, He replied with a smile which made us enjoy the delights of Paradise: “I want a great treasure from you”, and we said: “But we have nothing.” And He answered: “A treasure with seven names, which even the poorest may have, while the rich may not possess it. You have it, and I want it. Listen to the names: charity, faith, good will, right intention, continence, sincerity, spirit of sacrifice. That is what I want from My followers, only that, and You have it. It is dormant, like a seed under a winter clod, but the spring sunshine will make it sprout into a sevenfold spike.” That is what He said. »

« Ah! Now I feel that He is the true Rabboni, the promised Messiah! He is not harsh with the poor, He does not ask for money… It is enough to call Him the Holy Man of God. We can go safely. »

And it all ends.

49. First Meeting of Peter and the Messiah.

13th October 1944.

With my soul dejected by too many things, I am praying to receive illumination. And I am led to chapter 12 of the Epistle to the Hebrews and the strength of my spirit is really reinvigorated and once again I have the energy « to listen ». In fact when I am oppressed by so many things, I feel like saying:

« I do not want to do anything any more. An ordinary life, an ordinary life at all costs. » But I know who it is « Who speaks » and I see Him look at me with loving beseeching eyes. And I can no longer say: « I do not want. »

God is really a fire which devours also the inclinations of our human nature when the latter yields to Him. To Him Who speaks saying: « I will not leave you, I will not abandon you », I want to repeat once again with full confidence: « You are of much help to me, I do not fear man. O God, do not disappoint my hope.. »

At 2 p.m. I see the following:

Jesus is coming along a little road, a path between two fields. He is alone. John is moving towards Him along a different path in the fields and he meets Him at last, going through an opening in a hedge. John, both in yesterday's vision and today's is very young. His face is rosy and beardless, the fair complexion of a youth, who can hardly be called a man. There are no signs of moustache or beard, but only the smoothness of his rosy cheeks, his red lips, and his bright smile and pure look, not so much because of its deep turquoise hue, as because of the limpidity of his virginal soul shining through his eyes. His blond-brown long soft hair undulates at each step while he walks almost as fast as if he were

running.

When he is about to pass through the hedge, he shouts: « Master! »

Jesus stops and turns round, smiling.

« Master, I have longed so much for You! The people in the house where You live told me that You had come towards the country. But they did not say where. I was afraid I might not meet you. » While speaking, John has bent his head slightly, out of respect. And yet, he is full of truthful love, both in his attitude and in his eyes, which he raises towards Jesus, while his head is still gently inclined towards his shoulder.

« I saw you were looking for Me and I came towards you. »

« You saw me? Where were You, Master? »

« Over there » and Jesus points to a group of trees far away, which, by the color of their foliage, I would say were olive-trees. « I was over there. I was praying, and thinking what to say this evening in the synagogue. But I came away as soon as I saw you. »

« But how could You see me, if I can hardly see the place, hidden as it is behind that hedge? »

« And yet, you see, here I am. I came to meet you because I saw you. What the eye does not do, love does. »

« Yes, love does. You love me, therefore, Master? »

« And do you love Me, John, son of Zebedee? »

« So much, Master. I think I have always loved You. Before meeting You, long before, my soul was looking for You, and when I saw You, my soul said to me: “Here is the One you are seeking”. I think I met You, because my soul perceived You. »

« You said it, John, and what you say is right. I also came towards you because My soul perceived you. For how long will you love Me? »

« Forever, Master. I no longer want to love anybody, but You. »

« You have a father and a mother, brothers and sisters, you have your life, and with your life, you have a woman and love. How will you be able to leave all that for My sake? »

« Master… I do not know… but I think, if it is not pride to say so, that Your fondness will take the place of father and mother, of brothers and sisters, and also of a woman. I will be compensated for everything, if You love me. »

« And if My love should cause you sorrows and persecutions? »

« They will be nothing, if You love me. »

« And the day I should die… »

« No! You are young, Master… Why die? »

« Because the Messiah has come to preach the Law in its truthfulness and to accomplish Redemption. And the world loathes the Law and does not want redemption. Therefore they persecute God's messengers. »

« Oh! Let that never be! Do not mention that prediction of death to him who loves You!… But if You should die, I would still love You. Allow me to love You. » John's look is an imploring one. He has bowed his head lower than ever, and he walks beside Jesus, and seems to be begging love. Jesus stops. He looks at him, scrutinises him with His deep, penetrating eyes, and then lays His hand on his bowed head. « I want you to love Me. »

« Oh! Master! » John is happy. Although his eyes shine with tears, his well shaped young mouth smiles. He takes the divine hand, kisses it on its back, and presses it to his heart. They take to the road again.

« You said you were looking for Me… »

« Yes, to tell You that my friends want to meet You… and because, oh! how I was longing to be with You again! I left You only a few hours ago… but I could no longer be without You. »

« Have you therefore been a good announcer of the Word? »

« Also James, Master, spoke of You in such a way as… to convince them. »

« So that also he who had no confidence – and is not to be blamed because his reserve was due to prudence – is now convinced. Let us go and give him full assurance. »

« He was somewhat afraid… »

« No! Not afraid of Me! I have come for good people and even more for those who stand in error. I want to save people, not to condemn them. I will be full of mercy with honest people. »

« And with sinners? »

« Also. By dishonest people, I mean those who are spiritually dishonest and hypocritically they feign to be good, whereas they do ill deeds. And they do such things, and in such a way for their own profit and to secure an advantage over their neighbors. I will be severe with them. »

« Oh! Simon, then, need not worry. He is as loyal as no one else. »

« That is what I like, and I want you all to be so. »

« Simon wants to tell You many things. »

« I will listen to him after speaking in the synagogue. I asked them to inform the poor and sick people in addition to the rich and healthy ones. They are all in need of the Gospel. »

They are near the village. Some children are playing in the road and one of them runs into Jesus' legs and would have fallen if He were not quick in getting hold of him. The child cries just the same, as if he had been hurt and Jesus, holding him in His arms, says: « An Israelite who is crying? What should the thousands of children have done, who became men, crossing the desert with Moses? And yet, the Most High Lord sent the sweet manna for them, rather than for the others, because He loves innocent children and looks after these little angels of the earth, these wingless little birds, just as He sees to the sparrows of woods and towns. Do you like honey? Yes? Well, if you are good, you will eat a honey which is sweeter than the honey of your bees. »

« Where? When? »

« When, after a life of loyalty to God, you will go to Him. »

« I know that I cannot go there unless the Messiah comes. My mother says that now, we in Israel, are like many Moses and we die seeing the Promised Land. She says that we are there, waiting to go in, and that only the Messiah will make us go in. »

« What a clever little Israelite! Well, I tell you that when you die, you will go to Paradise at once, because the Messiah will already have opened the gates of Heaven. But you must be good. »

« Mummy! Mummy! » The child slides down from Jesus' arms and runs towards a young woman, who is entering her house holding a copper amphora.« Mummy! The new Rabbi told me that I will go to Paradise at once when I die and I will eat so much honey… if I am good. I will be good! »

« God grant it! I am sorry, Master, if he troubled You. He is so lively! »

« Innocence does not trouble, woman. May God bless you, because you are a mother who is bringing her children up in the knowledge of the Law. »

The woman blushes at being praised and replies: « May the blessing of the Lord be with You, too. » And she disappears with her little one.

« Do You like children, Master? »

« Yes, I do, because they are pure… sincere… and affectionate. »

« Have you any nephews, Master? »

« I have but My Mother… In Her there is purity, sincerity, the love of the most holy children, together with wisdom, justice and the fortitude of adults. I have everything in My Mother, John. »

« And You left Her? »

« God is above also the holiest mother. »

« Will I meet Her? »

« Yes, you will. »

« And will She love me? »

« She will love you because She loves whoever loves Her Jesus. »

« Then You have no brothers? »

« I have some cousins on My Mother's husband's side. But every man is My brother, and I have come for everybody. We are now at the synagogue. I am going in, and you will join Me with your friends. »

John goes away, and Jesus goes into a square room with the usual display of triangular lamps and lecterns with rolls of parchment. There is already a crowd waiting and praying. Jesus also prays. The people whisper and make their comments behind Him, as He bows to the head of the synagogue, greeting him, and He asks for a roll at random.

Jesus begins His lesson.

He says: « The Spirit makes Me read the following things for you. At chapter seven of the book of Jeremiah, we read: “Yahweh Sabaoth, the God of Israel, says this: 'Amend your behavior and your actions and I will stay with you here in this place. Put no trust in delusive words like these: This is the sanctuary of Yahweh, the sanctuary of Yahweh, the sanctuary of Yahweh! But if you do amend your behavior and your actions, if you treat each other fairly, if you do not exploit the stranger, the orphan and the widow, if you do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow alien gods, to your own ruin, then here in this place I will stay with you, in the land that long ago I gave to your fathers forever' ”.

Listen, Israel. Here I am to illuminate for you the words of light, which your dimmed souls can no longer see or understand. Listen. There is much weeping in the land of the People of God: old people cry remembering past glories, adults cry because they are bent under the yoke, children cry because they have no prospects of future glory. But the glory of the earth is nothing compared to a glory which no oppressor, except Mammon and ill will, can take away.

Why are you crying? Because the Most High, Who was always good to His people, has now turned His face elsewhere and no longer allows His children to see His Countenance? Is He no longer the God Who parted the sea and made Israel cross it and led the people through the desert and nourished them, and defended them from their enemies, and that they might not lose the way to Heaven, He gave a Law for their souls, as He had sent them a cloud for their bodies? Is He no longer the God That sweetened the waters and sent manna to His worn out children? Is He not the God Who wanted you to settle in His land and made an alliance with you as Father with his children? Well, then, why has the foreigner struck you?

Many amongst you mumble: “And yet the Temple is here!” It is not enough to have the Temple and to go and pray God in it. The first temple is in the heart of every man and that is where holy prayers should be said. But a prayer cannot be holy unless the heart first amends its way of living and with his heart man also amends his habits, affections, the rules of justice towards the poor, servants, relatives and God.

Now look. I see rich hard-hearted men who make rich offerings to the Temple, but they never say to a poor man: “Brother, here is a piece of bread, and a penny. Take them. From man to man, and let not my help discourage you as my offering may not make me proud”. I see people who, in their prayers, complain to God because He does not hear their prayers promptly; then when a poor wretch, very often a relative, says to them: “Listen to me”, they reply heartlessly: “No”. I see you crying because your money is squeezed out of your purses by your ruler. But then you squeeze blood out of those you hate and you are not filled with horror when you take the blood and life away from a body.

O Israel! The time of Redemption has come. Prepare its ways in your hearts with good will. Be honest, good, love one another. The rich must not despise the poor; merchants must not defraud; the poor must not envy the rich. You are all of one blood, and you belong to one God. You are all called to one destiny. Do not shut with your sins the Heavens that the Messiah will open for you. Have you erred so far? Err no longer. Abandon all errors.

The Law is simple, easy and good as it goes back to the original ten commandments, illuminated by the light of love. Come. I will show you which they are: love, love, love. God's love for you. Your love for God. Love for your neighbors. Always love, because God is love, and those are the Father's children who know how to live love.

I am here for everybody, and to give everybody the light of God. Here is the Word of the Father that becomes food for you. Come, taste, change the blood of your spirits with this food. Let every poison vanish, let every lust die. A new glory is offered to you: the eternal one, to which all those will come whose hearts will truly study the Law of God.

Start from love. There is nothing greater. When you know how to love, you will already know everything, and God will love you, and God's love means help against all temptations. May the blessing of God be on those who turn to God with their hearts full of good will. »

Jesus is silent. The people whisper. The meeting breaks up after some hymns, many of which are sung like psalms.

Jesus goes out onto the little square. On the doorstep there are John and James with Peter and Andrew.

« Peace to you » says Jesus and He adds: « Here is the man who in order to be just must not judge before knowing. But he is honest in admitting he is wrong. Simon, you wanted to see Me? Here I am. And you, Andrew, why did you not come before? »

The two brothers look at each other embarrassed. Andrew whispers: « I did not dare. »

Peter blushes, but does not speak. But when he hears Jesus say to his brother: « Were you doing any wrong in coming? One must not dare do only evil things » he intervenes frankly: « It was my fault. He wanted to bring me to You at once. But I… I said… Yes, I said "I don't believe it", and I did not want to come. Oh! I feel better now!… »

Jesus smiles, then He says: « And because of your sincerity I tell you that I love you. »

« But I… I am not good… I am not capable of doing what You said in the synagogue. I am quick tempered and if anyone offends me eh! I am greedy and I like money… and in my fish business eh! not always… I have not always been honest. And I am ignorant. And I have little time to follow You to receive Your Light. What shall I do? I would like to become as You say… but… »

« It is not difficult, Simon. Are you acquainted a little with the Scriptures? Are you? Well, think of the prophet Micah. God wants from you what Micah said. He does not ask you to tear your heart apart, neither does He ask you to sacrifice your most holy affections. He does not ask you for the time being. One day, without being requested by God, you will give God your own self. But He will wait while the sun and the dew turn you, a thin blade of grass as you are now, into a sturdy, glorious palm tree. For the time being, He asks you only this: to be just, to love mercy, to take the greatest care in following your God. Strive to do that and Simon's past will be cancelled and you will become a new man, the friend of God and of His Christ. No longer Simon, but Cephas, (1) the safe rock on which I lean. »

« I like that! I understand that. The Law is so… is so… that is, I cannot comply with it any longer, as the rabbis have made it. But what You say, yes,… I think I will be able to do it. And You will help me. Are You staying in this house? I know the owner. »

« I am staying here. But I am going to Jerusalem and after I will preach throughout Palestine. I came for that. But I will often be here. »

« I will come to hear You again. I want to be Your disciple. A little of the light will enter my head. »

« Your heart, above all, Simon. Your heart. And you, Andrew, have you nothing to say? »

« I am listening, Master. »

« My brother is shy. »

« He will become a lion. It is getting dark. May God bless you, and grant you a good haul. Go now. »

« Peace be with You. » They go away.

As soon as they are out Peter says: « I wonder what He meant before, when He said that I will be fishing with other nets and catching different fish. »

« Why did you not ask Him? You wanted to say so many things, but you hardly spoke. »

« I… was bashful. He is so different from all the other rabbis! »

« Now He is going to Jerusalem… » says John, with so much longing and nostalgia. « I wanted to ask Him if He would let me go with Him… But I did not dare… »

« Go and ask Him now, my boy » says Peter. « We left Him so… without a word of affection. Let Him at least know that we admire Him. I will tell your father. »

« Shall I go, James? »

« Go. » John runs away… and he runs back, overjoyed. « I said to Him: "Do You want me to come to Jerusalem with You?" He replied: "Come, My friend." Friend, He said! Tomorrow, I will be here at this time. Ah! To Jerusalem with Him!… »

… the vision ends.

(1) Cephas means Rock, see John 1,42.

With regard to the previous vision, this morning the 14th Of October Jesus says to me:

« I want you and everybody to consider John's behavior: particularly one point that always escapes everybody's notice. You admire him because he was pure, loving, faithful. But you do not notice that he was great also in humility.

He, the first one responsible for Peter's coming to Me, was modestly silent about that detail. The apostle of Peter, and consequently the first of My apostles, was John. First in recognising Me, first in speaking to Me, in following Me, in preaching Me. And yet, see what he says? “Andrew, Simon's brother, was one of the two who had heard John's (2) words and had followed Jesus. The first person he met was his brother Simon, to whom he said: 'We have found the Messiah' and he took him to Jesus”. Besides being good, he is just, and since he knows that Andrew is distressed because of his shy and reserved disposition, and that he would like to do so much, but does not succeed in doing it, he wants the acknowledgement of Andrew's good will to be handed down to posterity. He wants Andrew to appear as Christ's first apostle with Peter, notwithstanding that Andrew's shyness and uneasiness with his brother have been the cause of the failure of his apostolate.

Amongst those who do something for Me, who can imitate John, instead of proclaiming himself an unexcelled apostle, without considering that his success depends on a multitude of things, which are not only holiness, but also human daring, luck and the occasional chance of being with other people less daring and less lucky, but perhaps, holier?

When you succeed in doing some good, do not boast about it, as if the merit were entirely yours. Praise God, the Lord of the apostolic workers, and have a clear eye and a sincere heart to see and give each the praise they deserve. A clear eye to descry the apostles who sacrificed themselves and are the first real incentive for the work of the others. Only God sees them: they are timid and seem to be doing nothing, whereas they draw from Heaven the fire that urges daring workers. A sincere heart in saying: “I work. But this fellow loves more than I do, he prays better than I do, I am not able to sacrifice myself as he does and as Jesus said: '… in your private room with the door closed pray secretly.' Since I am aware of his humble holy virtue, I want to make it known and say: 'I am an active instrument; he is a power that inspires me, because, joined as he is to God, he is a channel of celestial energy for me' ”.

And the Blessing of the Father, that descends to reward the humble man, who secretly sacrifices himself to give strength to the apostles, will descend also on the apostle who sincerely acknowledges both the supernatural and silent help of the humble one, and his merits which superficial men do not notice.

It is a lesson for everybody. Is he My favorite? Yes, he is. Does he not resemble Me also in this? Pure, loving, obedient, but also humble. I looked at Myself in him as in a mirror and I could see My virtues in him. I therefore loved him like another Self. I could see in him the glance of My Father, Who considered him a little Christ. And My Mother would say to Me: “I feel as if he were My second son. I seem to be seeing You, reproduced in a man”.

Oh! How well the One Full of Wisdom knows you, My beloved! The two blues of your pure hearts mingled into one veil only to form a protection of love for Me, and they became one love only, even before I gave My Mother to John and John to My Mother. They loved each other because they realized they were alike: children and brothers of the Father and of the Son. »

(2) That is: John the Baptist.

50. Jesus at Bethsaida in Peter's House. He Meets Philip and Nathanael.

15th October 1944.

[…] Later on (at 9:30) I had to describe this.

John knocks at the door of the house where Jesus is a guest. A woman comes to the door and when she sees who it is, she calls Jesus.

They greet each other with a salutation of peace. Then Jesus says: « You have come early, John. »

« I have come to tell You that Peter asks You to pass by Bethsaida. He has

spoken to many people about You… We did not go out fishing last night. We prayed as well as we could, and we gave up profit… because the Sabbath was not yet over. And this morning, we went through the streets speaking about You. There are many people who would like to hear You… Will You come, Master? »

« I will, although I must go to Nazareth before going to Jerusalem. »

« Peter will take You from Bethsaida to Tiberias in his boat. It will be even quicker for You. »

« Let us go, then. »

Jesus takes His mantle and haversack. But John relieves Him of the latter. And they set out, after saying goodbye to the landlady.

The vision shows them coming out of the village and starting their journey to Bethsaida. But I do not hear what they are saying, in fact the vision is interrupted and it is resumed only when they are entering Bethsaida. I realize that it is that town because I see Peter, Andrew and James, with their wives, awaiting Jesus at the entrance to the village.

« Peace be with you. Here I am. »

« We thank You, Master, also on behalf of those who are waiting for You. It is not the Sabbath today, but will You speak Your words to those waiting to hear You? »

« Yes, Peter, I will. In your house. » Peter is overjoyed: « Come, then. This is my wife and this is John's mother and these are their friends. But there are other people waiting for You: relations and friends of ours. »

« Tell them that I will speak to them this evening, before I leave. »

I forgot to mention that they left Capernaum at sunset and arrived at Bethsaida the following morning.

« Master… please: stay one night at my house. The road to Jerusalem is a long one, even if I will shorten it for You, taking You to Tiberias by boat. My house is poor, but honest and friendly. Stay with us tonight. »

Jesus looks at Peter and at all the rest who are waiting. He looks at them inquisitively. He then smiles and says: « Yes, I will stay. »

It is a greater joy for Peter.

People look out from their doors and exchange knowing glances with one another. A man calls James by his name and speaks to him in a low voice, pointing to Jesus. James nods in assent and the man goes and speaks to other people standing at a crossroads.

They go into Peter's house. There is a large smoky kitchen. In a corner, there are nets, ropes, fishing baskets. In the middle there is a long, low fireplace, but there is no fire. Through two opposite doors, one can see the street on one side, and the kitchen garden with a fig-tree and vines on the other side. Beyond the street the rippling on the sky-blue lake can be seen, and beyond the kitchen garden there is the dark, low wall of another house.

« I offer You what I have, Master, and as best as I know how to… »

« You could not offer any more or any better, because you are making your offering with love. »

They give Jesus some water to refresh Himself and then some bread and olives. Jesus takes a few mouthfuls only to please them, then He thanks them, and eats no more.

Some children look in inquisitively from the kitchen garden and the street. I do not know whether they are Peter's children. I only know that he frowns at the intruders to keep them out. Jesus smiles and says: « Leave them alone. »

« Master, do You want to rest? My room is here and Andrew's is over there. Take Your choice. We will not make any noise while You are resting. »

« Have you got a terrace? »

« Yes, and the vine, although it is still almost bare, gives a little shade. »

« Then take Me up there. I prefer to rest there. I will think and pray. »

« As You wish. Come. »

A little staircase rises from the kitchen garden up to the roof, which is a terrace surrounded by a low wall. Also there, there are nets and ropes. But how much bright light, and what a beautiful view of the blue lake!

Jesus sits on a stool, leaning His back against the little wall. Peter bustles with a

sail, which he spreads over and on the side of the vine to make a shield against the sun. There is a breeze and silence. Jesus is visibly happy.

« I am going, Master. »

« Go. Go with John and tell people that I will be speaking here at sunset. »

Jesus remains alone and prays for a long time. With the exception of two pairs of doves that come and go from their nests, and the twittering of sparrows, there is no noise or living being near Jesus praying. The hours pass peacefully and quietly.

Then Jesus stands up, He walks round the terrace, looks at the lake, smiles at some children playing in the street and they smile back at Him, He looks along the street, towards the little square about one hundred yards away from Peter's house. He goes downstairs. He looks into the kitchen: « Woman, I am going for a walk on the shore. »

He goes out and walks to the beach, near the children. He asks them: « What are you doing? »

« We wanted to play at war. But he does not want to, and we are playing at fishing. » The boy who does not want to play at war, is a frail little fellow with a most bright face. Perhaps he is aware that, as frail as he is, he would get a beating in making « war » and so he pleads for peace.

But Jesus takes the opportunity to speak to the children: « He is right. War is a punishment of God to chastise men, and it is a sign that man is no longer a true son of God. When the Most High created the world, He made all things: the sun, the sea, the stars, the rivers, the plants, the animals, but He did not make arms. He created man and gave him eyes that he might cast loving glances, and a mouth to utter loving words, and ears to listen to such words, and hands to give help and to caress, and feet to run fast to assist our neighbors in need, and a heart capable of loving. He gave man intelligence, speech, affections and taste. But He did not give man hatred. Why? Because man, a creature of God, was to be love as God is Love. If man had remained a creature of God, he would have persevered in love, and the human family would have not known either war or death. »

« But he does not want to make war, because he always loses. »
(I had guessed right.)

Jesus smiles and says: « We must not reprove what is harmful to us simply because it is harmful to us. We must reprove a thing when it is harmful to everybody. If a person says: “I do not want that because I would lose”, that person is selfish. Instead, the good child of God says: “Brothers, I know I would win, but I say to you: don't let us do that because you would suffer a loss”. Oh! That fellow has understood the main precept! Who can tell Me which is the main precept? »

The eleven mouths say all together: « “You shall love your God with all your strength, and your neighbor as yourself.” »

« Oh! You are clever children. Do you all go to school? »

« Yes, we do. »

« Who is the most clever? »

« Him. » It is the frail little fellow who does not want war.

« What is your name? »

« Joel. »

« A great name! He says: “… let the weakling say: 'I am strong.' ” But strong in what? In the Law of the true God, to be amongst those whom in the Valley of Decision He will judge to be His saints. But the judgement is already near. Not in the Valley of Decision, but on the mountain of Redemption. There, the sun and the moon will grow dark with horror, the stars will tremble and shed tears of mercy, and the children of Light will be judged and separated from the children of Darkness. And the whole of Israel will know that its God has come. Happy those who will have recognized Him. Honey, milk and fresh water will descend into their hearts and thorns will become eternal roses. Which of you wants to be amongst those who will be judged saints of God? »

« I! I! I! »

« Will you love the Messiah, then? »

« Yes! Yes! You! You! It's You we love. We know who You are! Simon and James have told us, and our mothers have told us. Take us with You! »

« Yes, I will take you if you are good. No more bad words, no more arrogance, quarrels, no answering back to your parents. Prayer, study, work, obedience.

And I will love you and come with you. » The children are all round Jesus. They look like a gaily-colored corolla around a long, deep-blue pistil.

An elderly man goes near the group, inquisitively. Jesus turns round to caress a child who is pulling His mantle and sees him. He stares at him, intensely. The man blushes and greets Him, but does not say anything else.

« Come! Follow Me! »

« Yes, Master. »

Jesus blesses the children and walking beside Philip, (He calls him by his name) He goes back home. They sit in the little kitchen garden.

« Do you want to be My disciple? »

« Yes, I do… but I dare not hope for so much. »

« I have called you. »

« Then I am Your disciple. Here I am. »

« Did you know about Me? »

« Andrew spoke to me about You. He said to me: "The One you were pining after has come." Because Andrew knew that I yearned for the Messiah. »

« Your expectation has not been disappointed. He is in front of You. »

« My Master and my God! »

« You are a well-intentioned Israelite. That is why I am manifesting Myself to you. Another friend of yours is waiting, he is a sincere Israelite, too. Go and say to him: "We have found Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph of the House of David, Him of Whom Moses and the Prophets have spoken." Go. »

Jesus remains alone until Philip comes back with Nathanael-Bartholomew.

« Here is a true Israelite in whom there is no deceit. Peace be with you, Nathanael. »

« How do You know me? »

« Before Philip came to call you, I saw you under the fig-tree. »

« Master, You are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel! »

« Because I said I saw you, while you were meditating under the fig-tree, you believe? You will see greater things than that. I solemnly tell you that Heaven is open and because of your faith you will see angels descending and ascending above the Son of man: that is above Me, Who am speaking to you. »

« Master! I am not worthy of such a favor! »

« Believe in Me and you will be worthy of Heaven. Will you believe? »

« I will, Master. »

The vision is interrupted… it starts again on the terrace full of people; other people are in Peter's kitchen garden. Jesus starts speaking.

« Peace to men of good will. Peace and blessings to their homes, their women, their children. May the grace and the light of God reign in your homes and in the hearts dwelling in them.

You have wished to hear Me. The Word is speaking. It speaks with joy to the honest, with sorrow to the dishonest, with delight to the holy and the pure, with mercy to sinners. It does not deny Itself. It has come to spread out like a river that flows to irrigate lands needing water, refreshing them and fertilising them at the same time with humus.

You want to know what is required to become disciples of the Word of God, of the Messiah, Word of the Father, Who has come to gather Israel together, that it may hear once again the words of the holy and immutable Decalogue and may be sanctified by them and thus be purified for the hour of Redemption and of the Kingdom, as far as man can be purified by himself.

Now, I say to the deaf, the blind, the dumb, the lepers, the paralytic, the dead: "Rise, you are healed, rise, walk, may the rivers of light, of words, of sounds be opened for you, that you may see and hear Me and speak of Me". But rather than to your bodies, I am speaking to your souls. Men of good will, come to Me without any fear. If your souls are injured, I will cure them; if they are ill, I will heal them; if they are dead, I will raise them. All I want is your good will.

Is what I ask for difficult? No. It is not. I do not impose on you the hundreds of precepts of the rabbis. I say to you: follow the Decalogue. The Law is one and immutable. Many centuries have gone by since it was given, beautiful, pure,

fresh, like a new-born creature, like a rose just opened on its stem. Simple, neat, easy to follow. Throughout centuries faults and trends have complicated it with many minor laws, with burdens and restrictions, with too many painful clauses. I am bringing once again the Law to you as the Most High gave it. But, in your own interest, I ask you to accept it with sincere hearts, like the true Israelites of bygone times.

You grumble, more in your hearts than with your lips, that it is the fault of people in the upper classes, rather than of humble people. I know. Deuteronomy states what is to be done, nothing else was necessary. But do not judge those who acted for other people, not for themselves. Do what God commands. And above all, strive and be perfect in the two main precepts. If you love God with all your souls, you will not sin, because sin gives pain to God. Who loves, does not want to give pain. If you love your neighbors, as you love yourselves, you will be respectful children to your parents, faithful husbands to your wives, honest merchants in your trade, without any violence against your enemies, truthful in bearing witness, without envy of wealthy people, without any incentive of lewdness for another man's wife. And as you do not want to do to other people what you do not wish should be done to you, you will not steal, or kill, or slander, or enter someone else's nest like cuckoos.

Nay, I say to you: “Carry to perfection your obedience to the two precepts of love: love also your enemies.”

How much the Most High will love you, since He loves man so much. Although man became His enemy because of the original sin, and because of his personal sins, He sent man the Redeemer, the Lamb Who is His Son, that is I, Who am speaking to you, the Messiah promised to redeem you from all your sins, if you will learn to love as He does.

Love. May your love become a ladder by which, like angels, you will ascend to Heaven, as Jacob saw them, when you hear the Father say to each and everybody: “I will be your protector wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this place; to Heaven, the Eternal Kingdom.” Peace be with you. »

The crowd utter words of emotional approval and slowly go away. Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip and Bartholomew stay.

« Are You leaving tomorrow, Master? »

« Tomorrow, at dawn, if you do not mind. »

« I am sorry that You are going away. But I do not mind the hour. On the contrary, it suits me. »

« Are you going fishing? »

« Yes, tonight, when the moon rises. »

« You did well, Simon, not fishing last night. The Sabbath was not yet finished. Nehemiah in his reformation wants the Sabbath to be respected in Judah. Even nowadays too many people work on the Sabbath day at presses, carry wood, wine and fruit and buy and sell fish and lambs. You have six days for that. The Sabbath is of the Lord. Only one thing you may do on the Sabbath: you may do good to your neighbor. But all profit must be excluded from such help. Who infringes the Sabbath to make a profit will be punished by God. He makes a profit? He will lose it during the other six days. He makes no profit? He has fatigued his body to no purpose, because he did not grant it the rest that Intelligence prescribed for it, and thus he irritated his soul having worked in vain, and goes to the extent of cursing. The day of the Lord, instead, is to be spent with your hearts united to God in sweet prayer of love. You must be faithful in everything. »

« But… scribes and doctors, who are so severe with us… do not work on Sabbath days, they do not even give a piece of bread to their neighbors, to avoid the fatigue of handing it over, but they practise usury also on a Sabbath. As it is not a material work, is it legal to practise usury on a Sabbath? »

« No. Never. Neither on a Sabbath nor any other day. Who practises usury is dishonest and cruel. »

« The scribes and the Pharisees, then… »

« Simon: don't judge. Do not do it. »

« But I have eyes to see… »

« Is there only evil to be seen, Simon? »

« No, Master. »

« Well, then, why look at evil deeds? »

« You are right, Master. »

« Well, tomorrow morning at dawn, I will leave with John. »

« Master… »

« Yes, Simon, what is it? »

« Master… are You going to Jerusalem? »

« You know I am. »

« Also I am going at Passover… and also Andrew and James. »

« Well?… Do you mean that you would like to come with Me? And your fishing? And your profit? You told Me that you like to have money, and I will be away for many days. I am going to My Mother's first. And I will go there also on My way back. I will stop there to preach. How will you manage?… »

Peter is perplexed, undecided… then he makes up his mind: « think… I will come. I prefer You to money! »

« I am coming, too. »

« And so am I. »

« We are going too, aren't we, Philip? »

« Come, then, you will help Me. »

« Oh!… » Peter is more than excited at the idea of helping Jesus. « How shall we do that? »

« I will tell you. To do good, all you need do, is do what I tell you. Who obeys always does good. We will now pray and then each of us will go and perform his duties. »

« What will You do, Master? »

« I will continue to pray. I am the Light of the world, but I am also the Son of man. I must, therefore, draw from the Light, to become the Man Who redeems man. Let us pray. » Jesus says a psalm. The one beginning: « Who rests in the help of the Most High, will live in the protection of the God of Heaven. He will say to the Lord: "You are my protector and my shelter. He is my God, I will hope in Him. He rescued me from the snares of fowlers and from harsh words" etc. » I find it in the fourth book. It is the second psalm in book four, I think it is number 90, (if I read the Roman number correctly).

The vision ends thus.

51. Judas Thaddeus at Bethsaida to Invite Jesus to the Wedding at Cana

17th October 1944.

I see the kitchen in Peter's house. In addition to Jesus, there are Peter and his wife, James and John. I think they have just finished eating their supper. They are talking, and Jesus takes an interest in fishing.

Andrew enters and says: « Master, there is the man here in whose house You are living, together with another man who says he is Your cousin. »

Jesus gets up and goes towards the door saying: « Let them come in. » And when He sees Judas Thaddeus in the light of the oil lamp and of the fireplace, He exclaims: « You, Judas?! »

« Yes, Jesus. » They kiss each other.

Judas Thaddeus is a handsome man, in the fullness of his virile manhood. He is tall, although not quite so tall as Jesus, well built and strong, of a dark brown-olive complexion, like saint Joseph when young, but not sallow: his eyes have something in common with those of Jesus, because they are blue, verging on periwinkle. His brown beard is squarely cut, his hair wavy, but not so curly as Jesus', and is the same hue as his beard.

« I have come from Capernaum, I went there by boat and I have come here in the same boat to gain time. Your Mother sends me; She says: "Susanna is getting married tomorrow; please come to the wedding." Mary will be there, and also my mother and brothers. All the relatives have been invited. You would be the only one absent, and they ask You to come and make the young couple happy. »

Jesus bows lightly stretching out His arms and says: « A wish of My Mother is a law for Me. But I will come also for Susanna's and our relatives' sake. Only… I

am sorry for you… » and He looks at Peter and the others. « They are My friends » He explains to His cousin. And then He mentions their names, beginning with Peter's. He then adds: « And this is John » with a special expression that causes Judas Thaddeus to look at him more carefully while the beloved disciple blushes. He ends the introductions stating: « My friends, this is Judas, son of Alphaeus, My cousin according to the custom of the world, because he is the son of the brother of My Mother's spouse. A very good friend of Mine, and a companion both in life and in work. »

« My house is open to you as it is to the Master. Sit down » and then addressing Jesus, Peter says: « So? Are we no longer going to Jerusalem with You? »

« Of course you will come. I will go after the wedding feast. The only difference is that I will not stop at Nazareth any longer. »

« Quite right, Jesus, because Your Mother is my guest for a few days. That is what we intend to do. She also will come there after the wedding. » It is the man from Capernaum who speaks thus.

« This is what we will do. I will now go in Judas' boat to Tiberias and from there to Cana. With the same boat I will come back to Capernaum with My Mother, and with you. You will come the day after the next Sabbath, Simon, if you still wish to come, and we will go to Jerusalem for Passover. »

« Of course I want to come! Nay, I will come on the Sabbath to hear You in the synagogue. »

« Are You already teaching, Jesus? » asks Thaddeus.

« Yes, My cousin. »

« And you should hear His words! Ah! no one else speaks like Him! » exclaims Peter.

Judas sighs. With his head resting on his hand, his elbow on his knee, he looks at Jesus and sighs. He seems anxious to speak but does not dare.

Jesus encourages him: « What is the matter, Judas? Why do you look at Me and sigh? »

« Nothing. »

« No. It must be something. Am I no longer the Jesus of Whom you were fond? From Whom you had no secrets? »

« Of course You are! And how I miss You, You the Master of Your older cousin… »

« Well, then! Speak. »

« I wanted to tell You… Jesus… be careful… You have a Mother… She has but You… You want to be a "rabbi" different from the others and You know, better than I do, that… that the powerful classes do not allow anything which may differ from the customary laws they have laid down. I know Your way of thinking… it is a holy one… But the world is not holy… and it oppresses saints… Jesus… You know the fate of Your cousin the Baptist… He is in jail, and if he is not yet dead, it is because that evil Tetrarch is afraid of the crowds and of the wrath of God. As evil and superstitious as cruel and lustful… You… what are You going to do? To what fate are You going to expose Yourself? »

« Judas, you are so familiar with My way of thinking, and that is what you ask Me? Are you speaking on your own initiative? No, don't lie! You have been sent, certainly not by My Mother, to tell Me such things… »

Judas lowers his head and becomes silent.

« Speak, cousin. »

« My father… and Joseph and Simon with him… You know, for Your sake, because they are fond of You and Mary… do not look favorably on what You intend doing… and… and they would like You to think of Your Mother… »

« And what do you think? »

« I… I… »

« You are drawn in opposite directions by the voices coming from High Above and those coming from the world. I am not saying from below. I say from the world. The same applies to James, even more so. But I tell you that above the world there is Heaven, and above the interest of the world there is the cause of God. You must change your ways of thinking. When you learn to do that, you will be perfect. »

« But… and Your Mother? »

« Judas, She is the only one who, according to the way of thinking of the world,

should be entitled to recall Me to My duty as a son: that is to My duty to work for Her, and provide for Her material needs, to My duty to assist and comfort Her with My presence. But She does not ask for any of these things. Since She had Me, She knew She would lose Me, to find Me once again in a much wider manner than the small family circle… And since then She has prepared Herself for that.

Her unreserved voluntary donation of Herself to God is nothing new. Her mother offered Her in the Temple before She even smiled at life. And – as She told Me the innumerable times She spoke to Me of Her holy childhood, holding Me close to Her heart in the long winter evenings or in the clear starry summer nights – She gave Herself to God since the dawn of Her life in this world. And She gave Herself even more when She had Me, that She might be where I am, fulfilling the Mission given to Me by God. Everybody will abandon Me at a certain moment, perhaps only for a few minutes, but everyone will be overcome by cowardice, and you will think that it would have been better, for your own safety, if you had never known Me. But She, Who understood and knows, She will always be with Me. And you will become Mine, once again, through Her. With the power of Her unshaken, loving faith, She will draw you to Herself and will thus bring you to Me, because I am in My Mother, and She is in Me, and We are in God.

I would like you all to understand that, both you who are My relatives according to the world, and you, friends and children in a supernatural way. Neither you, nor anyone else know Who My Mother is. But if you knew, you would not criticise Her in your hearts stating She is not capable of keeping Me subject to Her, but you would venerate Her as the closest friend of God, the Mighty Woman Who can obtain all graces from the heart of the Eternal Father and from Her beloved Son. I will certainly come to Cana. I want to make Her happy.

You will understand better after the wedding. » Jesus is majestic and persuasive.

Judas gazes at Him. He is thinking. He then says: « And I will certainly come with You, with these friends, if You want me… because I feel that what You say is right. Forgive my blindness and my brothers'. You are so much holier than we are!… »

« I bear no grudge against those who do not know Me. I am also without ill-feeling towards those who hate Me. But I feel sorry for them, because of the harm they do themselves. What have you got in that satchel? »

« The tunic Your Mother sent You. It is a big feast tomorrow. She thinks that Her Jesus will need it, so that He may not look out of place amongst all the guests. She worked from early morning till late night every day, to have it ready for You. But She did not finish the mantle. Its fringes are not yet ready and She is very sorry about it. »

« It does not matter. I will wear this one, and I will keep that one for Jerusalem. The Temple is much more important than a wedding feast. »

« She will be so happy. »

« If you want to be on the way to Cana at dawn, you ought to leave at once. The moon is rising and it will be a pleasant crossing » says Peter.

« Let us go, then. Come, John. I am taking you with Me. Goodbye, Simon Peter, James, Andrew. I will see you on the Sabbath evening at Capernaum. Goodbye, woman. Peace be with you and your house. »

Jesus goes out with Judas and John. Peter follows them as far as the lake and helps them cast off.

And the vision ends.

Jesus says:

« When it is time to arrange the work in order, insert the vision of the wedding at Cana here. Put in the date (16th January 1944). »

52. Jesus at the Wedding at Cana.

The evening of 16th January 1944.

I see a house. A typical middle east house: a long, low, white house, with few windows and doors, with a terraced roof, surrounded by a little wall, about one metre high, with a shady vine pergola, which reaches up to the sunny terrace and stretches its branches over more than half of its surface. An outside staircase climbs up along the front, reaching up to a door which is situated half way up

the facade. At ground level there are a few low doors, not more than two on each side of the house, and they open into low dark rooms. The house is built in the middle of what looks like a kind of threshing-floor, but is actually more a grassy open space than a threshing-floor, with a well in its centre. There are some fig and apple-trees. The house faces the road, but-it is not set right on the roadside. It is a little way off the road and a path along the grass links it to the road, which looks like a main road.

It seems to be on the outskirts of Cana: a house owned by farmers who live in the middle of their holding. The country stretches calm and green far beyond the house. The sun is shining in a completely blue sky. At first I do not see anything else. There is no one near the house.

Then I see two women, with long dresses and mantles that also cover their heads like veils, walking along the road and then on the path. One is older than the other: about fifty years old, with a dark dress, the grey-brown hue of raw wool. The other woman is wearing lighter garments: a pale yellow dress and a blue mantle. She looks about thirty-five years old. She is really beautiful, slender, and Her carriage is most dignified, although She is most kind and humble. When She is nearer, I notice Her pale face, Her blue eyes and Her blond hair visible on Her forehead. I recognise Our Most Holy Lady. I do not know who the other older woman is. They are speaking to each other and Our Lady smiles. When they are near the house, someone, who is obviously watching the arrival of the guests, informs the others in the house, and two men and two women, all in their best clothes, go to meet them. They give the two women and particularly Our Lady a most warm welcome.

It is early morning, I would say about nine o'clock, perhaps earlier, because the country has the fresh look of the early morning hours, when the dew makes the grass look greener and the air is still free from dust. It appears to be springtime because the grass in the meadows is not parched by the summer sun and the corn in the fields is still young and green and earless. The leaves of the figtree and apple-tree are green and tender and those of the vines are the same. But I see no flowers on the apple-tree and there is no fruit on the apple and fig-tree or on the vines: which means that the apple-tree blossomed only recently and the little fruits cannot be seen as yet.

Mary, Who is most warmly welcomed and is escorted by an elderly man who appears to be the landlord, climbs up the outside staircase and enters a large hall which seems to fill the whole of the house upstairs, or most of it.

If I am correct, the rooms on the ground floor are the ones where they actually live, where they have their store-room, wine cellar, whereas the hall upstairs is used on special occasions, such as feast days, or for tasks which require a lot of space, such as drying and pressing foodstuffs. For special celebrations the hall is cleared of every object and then decorated, as it is today, with green branches, mats and tables prepared with rich dishes. In the centre there is a richly laid table with amphorae and plates full of fruit. Along the right-hand side wall, in respect to me, there is another table already prepared, but not so sumptuously. On the left-hand side, there is a kind of long dresser with plates of cheese and other foodstuffs, which look like cakes covered with honey and sweetmeats. On the floor, near the same wall, there are more amphorae and six large vases, shaped more or less like copper pitchers. I would call them jars.

Mary listens benignly to what they are telling Her, then She takes off Her mantle and kindly helps to finish laying the tables. I see Her going to and fro sorting out the bed-seats, straightening up the wreaths of flowers, improving the appearance of the fruit dishes, making sure that the lamps are filled with oil. She smiles, speaks very little and in a very low voice. Instead She listens a lot and with so much patience.

A loud sound of musical instruments (not very harmonious) is heard coming from the road. They all rush out, with the exception of Mary. I see the bride come in, smartly dressed and happy, surrounded by relatives and friends. The bridegroom, who was the first to rush out and meet her, is now beside her.

At this point there is a change in the vision. Instead of the house I see a village. I do not know whether it is Cana or a nearby village. And I see Jesus with John and another man, who I think is Judas Thaddeus, but I may be wrong. I am sure about John. Jesus is wearing a white tunic and a dark blue mantle. When he hears the sound of the instruments, Jesus' companion questions a man about something and then tells Jesus. Then Jesus, smiling, says: « Let us go and make My Mother happy.» And He starts walking across the fields towards the house, with His two companions.

I forgot to mention that it is my impression that Mary is either a relation or a close friend of the bridegroom's relatives, because She is on familiar terms with them.

When Jesus arrives, the same watchman as before, informs the others. The landlord, with his son, the bridegroom, and Mary goes down to meet Him, and greets Him respectfully. He then greets the other two and so does the bridegroom. But what I like is the loving and respectful way in which Jesus and Mary exchange their greetings. There are no effusions, but the words « Peace be with You» are pronounced with a look and a smile worth one hundred embraces and one hundred kisses. A kiss trembles on Mary's lips, but it is not given. She only lays Her little white hand on Jesus, shoulder and lightly touches a curl of His long hair. The caress of a chaste lover.

Jesus climbs the staircase beside His Mother, followed by His disciples, the landlord and the groom, and enters the banquet hall, where the women start bustling about, adding seats and plates for the three guests, who, apparently, were not expected. I would say that Jesus' coming was uncertain and the arrival of His companions was completely unforeseen.

I can distinctly hear the Master's full, virile, most sweet voice say on entering the hall: « May peace be in this house and the blessing of God on you all. » A greeting of majesty addressed to all the people present. Jesus dominates everybody with His bearing and His height. He is a guest, and a casual one, but He seems to be the king of the banquet, more than the groom, more than the landlord. No matter how humble and obliging, He is the one who dominates influential friends. The two disciples are also invited to sit at the same table, out of respect for Jesus.

Jesus' back is turned to the wall where the large jars and the dresser are. He therefore cannot see them, neither can He see the steward bustling about the dishes of roast meat, which are brought in through a little door near the dresser.

I notice one thing. With the exception of the mothers of the young couple and of Mary, no woman is sitting at that table. All the women, who are making a din worthy of one hundred people, are sitting at the other table near the wall, and are served after the young couple and the guests of importance. Jesus is sitting near the landlord, in front of Mary, Whose place is near the bride.

The banquet starts. And I can assure you that they lack neither appetite nor thirst. The ones who eat and drink little are Jesus and His Mother, Who speaks also very little. Jesus talks a little more. But although very moderate, He is neither sullen nor disdainful in the little He says. He is kind, but not talkative. He answers when He is questioned, when they speak to Him, He takes an interest in the subject, he states His opinion, but then He concentrates on His thoughts, like one accustomed to meditation. He smiles, He never laughs. If He hears any inconsiderate joke, He pretends He has not heard. Mary is nourished by the contemplation of Her Jesus, and so is John, who is at the end of the table and hangs on His Master's lips.

Mary notices that the servants are talking in low voices to the steward, who looks very embarrassed and She understands what the cause of the unpleasant situation is. « Son », She whispers in a low voice, thus drawing Jesus' attention. « Son, they have no more wine.»

« Woman, what is there still between Me and You?» Jesus, when saying these words, smiles even more gently, and Mary smiles too, like two people aware of some truth which is their joyful secret and is ignored by everyone else.

Jesus explains the meaning of the sentence to me.

« That “still”, which is omitted by many translators, is the keyword of the sentence and explains its true meaning.

I was the Son, submissive to My Mother, up to the moment when the will of My Father told Me that the hour had come when I was to be the Master. From the moment My mission started, I was no longer the Son submissive to My Mother, but I was the Servant of God. My moral ties with My Mother were broken. They had turned into higher bonds, all of a spiritual nature. I always called Mary, My Holy “Mother”. Our love suffered no interruptions, neither did it even cool down, nay, it was never so perfect as when I was separated from Her as by a second birth and She gave Me to the world and for the world, as the Messiah and Evangeliser. Her third sublime mystical maternity took place when She bore Me to the cross in the torture of Golgotha, and made Me the Redeemer of the world.

“What is there still between Me and You?” Before I was Yours, only Yours. You gave Me orders, and I obeyed You. I was subject to You. Now I belong to My mission.

Did I not say: “He, who lays his hand on the plough and looks back to bid farewell to those who are staying, is not fit for the Kingdom of God”? I had laid My hand on the plough not to cut the ground with the ploughshare, but to open

the hearts of men and sow there the word of God. I was to take My hand away from the plough only when they would tear it away to nail it to the Cross and to open with My torturing nail My Father's heart, out of which forgiveness for mankind was to flow.

That “still”, forgotten by most, meant this: “You were everything for Me, Mother, as long as I was only Jesus of Mary of Nazareth, and You are everything in My spirit; but since I became the expected Messiah, I belong to My Father. Wait for a little while and once My mission is over, I will be, once again, entirely Yours; You will hold Me once again in Your arms, as when I was a little child, and no one will ever again contend with You for Your Son, considered as the disgrace of mankind, who will throw His mortal remains at You, to bring on You the shame of being the mother of a criminal. And afterwards You will have Me once again, triumphant, and finally You will have Me forever when You are triumphant in Heaven. But now I belong to all these men. And I belong to the Father, Who sent Me to them.”

That is the sense of that short but so full of meaning “still”. »

Mary says to the servants: « Do what He will tell you.» In the smiling eyes of Her Son, Mary has read His consent, veiled by the great teaching to all those “who are called”.

And Jesus says to the servants: « Fill the jars with water. »

I see the servants filling the jars with water brought from the well (I hear the pulley screeching as the dripping pail is pulled up and lowered down). I see the steward pour out some of the liquid with astonished eyes, then taste it with gestures of even greater astonishment, relish it and speak to the landlord and the groom.

Mary looks at Her Son once again, and smiles; then having received a smile from Him, She bows Her head, blushing slightly. She is happy.

A murmur spreads throughout the hall, they all turn their heads towards Jesus and Mary, some stand up to get a better view, some go near the jars. Then a moment's silence, which is immediately broken by an outburst of praises for Jesus.

He stands up and simply says: « Thank Mary » and withdraws from the banquet. His disciples follow Him. On the threshold He repeats: « May peace be in this house and God's blessing on you » and He adds: « Goodbye, Mother.»

The vision ends.

Jesus teaches me as follows:

« When I said to My disciples: “Let us go and make My Mother happy”, I had given the sentence a deeper meaning than it seemed. I did not mean the happiness of seeing Me, but the joy of being the initiatress of My miraculous activity and the first benefactress of mankind.

Always remember that. My first miracle happened because of Mary. The very first one. It is a symbol that Mary is the key to miracles. I never refuse My Mother anything and because of Her prayer I bring forward also the time of grace. I know My Mother, the second in goodness after God. I know that to grant you a grace is to make Her happy, because She is All Love. That is why I said, knowing Her: “Let us go and make Her happy.”

Besides I wanted to make Her power known to the world together with Mine. Since She was destined to be joined to Me in the flesh, it was fair She should be joined to Me in the power that is shown to the world. Because We were one flesh: I in Her, She around Me, like the petals of a lily round its scented lively pistil; and She was united to Me in sorrow: because we were both on the cross, I with My body, She with Her soul, as a lily is scented because of its corolla and because of the essence extracted from it.

I say to you what I said to the other guests: “Thank Mary. It is through Her that you had with you the Master of the miracle and you have My graces, particularly those of forgiveness.”

Rest in peace. We are with you.»

53. Jesus Drives the Merchants out of the Temple.

24th October 1944.

I see Jesus entering the enclosure of the Temple with Peter, Andrew, John, James, Philip and Bartholomew. There is a very large crowd both inside and

outside the enclosure. Pilgrims are arriving in flocks from every part of the town.

From the top of the hill on which the Temple is built, one can see the narrow twisted streets of the town, swarming with people. One gets the impression that a self-moving, many-colored ribbon has been laid between the white houses. The town looks like a rare toy indeed, a toy made of gaily-colored ribbons between two white threads, all converging on the point where the domes of the House of the Lord are shining.

Inside it is... a real market. The concentration of a holy place has been destroyed. Some run, some call, some contract for lambs, shouting and cursing because of the extortionate prices, some drive the poor bleating animals into their enclosures (rough partitions made of ropes and pegs, at the entrance of which stand the merchants or owners, awaiting buyers). Blows with cudgels, bleatings, curses, shouts, insults to the boys who are not prompt in gathering together or selecting the animals, abuses to the purchasers who haggle over prices or who go away, graver insults to those who wisely brought their own lambs.

Near the benches of the money-changers, there is more bawling. It is obvious that either always, or at Passover time, the Temple functioned as a... stock exchange or black market. There was no fixed rate of exchange. There must have been a legal rate, but the money-changers imposed a different one, making whatever profit they fancied, for exchanging the money. And I can assure you they were not joking in their usury transactions!... The poorer the people were and the farther they came from, the more they were fleeced: old people more than young people, those coming from beyond Palestine more than the old folk.

Some poor old men looked over and over again at the money they had saved in a whole year, I wonder with how much hard work, they took it out and put it back into their purses dozens and dozens of times, going from one money-changer to another and at times ending up by going back to the first one, who avenged himself for their original desertion by increasing the premium for the exchange. And the big coins passed from the hands of the sighing owners into the clutches of the usurers and were changed into smaller coins. Then a further tragedy would take place with vendors over the choice and payment of their lambs, and the poor old men, particularly if they were half blind, were fobbed off with the most wretched little lambs.

I see an old couple, man and wife, come back pushing a poor little lamb which must have been found faulty by the sacrificers. They cried and begged the vendor, who, far from being moved, replied with nasty words and rude manners.

« Considering what you want to spend, Galileans, the lamb I gave you is even too good. Go away! Or if you want a better one, you must pay five more coins. »

« In the name of God! We are poor and old! Are you going to prevent us from celebrating this Passover which may be our last one? Are you not satisfied with what you wanted for a poor little lamb? »

« Go away, you filthy lot. Joseph the Elder is now coming here. I enjoy his favor. God be with you, Joseph! Come and make your choice! »

The man whose name is Joseph the Elder, that is Joseph of Arimathea, enters the enclosure and picks a magnificent lamb. He passes by, stately and proud, magnificently dressed, without even looking at the poor old people weeping at the gate, that is the enclosure entrance. He almost bumps into them when he goes out with the fat, bleating lamb.

But Jesus also is now nearby. He also has made His purchase, and Peter, who probably bargained for Him, is pulling a fairly good lamb.

Peter would like to go at once where they offer the sacrifices. But Jesus turns to the right, towards the dismayed, weeping, undecided old couple, who are knocked about by the crowds and insulted by the vendor.

Jesus, Who is so tall that the heads of the poor old souls reach only up to His heart, lays one hand on the shoulder of the woman and asks her: « Why are you crying, woman? »

The little old woman turns round and she sees the young, tall, stately man, wearing a beautiful new white tunic and a snow-white mantle. She must think He is a doctor because of His garments and His aspect and is greatly surprised, because doctors and priests pay no attention to the poor, neither do they protect them from the stinginess of merchants. She explains to Jesus the reason for their tears.

Jesus addresses the lamb vendor: « Change this lamb for these believers. It is not worthy of the altar, neither is it fair that you should take advantage of two poor old people, only because they are weak and unprotected. »

« And who are You? »

« A just man. »

« By Your way of speaking and Your companions', I know You are a Galilean. Can there be a just man in Galilee? »

« Do what I told you, and be a just man yourself. »

« Listen! Listen to the Galilean Who is defending His equals! And He wants to teach us of the Temple! » The man laughs and jeers, imitating the Galilean accent, which is more musical and softer than the Judaean, at least I think so.

Many people go near them and other merchants and moneychangers take their companion's part against Jesus.

Amongst the people present there are two or three ironical rabbis. One of them asks: « Are You a doctor? », in such a way that even Job would lose his temper.

« Yes, I am. »

« What do You teach? »

« This I teach: to make the House of God a house of prayer and not a usury or a market place. That is what I teach. »

Jesus is formidable. He looks like the archangel posted on the threshold of Eden. He has no flashing sword in His hand but the beams from His eyes strike the impious mockers like lightning. Jesus has nothing in His hands. All He has is His wrath. And full of wrath, He walks fast and solemn between the benches, He scatters the coins which had been sorted out so meticulously according to their values, He turns over the benches and tables, and everything falls on the ground with great noise, in the bustle of rebounding metals and beaten wood, angry cries, shrieks of terror and shouts of approval. He then snatches from the hands of the stable-boys some ropes with which they were holding oxen, sheep and lambs, and He makes a very hard lash, in which the slip-knots are real scourges: He lifts it, swings it and strikes mercilessly with it. Yes, I can assure you: mercilessly.

The unforeseen storm hits heads and backs. The believers move to one side admiring the scene; the guilty ones, chased as far as the external wall, take to their heels, leaving their money on the ground and abandoning in a great confusion of legs, horns and wings, their animals, some of which run and fly away. The bellows, bleatings, and fluttering of turtle doves and pigeons, added to the burst of laughter and shouting of the believers at the escaping usurers, overcome even the plaintive chorus of lambs, slaughtered in another yard.

Priests, rabbis and Pharisees rush to the spot. Jesus is still in the middle of the yard, on His way back from the chase. The lash is still in His hands.

« Who are You? How dare You do that, upsetting the prescribed ceremonies? From which school are You? We do not know You, neither do we know where You come from. »

« I am He Who is Mighty. I can do anything. Destroy this true Temple and I will raise it to give praise to God. I am not upsetting the holiness of the House of God or of the ceremonies, but you are perturbing it, allowing His House to become the centre of usurers and merchants. My school is the school of God. The same school as the whole of Israel had when the Eternal God spoke to Moses. You do not know Me? You will know Me. You do not know where I come from? You will learn.»

And turning towards the people, without noticing the priests any longer, tall in His white tunic, with His mantle open and blowing behind His back, His arms stretched out like an orator at the most important part of his speech, He says: « Listen, Israel! In Deuteronomy it is said: “You are to appoint judges and scribes at all the gates... and they must administer an impartial judgment to the people. You must be impartial; you must take no bribes, for a bribe blinds wise men's eyes and jeopardizes the cause of the just. Strict justice must be your ideal, so that you may live in rightful possession of the land that Yahweh your God is giving you.” »

« Listen, Israel. In Deuteronomy it is said: “The priests and scribes and the whole of the tribe of Levi shall have no share or inheritance with Israel, because they must live on the foods offered to Yahweh and on His dues; they shall have no inheritance among their brothers, because Yahweh will be their inheritance.” »

« Listen, Israel. In Deuteronomy it is said: “You must not lend on interest to your brother, whether the lack be of money or food or anything else. You may demand interest on a loan of a foreigner; you will lend without interest to your brother whatever he needs.”

The Lord said that. But now you see that in Israel judgments are administered without justice for the poor. They are not inclined to justice, but they are partial

with the rich, and to be poor, to be of the common people means to be oppressed. How can the people say: “Our judges are just” when they see that only the mighty ones are respected and satisfied, whereas the poor have no one who will listen to them? How can the people respect the Lord, when they see that the Lord is not respected by those who should respect Him more than everyone else? Does he who infringes the Lord's commandment respect Him? Why then do the priests in Israel possess property and accept bribes from tax-collectors and sinners, who make them offerings to obtain their favors, while they accept gifts to fill their coffers? God is the inheritance of His priests. He, the Father of Israel, is more than a Father to them and provides them with food, as it is just. But not more than what is just. He did not promise money and possessions to His servants of the sanctuary. In eternal life, they will possess Heaven for their justice, as Moses, Elijah, Jacob and Abraham will, but in this world they must have but a linen garment and a diadem of incorruptible gold: purity and charity, and their bodies must be subject to their souls, which are to be subject to the true God, and their bodies are not to be masters over their souls and against God.

I have been asked on what authority I do this. And on what authority do they violate God's command and allow in the shade of the sacred walls usury on their brothers of Israel, who have come to obey the divine command? I have been asked from what school I come and I replied: “From God's school” Yes, Israel, I have come from and I will take you back to that holy and immutable school.

Who wants to know the Light, the Truth, the Way, who wants to hear once again the voice of God speaking to his people, let him come to Me. You followed Moses through the deserts, Israel. Follow Me, because I shall lead you through a far worse desert, to the true blessed Land. At God's command, I will draw you to it, across an open sea. I will cure you of all evils lifting up My Sign.

The time of Grace has come. The Prophets expected it and died waiting for it. The Prophets prophesied it and died in that hope. The just have dreamt of it and died comforted by that dream. It is now here. Come. “The Lord is about to judge His people and have mercy on His servants,” as He promised through Moses. »

The people crowding round Jesus stand open-mouthed listening to Him. Then they comment on the new Rabbi's words and ask His companions questions. Jesus goes to another yard, separated from this one only by a porch. His friends follow Him, and the vision ends.

54. Jesus Meets Judas Iscariot and Thomas and Cures Simon the Zealot.

26th October 1944.

Jesus is together with His six disciples. Neither the other day nor today have I seen Judas Thaddeus, who said he wanted to come to Jerusalem with Jesus.

It must still be Passover time, because there is always a lot of people in town. It is evening and many people are hurrying home. Jesus also goes towards the house where He is a guest. It is not the house of the last Supper, which is in town, although not far from its walls. This house, instead, is a real country house, amongst thick olive-trees.

From the rustic open space in front of the house, one can see the olive-trees down the terraces of the hill, right down to a little torrent, with very little water, which flows away along the valley formed by two hills: on the top of one there is the Temple, on the other hill there are only olive-trees. Jesus is at the first slopes of the latter hill, which rises smoothly, completely covered with peaceful trees.

« John, there are two men awaiting your friend » says an elderly man, who must be the farmer or the owner of the olive-grove. I would say that John knows him.

« Where are they? Who are they? »

« I don't know. One is certainly a Judaean. The other… I don't know. I didn't ask him. »

« Where are they? »

« In the kitchen, waiting, and… and… yes… there is another man who is all covered with sores. I made him stay over there, because I am afraid he may be a leper. He says he wants to see the Prophet Who spoke in the Temple. »

Jesus, Who up to this moment has been silent, says: « Let us go to him first. Tell the others to come if they so wish. I will speak to them there, in the olive-grove. » And He makes for the place indicated by the man.

« And what about us? What shall we do? » asks Peter.

« Come, if you want. »

A man, muffled up, is leaning against the rustic wall supporting a terrace, the nearest to the boundary of the property. He must have climbed up there along a path coasting the torrent. When he sees Jesus approaching him, he shouts: « Go back. Back! Have mercy on me! » And he uncovers his trunk dropping his tunic to the ground. If his face is covered with scabs his trunk is one big sore. Some of the sores have already become deep wounds, some are like burns, some are whitish and glossy, as if there was a thin white pane of glass on them.

« Are you a leper? What do you want of Me? »

« Don't curse me! Don't stone me. I have been told that the other evening You revealed Yourself as the Voice of God and the Bearer of Grace. I was also told that You gave assurance that by raising Your Sign, You will cure all diseases. Please raise it on me. I have come from the sepulchers… over there… I crept like a snake amongst the bushes near the torrent to arrive here without being seen. I waited until evening before leaving because at dusk it is more difficult to see who I am. I dared… I found this man, the man of the house, he is good. He did not kill me. He only said: “Wait over there, near the little wall.” Have mercy on me » and as Jesus is going near him, all by Himself, because the six disciples and the landlord, as well as the two strangers, are far away and are evidently disgusted, he adds: « Don't come nearer. Don't! I am infected! » But Jesus proceeds. He looks at him so mercifully, that the man starts crying and kneels down almost touching the ground with his face, moaning: « Your Sign! Your Sign! »

« It will be raised when it is time. But now I say to you: Stand up. Be healed. I want it. And be the sign in this town that must recognize Me. Rise, I say. And do not sin, out of gratitude to God! » The man rises slowly. He seems to emerge from the long flowery grass as from a shroud… and is healed. He looks at himself in the last dim light of the day. He is healed. He shouts: « I am clean! Oh! What shall I do for You now? »

« You must comply with the Law. Go to the priest. Be good in future. Go. »

The man is on the point of throwing himself at Jesus' feet, but he remembers he is still impure, according to the Law, and he restrains himself. But he kisses his own hand, and throws a kiss to Jesus and weeps. He weeps out of joy.

The others are dumbfounded. Jesus turns away from the healed man and rouses them smiling. « My friends, it was only a leprosy of the flesh. But you will see leprosy fall from hearts. Is it you that wanted Me? » He asks the two strangers. « Here I am. Who are you? »

« We heard You the other evening… in the Temple. We looked for You in town. A man, who said he is a relative of Yours, told us You stay here. »

« Why are you looking for Me? »

« To follow You, if You will allow us, because You have words of truth. »

« Follow Me? But do you know where I am going? »

« No, Master, but certainly to glory. »

« Yes. But not to a glory of this world . I am going to a glory which is in Heaven and is conquered by virtue and sacrifice. Why do you want to follow Me? » He asks them again.

« To take part in Your glory. »

« According to Heaven? »

« Yes, according to Heaven. »

« Not everybody is able to arrive there. Because Mammon lays more snares for those yearning for Heaven than for the others. And only he who has strong will power can resist. Why follow Me, if to follow Me implies a continuous struggle against the enemy, which is in us, against the hostile world, and against the Enemy who is Satan? »

« Because that is the desire of our souls, which have been conquered by You. You are holy and powerful. We want to be Your friends. »

« Friends!!! » Jesus is silent and sighs. Then He stares at the one who has spoken all the time and who has now removed the mantle-hood from his head, and is bareheaded. He is Judas of Kerioth. « Who are you? You speak better than a man of the people. »

« I am Judas, the son of Simon. I come from Kerioth. But I am of the Temple. I am waiting for and dreaming of the King of the Jews. I heard You speak like a king. I saw Your kingly gestures. Take me with You. »

« Take you? Now? At once? No. »

« Why not, Master? »

« Because it is better to examine ourselves carefully before venturing on very steep roads. »

« Do You not believe I am sincere? »

« You have said it. I believe in your impulsiveness. But I do not believe in your perseverance. Think about it, Judas. I am going away now and I will be back for Pentecost. If you are in the Temple, you will see Me. Examine yourself. And who are you? ».

« I am another one who saw You. I would like to be with You. But now I am frightened. »

« No. Presumption ruins people. Fear may be an impediment, but it is a help when it originates from humility. Do not be afraid. Think about it, too, and when I come back… »

« Master, You are so holy! I am afraid of not being worthy. Nothing else. Because I do not doubt my love… »

« What is your name? »

« Thomas, of Didymus. »

« I will remember your name. Go in peace. »

Jesus dismisses them and He goes into the hospitable house for supper.

The six disciples who are with Him want to know many things. « Why, Master, why did You treat them differently? Because there was a difference. Both of them had the same impulsiveness… » asks John.

« My friend, also the same impulsiveness may have a different taste and bring about a different effect. They both certainly had the same impulsiveness. But they were not the same in their purposes. And the one who appears less perfect is, in fact, more perfect, because he has no incentive to human glory. He loves Me because he loves Me. »

« And so do I. »

« And I, too. », « And I. », « And I. », « And I. », « And I. »

« I know. I know you for what you are. »

« Are we therefore perfect? »

« Oh! No! But, like Thomas, you will become perfect if you persevere in your desire to love. Perfect?! Oh! My friends! And who is perfect but God? »

« You are! »

« I solemnly tell you that I am not perfect by Myself, if you think I am prophet. No man is perfect. But I am perfect because He Who is speaking to you is the Word of the Father: part of God. His thought that becomes Word. I have Perfection in Myself. And you must believe Me to be such if you believe that I am the Word of the Father. And yet, see, My friends, I want to be called the Son of man because I lower Myself taking upon Myself all the miseries of man, to bear them as My first scaffold, and cancel them, after bearing them, without suffering from them Myself. What a burden, My friends! But I bear it with joy. It is a joy for Me to bear it, because, since I am the Son of mankind, I will make mankind once again the child of God. As it was on the first day. »

Jesus is speaking very gently, sitting at the poor table, gesticulating calmly with His hands on the table, His head slightly inclined to one side, His face lit up from below by a small oil lamp on the table. He smiles gently, He Who formerly was so majestic a Master in His bearing, is now so friendly in His gestures. His disciples are listening to Him carefully.

« Master… why did Your cousin not come, although he knows where You live? »

« My Peter!… You will be one of My stones, the first one. But not all the stones can be easily used. Have you seen the marble blocks in the Praetorium building? With hard labor they have been torn away from the bosom of the mountain side, and are now part of the Praetorium. Look instead at those stones down there shining in the moonlight, in the water of the Kidron. They arrived in the river-bed by themselves, and if anyone wants to take them, they do not put up any resistance. My cousin is like the first stones I am speaking of… The bosom of the mountain side: his family, they contend for him with Me. »

« But I want to be exactly like the stones in the torrent. I am quite prepared to

leave everything for You: home, wife, fishing, brothers. Everything, Rabboni, for You. »

« I know, Peter. That is why I love you. Also Judas will come. »

« Who? Judas of Kerioth? I don't care for him. He is a dandy young man, but… I prefer… I prefer myself… » They all laugh at Peter's witty remark. « There is nothing to laugh at. I mean that I prefer a sincere Galilean, a rough fisherman, but without any fraud to… to townsfolk who… I don't know… here: the Master knows what I mean. »

« Yes, I know. But do not judge. We need one another in this world, the good are mixed with the wicked, just like flowers in a field. Hemlock grows beside the salutary mallow. »

« I would like to ask one thing… »

« What, Andrew? »

« John told me about the miracle You worked at Cana… We were hoping so much that You would work one at Capernaum… and You said that You would not work any miracles before fulfilling the Law. Why Cana then? And why here and not in Your own fatherland? »

« To obey the Law is to be united to God and that increases our capabilities. A miracle is the proof of the union with God, as well as of God's benevolent and assenting presence. That is why I wanted to perform My duty as an Israelite, before starting the series of miracles. »

« But You were not bound to fulfill the Law. »

« Why? As the Son of God, I was not. But as a son of the Law, yes, I was. For the time being, Israel knows Me only as such… and, even later, almost everyone in Israel will know Me as such, nay, even less. But I do not want to scandalize Israel and therefore I obey the Law. »

« You are holy. »

« Holiness does not bar obedience. Nay it makes obedience perfect. Besides everything else, there is a good example to be given. What would you say of a father, of an elder brother, of a teacher, of a priest who did not give good examples? »

« And what about Cana? »

« Cana was to make My Mother happy. Cana is the advance due to My Mother. She anticipates Grace. Here I honor the Holy City, making her, in public, the starting point of My power as Messiah. But there, at Cana, I paid honor to the Holy Mother of God, Full of Grace. The world received Me through Her. It is only fair that My first miracle in the world should be for Her. »

There is a knocking at the door. It is Thomas once again. He goes in and throws himself at Jesus' feet.

« Master… I cannot wait until You come back. Let me come with You. I am full of faults, but I have my love, my only real great treasure. It is Yours, it's for You. Let me come, Master… »

Jesus lays His hand on Thomas' head. « You may stay, Didymus. Follow Me. Blessed are those who are sincere and persistent in their will. You are all blessed. You are more than relatives to Me, because you are My children and My brothers, not according to the blood, that dies, but according to the will of God and to your spiritual wishes. Now I tell you that I have no closer relative than those who do the will of My Father, and you do it, because you want what is good. »

The vision ends thus. It is 4 o'clock p.m. and the shadows of torpor are already falling upon me: a torpidity which I perceive will be violent, a logical consequence of yesterday's painful hour… But I was very ill also on October the 24th. So much so, that when the vision was over – I wrote it suffering from a headache quite as bad as meningitis – I did not have enough strength to add that at last I saw Jesus dressed as He appears to me when the vision is entirely for me: wearing a soft tunic of white wool just verging to ivory and a mantle of the same hue. The garments He was wearing the first time He revealed Himself as Messiah in Jerusalem.

55. Thomas Becomes a Disciple.

27th October 1944.

This morning, as I recovered my senses after a very heavy torpor which had lasted many hours, while I was praying awaiting daylight, I saw the resumption of the vision.

I say resumption because we are still in the same place: the low, wide kitchen, with its dark, smoky walls, dimly lit up by the small flame of an oil lamp on the rustic table. It is a long narrow table at which eight people are sitting: Jesus and His six disciples, and the landlord, four each side.

Jesus, sitting on a stool – the only seats here are three-legged stools, real country furniture – is still turned round speaking to Thomas. Jesus' hand has fallen from Thomas' head on to his shoulder. Jesus says: « Stand up, My friend. Have you had any supper yet? »

« No, Master. I walked a few yards with the other fellow who was with me, then I left him and I came back saying that I wanted to speak to the healed leper… I said that because I thought he would disdain approaching an impure man. I guessed right. But I wanted to see You, not the leper… I wanted to say to You: “Please take me”… I wandered up and down the olive-grove until a young man asked me what I was doing. He must have thought I was ill-disposed. He was near a pillar, at the boundary of the olive-grove. »

The landlord smiles. « It's my son » he explains and adds: « He is on guard at the oil-mill. In the caves under the mill, we still have almost all the crop of the year. It was a very good one and we made a lot of oil. And when there are large crowds about, robbers always get together to plunder unguarded places. Eight years ago, just at Parasceve, they robbed us of everything. Since then we keep a good watch one night each. His mother has gone to take him his supper. »

« Well, he asked me: “What do you want?”, and he spoke in such a tone that to save my back from his stick, I answered at once: “I am looking for the Master Who lives here”. He then replied: “If what you say is true, come to the house”. And he brought me here. It was he who knocked at the door and he did not go away until he heard my first words. »

« Do you live far away? »

« I live on the other side of the town, near the Eastern Gate. »

« Are you alone? »

« I was with some relatives. But they have gone to stay with other relatives on the road to Bethlehem. I remained here to look for You day and-night, until I found You. » Jesus smiles and says: « So no one is waiting for you? »

« No, Master. »

« It is a long way, it is a dark night, the Roman patrols are about the town. I say: stay with us, if you wish. »

« Oh! Master! » Thomas is happy.

« Make room for him. And each of us will give something to our brother. » Jesus gives him the portion of cheese He had in front of Him. He explains to Thomas: « We are poor and our supper is almost over. But there is so much heart in who offers. » And He says to John who is sitting beside Him: « Give your seat to our friend. »

John gets up at once and sits down at the end of the table near the landlord.

« Sit down, Thomas, and eat. » And then He says to them all: « You will always behave like that, My friends, according to the law of charity. A pilgrim is already protected by the law of God. But now, in My name, you must love him even more. When anyone asks you for some bread, a drop of water or a shelter in the name of God, you must give it in the same name. And you will receive your reward from God. You must behave so with everybody. Even with your enemies. And that is the new Law. Up till now you were told: “Love those who love you and hate your enemies.” I say: “Love also those who hate you.” Oh! if you only knew how much you will be loved by God, if you love as I am telling you! And when anyone says: “I want to be your companion in serving the true Lord God and following His Lamb”, then he must be dearer to you than a brother by blood, because you will be joined by an eternal bond: the bond of Christ. »

« But if someone comes who is not sincere? It is easy to say: “I want to do this or that.” But words do not always correspond to the truth » says Peter, rather irritated. I do not know why, but he is not in his usual jovial mood.

« Peter, listen. What you say is sensible and fair. But, see: it is better to exceed in bounty and trust rather than exceed in distrust and hardness. If you help an

undeserving person, what harm will befall you? None. Nay, God's reward will always be active for you, whereas the person will be guilty of betraying your trust. »

« No harm? Eh! Very often a worthless person is not satisfied with ingratitude, but goes much further, even to the extreme of ruining one's reputation, wealth and one's very life. »

« True. But would that diminish your merit? No, it would not. Even if the whole world should believe slander, even if you became poorer than Job, even if the cruel person should take your life, what would change in the eyes of God? Nothing. Nay, something would change. But to your advantage. God, to the merits of your bounty, would add the merits of your intellectual, financial, physical martyrdom. »

« All right! Perhaps it is so. » Peter does not speak any more. He sulkily rests his head on his hand. Jesus addresses Thomas: « My friend, before, in the olive-grove I said to you: "When I come back here, if you are still willing, you will be one of My disciples." Now I say to you: "Are you willing to do Jesus a favor?"»

« Most certainly. »

« And if this favor should cost you some sacrifice? »

« There is no sacrifice in serving You. What is it You want? »

« I wanted to say… but you may have some business, some affections…»

« None, none! I have You! Tell me. »

« Listen. Tomorrow at daybreak the leper will leave the sepulchers to find someone who will inform the priest. You will be the first to go to the sepulchers. It is charity. And you will shout: "Come out, you, the one who was cleansed yesterday. I have been sent by Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah of Israel, He who cleansed you." Let the world of the "living dead" know My name, let them throb with hope, and let those come to Me, who will have faith in addition to hope, that I may heal them. It is the first form of purity that I am bringing, the first form of the resurrection, of which I am the lord. One day I will grant a greater purity… One day the sealed tombs will violently expel those who are really dead, and they will appear and laugh with their empty eye sockets, with their bare jaws, because of the rejoicing of the souls freed from Limbo, a remote rejoicing and yet perceived even by skeletons. They will appear to laugh because of this liberation and to throb knowing it is due to… Go! He will come to you. You will do what he asks you to do. You will assist him in everything, as if he were your brother. And you will also say to him: "When you are completely purified, we will go together along the road of the river, beyond Doco and Ephraim. Jesus, the Master, will be waiting for us to tell us in what we have to serve him." »

« I will do that. And what about the other one? »

« Who? The Iscariot? »

« Yes, Master. »

« The advice I gave him still stands. Let him decide by himself and let him take a long time. Nay, avoid seeing him. I will be with the leper. Only lepers wander about in the valley of the sepulchers and those who pitifully are in touch with them. »

Peter mumbles something. Jesus hears him. « What is the matter with you, Peter? You either grumble or are silent. You seem to be discontented. Why? »

« I am discontented. We were the first and You did not work a miracle for us. We were the first and You let a stranger sit beside You. We were the first and You entrust him, not us, with a task. We were the first and… yet, yes, we seem to be the last ones. Why are You going to wait for them on the road near the river? Certainly to entrust them with some mission. Why them, and not us? »

Jesus looks at him. He is not angry. On the contrary He smiles as one smiles at a child. He gets up, goes slowly over to Peter and, smiling, says to him: « Peter! Peter! You are a big, old baby! » And He says to Andrew, who is sitting beside his brother: « Go and take My seat » and He sits beside Peter, clasping his shoulders with His arm, and He speaks to him, holding him thus against His own shoulder: « Peter, you think I am being unfair, but I am not. On the contrary it is a proof that I know what you are worth. Look. Who needs proofs? He who is not yet certain. I knew you were so certain about Me, that I did not feel any need to give you evidence of My power. Proofs are required here in Jerusalem, where vices, irreligiousness, politics and many worldly things dim souls to such an extent that they can no longer see the Light passing by. But up there, on our beautiful lake, so clear under a clear sky, amongst honest and good willing people, no proof is required. You will have miracles. I will pour torrents of

graces upon you. But consider how I valued you, I took you without exacting any proof and without finding it necessary to give you any, because I know who you are. You are dear to Me, so dear, and so faithful. »

Peter cheers up: « Forgive me, Jesus. »

« Yes, I forgive you because your sulkiness is a sign of love. But do not be envious any more, Simon of Jonas. Do you know what the heart of your Jesus is? Have you ever seen the sea, the real sea? You have? Well, My heart is bigger than the immense sea! And there is room for everybody. For the whole of mankind. And the smallest person has a place exactly as the greatest. And a sinner finds love just like an innocent. I am entrusting these with a mission. Certainly. Do you want to forbid Me? I chose you. You did not choose yourselves. I am therefore free to decide how I want to employ you. And if I leave them here with a mission – which might well be a test, as the lapse of time granted to the Iscariot may be due to mercy – can you reproach Me? How do you know that I am not keeping a greater mission for you? And is not the nicest mission to be told: “You will come with me”? »

« It is true. I am a blockhead! Forgive me… »

« Yes. I forgive everything. Oh! Peter!… But I beg you all never to discuss merits and positions. I could have been born a king. I was born poor, in a stable. I could have been rich. I lived with My work and now I live out of charity. And yet, believe Me, My friends, there is no one greater than I in the eyes of God. Greater than I am, Who am here: the servant of man. »

« You a servant? Never! »

« Why not, Peter? »

« Because I will serve You. »

« Even if You served Me as a mother serves her child, I have come to serve man. I will be a Savior for him. What service is there like that? »

« Oh! Master! You explain everything. And what seemed dark becomes clear at once! »

« Are you happy now, Peter? Now let Me finish talking to Thomas. Are you sure you will recognize the leper? He is the only one healed; but he may already have left by starlight, to find an early wayfarer. And someone, anxious to enter the town and see his relatives, might perhaps take his place. Listen to his description. I was near him and I saw him well in the twilight. He is tall and thin. Of a dark complexion, like a cross-breed, very deep and dark eyes with snow-white eyebrows, hair as white as linen and somewhat curly, and a long snubbed nose like the Lybians', two thick protruding lips particularly the lower one. He is so olive-colored that his lips verge on violet. He has an old scar on his forehead and it will be the only stain, now that he has been cleaned from scabs and dirt. »

« He must be old, if he is all white. »

« No, Philip, he looks old, but he is not. Leprosy made him white. »

« What is he? A cross-breed? »

« Perhaps, Peter. He resembles African people. »

« Will he be an Israelite, then? »

« We will find out. But suppose he is not? »

« Eh! If he were not, he would go away. He is already lucky that he deserved to be healed. »

« No, Peter. Even if he is an idolater, I will not send him away. Jesus has come for everybody. And I solemnly tell you that people living in darkness will overcome the children of the people of Light… »

Jesus sighs. He then stands up. He thanks the Father with a hymn and blesses everyone.

The vision ends thus.

I point out incidentally that my internal adviser said to me, since yesterday evening when I saw the leper: « It is Simon, the apostle. You will see him and Thaddeus coming to the Master. » This morning, after Holy Communion (today is Friday) I opened my missal and I saw that this is the eve of the feast of Saints Simon and Judas, and tomorrow's Gospel deals with charity, almost repeating the very words I heard before the vision. However, I have not seen Judas Thaddeus so far.

56. Judas of Alphaeus, Thomas and Simon Are Accepted as Disciples at the Jordan.

28th October 1944.

You are beautiful, o banks of the Jordan, as beautiful as you were in the times of Jesus! I admire you and am enraptured by your solemn green-blue peace, resounding with flowing waters and leafy branches, as sweet as a melody.

I am on a road which is quite wide and also well maintained. It must be a highway, or more likely a military road, built by the Romans to link the various regions with the capital. It runs near the river, but not precisely along it. It is in fact separated from it by woodland, the function of which I think is to consolidate the river banks and contain the water in times of flood. The woodland continues on the other side of the road, so that the road looks like a natural tunnel over which the trees interlace their leafy branches, a beneficial protection for wayfarers in the hot climate of this country.

At the point where I am, the river, and consequently also the road, form a wide bend, so that the leafy embankment appears to me like a huge green barrier built to enclose a basin of calm waters. It almost looks like a lake in a luxury park. But the water is not as still as the water of a lake. It flows, although slowly. This is evident from its rustling against the first reed thickets, the more daring ones that have grown down there, in the gravel bed, and also from the undulation of the long ribbon-like leaves of the canes, reaching down to the water by which they are sweetly lulled. Also a group of willows, with flexible falling branches have entrusted the ends of their green foliage to the river, that combs the thin branches with a graceful caress, stretching them softly on the water surface.

There is peace and silence in the early morning. One can sense only the warbling of birds, the rustling of water and leaves, the glittering of dew drops on the tall green grass between the trees, a grass not yet hardened or parched by the summer sunshine, but tender and fresh, since- it came up after the springtime showers, which nourished the earth, in its very depth, with moisture and rich juices. Three wayfarers are standing on the road, in the middle of the bend. They look up and down, to the south, where Jerusalem is and to the north, where Samaria lies. They look anxiously between the trees to see whether anyone is arriving as expected. They are Thomas, Judas Thaddeus and the healed leper. They are speaking.

« Can you see anything? »

« No, I can't. »

« Neither can I. »

« And yet this is the place. »

« Are you sure? »

« I'm sure, Simon. One of the six said to me, when the Master was going away amid the acclamations of the crowd, after the miraculous healing of a crippled beggar, who was healed at the Fish Gate: “We are now going out of Jerusalem. Wait for us five miles between Jericho and Doco, at the bend of the river, along the road in the woodland.” This one. He also said: “We will be there in three days' time at dawn.” This is the third day, and we have been here before dawn. »

« Will He come? Perhaps we should have followed Him from Jerusalem. »

« You were not yet allowed to mix with the crowds, Simon. »

« If my cousin told you to come here, He will certainly come here. He always keeps His promise. All we can do is wait. »

« Have you always been with Him? »

« Yes, always. Since He came back to Nazareth He was my good companion. We were always together. We are about the same age, I am a little older. And I was the favorite of His father, who was my father's brother. Also His Mother was very fond of me. I grew up more with Her than with my own mother. »

« She was fond… Is She no longer as fond of you, now? »

« Oh! Yes, She is. But we have parted a little since He became a prophet. My relatives are not happy about it. »

« Which relatives? »

« My father and the two older brothers. The other one is undecided… My father is very old and I did not have the courage to hurt him. But now… Now, no longer so. Now I am going where my heart and my mind tell me. I am going to

Jesus. I don't think I am offending the Law by doing so. In any case… if what I want to do was not right, Jesus would tell me. I will do what He says. Is it right for a father to prevent a son from doing good? If I feel that my salvation is there, why prevent me from reaching it? Why, at times, are our fathers our enemies? »

Simon sighs, as if he were overwhelmed by sad memories, he lowers his head, but does not speak. Thomas instead replies: « I have already overcome the obstacle. My father listened to me and he understood me. He blessed me saying: "Go. May this Passover be for you the liberation from the slavery of waiting. You are fortunate because you can believe. I will wait. But if it is really 'Him', and you will find out following Him, then come and say to your old father: 'Come, Israel has the Expected One' ". »

« You are luckier than I am. And we always lived beside Him! And we, in the family, do not believe!… We say, that is: they say: "He has gone mad!"»

« There, there is a group of people » shouts Simon. « It's Him, it's Him! I recognize His fair head! Oh! Come! Let us run! » They start walking fast southwards. When they reach the centre of the bend, the trees cover the remainder of the road, so that the two groups face each other unexpectedly. Jesus seems to be coming up from the river, because He is among the trees on the bank.

« Master! » « Jesus! » « My Lord! »

The three cries of the disciple, the cousin and the cured leper are full of joy and veneration.

« Peace to you! » There is the beautiful, unmistakable, full, resonant, calm, expressive, clear, virile, sweet, incisive voice! « You too, Judas, My cousin, are here? »

They embrace each other. Judas is weeping.

« Why are you weeping? »

« Oh! Jesus! I want to stay with You! »

« I have been waiting for you all the time. Why did you not come? »

Judas lowers his head and is silent.

« They did not let you! And now? »

« Jesus, I… I cannot obey them. I want to obey only You. »

« But I did not give you an order. »

« No, You did not. But it is Your mission that gives it! It is He, Who sent You, Who is speaking here, in my heart, and says to me: "Go to Him". It is She, Who bore You, my sweet teacher, Who with Her gentle look, as mild as a dove's, says to me without uttering a word: "Be of Jesus!". Can I ignore that heavenly voice that pierces my heart? Can I ignore the prayers of such a Holy Woman, Who implores me for my own good? Only because I am Your cousin on Joseph's side, am I not to acknowledge You for what You are, whereas the Baptist recognized You, although he had never seen You, here, on the banks of this river and he greeted You as the "Lamb of God"? And I, should I not be capable of anything, although I was brought up with You, and I was good because I followed You, and I became a son of the Law through Your Mother, from Whom I learned not the six hundred and thirteen precepts of the rabbis, besides the Scriptures and the prayers, but the essence of them all? »

« And your father? »

« My father? He does not lack bread and assistance, and then… you give me the example. You have thought of the welfare of the people, rather than the little advantage of Mary. And She is alone. Tell me, Master, is it not right for a son to say to his father, without lacking respect: "Father, I love you. But God is above you and I will follow Him"? »

« Judas, My cousin and My friend, I tell you: you have made good progress on the way to Light. Come. It is lawful to speak thus to a father, when it is God Who calls. There is nothing above God. Also the laws of relationship cease, that is they are raised to a dignity, because with our tears, we give our fathers and mothers a greater help and for something everlasting, not for a short time in this world. We draw them with us to Heaven, and by sacrificing our affections, to God. So, Judas, stay here. I have been waiting for you and I am happy to have you, the friend of My life at Nazareth. »

Judas is touched.

Jesus addresses Thomas: « You obeyed faithfully. That is the first virtue of a disciple. »

« I came because I want to be faithful to You. »

« And you will be. I tell you. And you, who are hiding shyly in the shade, come here. Do not be afraid. »

« My Lord! » The ex-leper is at Jesus' feet.

« Stand up. Your name? »

« Simon. »

« Your family? »

« My Lord… it was powerful… I was powerful too… But bitter sectarian hatred… and errors of youth damaged its power. My father… Oh! I must speak against him, who caused me to shed so many earthly tears! You see, You saw the gift he gave me. »

« Was he a leper? »

« He was not. Neither was I. But he suffered from another disease which we in Israel associate with various forms of leprosy. He… his caste was then triumphant, he lived and died as a powerful man, at home. I… if You had not saved me, I would have died in the valley of sepulchers. »

« Are you alone? »

« Yes, I am. I have a faithful servant who looks after what property is left. I sent word to him. »

« And your mother? »

« She… is dead. » The man seems embarrassed.

Jesus looks at him attentively. « Simon, you asked me: "What shall I do for You?" Now I say to you: "Follow Me." »

« I will, at once, my Lord… But… But I… let me tell You one thing. I am, I was called "Zealot" because of the caste, and "Cananean", because of my mother. See. I am of a dark complexion. In my veins there is the blood of a slave woman. My father had no children from his wife, and he had me from a slave. His wife was a good woman and she brought me up as her own son, she took care of me in my endless illnesses until she died… »

« There are no slaves or freemen in the eyes of God. There is only one slavery in His eyes: sin. And I have come to abolish it. I am calling everybody, because the Kingdom is of all men. Are you a learned man? »

« Yes, I am. I also had my position amongst the important people, as long as my disease was hidden under my clothes. But when it spread to my face… My enemies then could not believe they were at last able to confine me amongst the "dead", although a Roman doctor of Caesarea, when I consulted him, told me that mine was not real leprosy, but hereditary serpigo, which I would spread only by procreation. Is it possible for me not to curse my father? »

« You must not curse him. He has caused you all sorts of trouble… »

« Yes, he did! He was a squanderer, a vicious, cruel, heartless man without any love. He deprived me of my health, he denied me love and peace, he branded me with a shameful name and with a disease which is a mark of infamy… He wanted everything for himself, even his son's future. He deprived me of everything, also of the joy of being a father. »

« That is why I say to you: "Follow Me". As My follower you will find father and children. Look up, Simon. There, the True Father is smiling at you. Look at the wide world, at the continents, at the countries: there are children and children everywhere; children of the souls for the childless. They are waiting for you, and many like you are also waiting. There are no foundlings under My Sign. There is no solitude, no difference in My Sign. It is a sign of love, and it gives love. Come, My childless Simon. Come, Judas, who are losing your father for My sake. I join you in the same destiny. »

They are both beside Him. He is holding His hands on their shoulders as if He were taking possession of them and imposing a common yoke on them. He then says: « And I unite you together. But now I will separate you. Simon, you will stay here with Thomas. You will prepare with him the way for My return: I will be back soon, and I want the people to be waiting for Me. Tell the sick people that He Who can cure their illnesses, is about to come here: you can certainly tell them that. Tell those who are waiting, that the Messiah is among His people. Tell the sinners that He Who forgives has come to give them strength to rise… »

« Will we be able to do that? »

« Yes, you will. All you have to say is: "He has come. He calls you. He is waiting for you. He has come to grant you graces. Come here to see Him", and to these words, add a report of what you know. And you, Judas, My cousin,

come with Me and these. But you will stay at Nazareth. »

« Why, Jesus? »

« Because you must prepare My way in My fatherland. Do you think it is a small mission? I can tell you that there is not a harder one… » Jesus sighs.

« And will I succeed? »

« You will and you will not. But it will be sufficient to be justified. »

« Justified of what? And with whom? »

« With God. With your fatherland. With your family. They will not be able to reproach us, because we offered good things: and if the fatherland and the family will disdain our offer, we shall not be blamed for their loss. »

« And what about us? »

« You, Peter? You will go back to your fishing nets. »

« Why? »

« Because I will teach you slowly and I will take you with Me, when I find that you are ready. »

« But will we see You, then? »

« Certainly. I will often come to see you, or I will send for you when I am at Capernaum. Now, let us say goodbye, My friends and let us go. I bless you, who are staying here. May My peace be with You. »

And the vision ends.

57. Return to Nazareth after Passover with the Six Disciples.

31st October 1944.

Jesus is near Nazareth with His cousin and the six disciples. From the top of the hill where they are, the white village can be seen amongst the green of the trees, with its houses scattered up and down the sweetly undulating slopes, gently declining in some cases, more steep in others.

« Here we are, My friends. That is My house. My Mother is at home because there is smoke rising from the house. Perhaps She is baking. I will not ask you to stay with Me, because I imagine you will be anxious to go to your homes. But if you wish to share My bread with Me and meet My Mother, Whom John has already met, then I say to You: “Come”. »

The six disciples, who were already sad because of the impending separation, are all happy again and they accept the invitation wholeheartedly.

« Let us go, then. »

They go down the hillock quickly and take to the main road. It is evening. It is still warm, but the shades of evening are falling over the country, where the crops are beginning to ripen.

They go into the village. Women are coming and going from the fountain, men standing on the threshold of their little workshops or working in the kitchen gardens wave to Jesus and Judas. The children press round Jesus.

« Have You come back? », « Are You staying here, now? », « The wheel of my little barrow is broken again. », « Do You know, Jesus. I have a new baby sister, and they have called her Mary. », « The schoolmaster told me that I have learned everything and that I am a true son of the Law. », « Sarah is not -here, because her mother is very ill. She cries, because she is afraid. », « My brother Isaac got married. We had a lovely feast. »

Jesus listens, caresses, praises, promises His help.

And they reach the house thus. Mary is already at the door, as a thoughtful boy informed Her.

« Son! »

« Mother! »

They are in each other's arms. Mary, Who is much smaller than Jesus, is leaning with Her head on Her Son's chest, clasped in His arms. He kisses Her blond hair. They enter the house.

The disciples, including Judas, remain outside, to leave Jesus and Mary free in

their first effusions.

« Jesus! My Son! » Mary's voice trembles, as if it were choked with sobs.

« Why, Mother, why are You so upset? »

« Oh! Son. They told Me… In the Temple, that day, there were some Galileans and some Nazarenes… They came back… and they told Me… Oh! Son! »

« But You can see, Mother, that I am well. I suffered no harm. God was glorified in His House. »

« Yes, I know, Son of My heart. I know it was like the blare awaking the sleepers. And I am happy for the glory given to God… I am happy that this people of Mine wakes to God… I am not reproaching You… I will not be a hindrance to You… I understand You and… and I am happy, but I begot You, Son!… » Mary is still clasped by Jesus' arms and She has spoken holding Her little open hands pressed against Her Son's chest, Her head turned up towards Him, Her eyes shining with tears ready to run down Her cheeks. She is now silent, leaning Her head on His chest. She looks like a grey turtle-dove, in Her greyish dress, sheltered by two strong white wings, because Jesus still wears His white tunic and mantle.

« Mother! Poor Mother! Dear Mother!… » Jesus kisses Her again.

He then says: « Well, see? I am here, but I am not alone. I have My first disciples with Me, and the other ones are in Judaea. Also My cousin Judas is with Me and follows Me… »

« Judas? »

« Yes, Judas. I know why You are surprised. Among those who told You what happened, there certainly was Alphaeus with his sons, and I am not mistaken if I tell You that they criticised Me. But do not be afraid. Today is so, tomorrow will be different. A man is to be cultivated like the soil, and where there are thorns, there will be roses. Judas, of whom You are so fond, is already with Me. »

« Where is he now? »

« Outside with the others. Have You got enough bread for everybody? »

« Yes, Son. Mary of Alphaeus is taking it out of the oven just now. Mary is very good to Me, particularly now. »

« God will give her glory. » He goes to the door and calls: « Judas! Your mother is here! Come in, My friends! »

They go in and greet Jesus' Mother. Judas kisses Her and then runs looking for his mother. Jesus introduces the five disciples mentioning their names: Peter, Andrew, James, Nathanael, Philip; because John, who has already met Mary, spoke to Her immediately after Judas, bowing down to Her and receiving Her blessing.

Mary greets them and asks them to sit down. She is the landlady and although adoring Her Jesus with Her glances – Her soul seems to be speaking to Her Son through Her eyes – She takes care of Her guests. She would like to bring some water to refresh them. But Peter objects: « No, Woman. I cannot allow that. Please sit near Your Son, Holy Mother. I will go, we will all go into the kitchen garden to refresh ourselves. »

Mary of Alphaeus rushes in, flushed and covered with flour, she greets Jesus Who blesses her, she then leads the six men into the kitchen garden, to the fountain, and comes back happy. « Oh! Mary! » she says to the Virgin. « Judas told me. How happy I am! For Judas and for You, my dear sister-in-law. I know that the others will scold me. But it does not matter. I will be happy the day I know that they are all for Jesus. We are mothers and we know… we feel what is good for our children. And I feel that You, Jesus, are the wealth of my children. »

Jesus caresses her head and smiles at her.

The disciples come back in and Mary of Alphaeus serves them sweet-smelling bread, olives and cheese. She then brings a small amphora of red wine, which Jesus pours out to his friends. It is always Jesus Who offers and then hands things out. At first the disciples are somewhat embarrassed, then they become more sure of themselves and they speak about their houses, of the journey to Jerusalem, of the miracles worked by Jesus. They are full of zeal and affection and Peter endeavors to form an alliance with Mary to be taken by Jesus at once, without having to wait at Bethsaida.

« Do what He tells you » urges Mary, with a gentle smile. « The wait will be more useful to you than an immediate union. Whatever My Jesus does is always well done. »

Peter's hope vanishes. But he submits with good grace. He only asks: « Will it be a long wait? »

Jesus smiles at him, but does not say anything.

Mary interprets Jesus' smile as a favorable sign and She explains: « Simon of Jonas, He is smiling… I therefore say to you: as fast as a swallow's flight over the lake will be the time of your obedient waiting. »

« Thank You, Woman. »

« Have you nothing to say, Judas? And you, John? »

« I am looking at You, Mary. »

« And I. »

« I am also looking at you… and do you know? This reminds Me of bygone days. Also then I had three pairs of eyes staring at Me lovingly. Do you remember, Mary, My three pupils? »

« Oh! I do remember! You are quite right! And even now, three of almost the same age, are looking at You with all their love. And I think that John is like Jesus, as Jesus was then, so fair and rosy, the youngest of them all. » The others are anxious to know more… and memories and stories of the past are awakened and related. It is growing dark.

« My friends, I have no bedrooms. But the workshop where I used to work is over there. If you wish to take shelter there… But there is nothing but benches in it. »

« A comfortable bed for fishermen, wont to sleep on narrow boards. Thank You, Master. It is an honor and a blessing to sleep under Your roof. »

They withdraw after bidding good night. Judas also goes home with his mother. Jesus and Mary are left in the room, sitting on the chest, in the light of the little oil lamp, each with one arm round the other's shoulder, and Jesus tells Mary of His recent journey. And Mary listens blissful, anxious, happy. The vision ends thus.

58. Cure of a Blind Man at Capernaum.

7th October 1944.

Jesus says, and I become calm at once and the joy of such bright peace makes my heart cheerful: « See. He is so fond of episodes of blind people. Let us give him another one. » And I see.

I see a beautiful summer sunset. The sun has inflamed the whole of the western sky and the Lake of Gennesaret looks like a huge disc aflame, under a sky ablaze.

The streets in Capernaum are just beginning to become crowded; women go to the fountain, fishermen prepare their nets and boats to go fishing at night, children run playing in the streets, little donkeys carrying hampers go towards the country, probably to get vegetables.

Jesus appears at a door which opens on to a little yard completely shaded by a vine and a fig-tree. Beyond it there is a stoney lane, that runs along the lake. It must be Peter's house, because he is on the shore with Andrew, arranging the fish baskets and nets in the boat, and sorting the seats and coils of rope. He is preparing everything to go fishing, and Andrew is helping him, coming and going from the house to the boat.

Jesus asks His apostle: « Will you have a good haul? »

« The weather is right. The water is calm, it will be clear moonlight. The fish will come to the surface from the bottom and my net will drag them. »

« Are we going by ourselves? »

« Oh! Master! How could we manage by ourselves with this type of net. »

« I have never gone fishing and I expect to be taught by you. » Jesus goes down very slowly towards the lake and He stops near the boat, on the coarse, pebbly sands.

« See, Master: this is what we do. I go out beside the boat of James of Zebedee, and we go thus to the right point, both boats together. Then we lower the net. We hold one end. You said You wanted to hold it. »

« Yes, if you tell Me what I have to do. »

« Oh! You only have to watch it going down. It must be lowered slowly without making any knots. Very slowly, because we will be in a fishing area, and any harsh movement may drive the fish away. Without knots, otherwise the net would close up, whereas it must open like a bag, or if You prefer so, like a veil blown by the wind. Then, when the net is fully lowered, we will row gently, or we may set sail, according to circumstances, forming a semicircle on the lake. And when we understand by the vibration of the safety peg that the haul is good, we head for the shore. When we are almost on the shore – not before to avoid running the risk of losing all the fish; not after, to avoid damaging both the fish and net on the stones – we will haul in the net. At this point we must be very careful, because the boats must be so close as to allow one boat to catch the end of the net from the other one, but they must not collide, to avoid crushing the net full of fish. Please, Master, be careful, it is our daily bread. Keep an eye on the net, that jolts may not turn it over. The fish fight for their freedom with strong strokes of their tails, and if there is a lot of them… You will understand… They are small things, but if ten, one hundred, a thousand get together, they become as strong as Leviathan. »

« The same happens with sins, Peter. After all, one fault is not irretrievable. But if one is not careful in controlling oneself, and one adds fault to fault, at the end a little fault, perhaps a single omission, or a simple weakness, becomes bigger and bigger, it becomes a habit, it becomes a capital vice. At times one starts with a lustful glance and ends up by committing adultery. At times, while simply lacking charity when speaking to a relative, one ends up by doing violence to one's neighbor. Never, never allow faults to increase in gravity and in numbers, if you wish to avoid trouble! They become dangerous and overbearing like the infernal Snake himself, and they will drag you down into Gehenna. »

« What You say is right, Master… But we are so weak! »

« Care and prayer are necessary to become strong and obtain help, together with a strong will not to sin. And you must have full trust in the loving justice of the Father. »

« Do You think He will not be too severe with poor Simon? »

« He might have been severe with the old Simon. But with My Peter, with the new man, the man of His Christ… no, Peter, He will not. He loves you and will love you. »

« And what about me? »

« You, too, Andrew; and John, James, Philip and Nathanael as well. You are the first chosen by Me. » « Will there be any more? There is Your cousin, and in Judaea… »

« Oh! There will be many more. My Kingdom is open to all mankind and I solemnly tell you that My haul, in the nights of centuries, will be more plentiful than your richest one… Because every century is one night in which not the pure light of Orion or of the sailing moon will be the guide and light of mankind, but the word of Christ and the Grace He will bestow; a night that will become the dawn of a day with no sunset and of a light in which all the faithful will live and will be the dawn of a sunshine that will make all the chosen resplendent, beautiful, happy forever even like gods. Minor gods, children of God the Father and like Me… It is not possible for you to understand now. But I solemnly tell you that your Christian life will cause you to resemble your Master, and you will shine in Heaven with His signs. So, notwithstanding the envious malice of Satan and the weak will of men, My haul will be more plentiful than yours. »

« But shall we be Your only apostles? »

« Are you jealous, Peter? No, don't be! Others will come and in My heart there will be love for everybody. Don't be avaricious, Peter. You do not yet know Who loves you. Have you ever counted the stars? Or the stones in the depth of the lake? No, you could not. And even less you would be able to count the loving throbs of which My heart is capable. Have you ever been able to count how many times this lake kisses the shore with its waves in the course of twelve moons? No, you would never be able to do so. And even less you would be able to count the loving waves that My heart pours out to kiss men. Be sure of My love, Peter. »

Peter takes Jesus' hand and kisses it. He is deeply moved.

Andrew looks, but does not dare take Jesus' hand. But Jesus caressing his hair with His hand says: « I love you very much, too. In the hour of your dawn, without having to lift your eyes, you will see your Jesus reflected in the vault of heaven, and He will be smiling at you to say to you: “I love you. Come”, and your passing away at dawn will be sweeter than entering a nuptial room… »

« Simon! Simon! Andrew! Here I am… I am coming… » John is rushing

towards them, panting. « Oh! Master! Have I kept You waiting? » John looks at Jesus with the eyes of a lover. Peter answers: « To tell you the truth, I was beginning to think you were no longer coming. Get your boat ready quickly. And James?… »

« Well… we are late because of a blind man. He thought Jesus was in our house and he came there. We said to him: “He is not here. Perhaps He will cure you tomorrow. Just wait.” But he did not want to wait. James said to him: “You have been waiting so long to see the light, what does it matter if you have to wait another night?” But he will not listen to reason… »

« John, if you were blind, would you be anxious to see your mother? »

« Eh!… most certainly! »

« Well then? Where is the blind man? »

« He is coming with James. He got hold of his mantle and will not let it go. But he is coming very slowly because the shore is covered with stones, and he stumbles against them… Master, will You forgive me for being hard? »

« Yes, I will, but to make amends, go and help the blind man and bring him to Me. »

John runs away. Peter shakes his head, but does not say anything. He looks at the sky which is becoming blue after being a deep copper hue, he looks at the lake and the other boats which are already out fishing and he sighs.

« Simon? »

« Master? »

« Don't be afraid. You will have a good haul, even if you are the last one to go out. »

« Also this time? »

« Every time you are charitable, God will grant you the grace of abundance. »

« Here is the blind man. »

The poor man is coming forward between James and John. He is holding a walking stick in his hand, but is not using it at present. He walks better, supported by the two men.

« Here, man, the Master is in front of you. »

The blind man kneels down: « My Lord! Have mercy on me. »

« Do you want to see? Stand up. How long have you been blind? »

The four apostles gather round the other two.

« Seven years, Lord. Before, I could see well, and I worked. I was a blacksmith at Caesarea on Sea. I was doing well. The harbour, the good trading, they always needed me for one job or another. But while striking a piece of iron to make an anchor, and You can imagine how red hot it was to be pliable, a splinter came off it, and burnt my eye. My eyes were already sore because of the heat of the forge. I lost the wounded eye, and also the other one became blind after three months. I have finished all my savings, and now I live on charity… »

« Are you alone? »

« I am married with three little children… ; I have not even seen the face of one of them… and I have an old mother. And yet she and my wife earn a little bread, and with what they earn and the alms I take home, we manage not to starve. If I were cured!… I would go back to work. All I ask for is to be able to work like a good Israelite and thus feed those I love. »

« And you came to Me? Who told you? »

« A leper who was cured by You at the foot of Mount Tabor, when You were coming back to the lake after that beautiful speech of Yours. »

« What did he tell you? »

« That You can do everything. That You are the health of bodies and of souls. That You are a light for souls and bodies, because You are the Light of God. He, although a leper, had dared to mingle with the crowd, at the risk of being stoned, all enveloped in his mantle, because he had seen You passing by on the way to the mountain, and Your face had kindled hope in his heart. He said to me: “I saw something in that face that whispered to me: 'There is health there. Go!' And I went.” Then he repeated Your speech to me and he told me that You cured him, touching him with Your hand, without any disgust. He was coming back from the priest after his purification. I knew him. I had done some work for

him when he had a store at Caesarea. I came, asking for You in every town and village. Now I have found You… Have mercy on me! »

« Come. The light is still too bright for one coming out of darkness! »

« Are you going to cure me, then? »

Jesus takes him to Peter's house, in the dim light of the kitchen garden, he places him in front of Himself, in such a position that his cured eyes may not see, as first sight, the lake still sparkling with light. The man looks like a very docile child, he obeys without asking questions.

« Father! Your Light to this son of Yours! » Jesus has stretched His hands over the head of the kneeling man. He remains in that attitude for a moment. He then moistens the tips of His fingers with saliva and with His right hand He touches lightly the open, but lifeless eyes.

A moment. Then the man blinks, rubs his eyelids as if he were awakening from sleep, and his eyes were dimmed.

« What do you see? »

« Oh!… oh!… oh!… Eternal God! I think… I think… oh! that I can see… I see Your mantle… it's red, isn't it? And a white hand… and a woollen belt… oh! Good Jesus… I can see better and better, the more I get used to seeing… There is the grass of the earth… and that is certainly a well… and there is a vine… »

« Stand up, My friend. »

The man who is crying and laughing, stands up, and after a moment's hesitation between respect and desire, he lifts his face and meets Jesus' eyes: Jesus smiling full of merciful love. It must be beautiful to recover your sight and see that face as the first thing! The man gives a scream and stretches his arms. It is an instinctive action. But he controls himself.

But Jesus opens His arms and draws to Himself the man who is much lower than He. « Go home now, and be happy and just. Go with My peace. »

« Master, Master! Lord! Jesus! Holy! Blessed! The light… I see… I see everything… There is the blue lake, the clear sky, the setting sun, and then the horns of the waxing moon… But it is in Your eyes that I see the most beautiful and clear blue, and in You I see the beauty of the most real sun, and the chaste light of the blessed moon. You are the Star of those who suffer, the Light of the blind, the living active Mercy! »

« I am the Light of souls. Be a son of the Light. »

« Yes, Jesus, always. Every time I close my re-born eyes, I will renew my oath. May You and the Most High be blessed. »

« Blessed be the Most High Father! Go! »

And the man goes away, happy, sure of himself, while Jesus and the dumbfounded apostles get into two boats and begin their navigation manoeuvres. And the vision ends

59. The Demoniac of Capernaum Cured in the Synagogue.

2nd November 1944.

I see the synagogue of Capernaum. It is already crowded with people waiting. People near the door cast glances at the square, which is still sunny, though it is almost evening. At last there is a shout: « The Rabbi is coming.» They all turn towards the door, the smaller people stand on their toes or endeavour to push their way to the front. Some start discussing and shoving, notwithstanding the reproaches of those employed in the synagogue and of the elders of the town.

« May peace be with all those seeking the Truth.» Jesus is at the entrance and He greets them, blessing with His arms stretched forward. His tall figure stands out against the very bright light in the sunny square. He has taken off His white mantle and is wearing the usual deep blue one. He makes His way through the crowd, which opens out and then throngs around Him, like the waves round a ship.

« I am ill, cure me!» moans a young man who appears to be consumptive, and pulls Jesus by His mantle.

Jesus lays His hands on his head and says: « Have faith. God will listen to you. Let Me speak to the people now, then I will come to you.»

The young man lets Him go and calms down.

« What did He say to you?» asks a woman holding a child in her arms.

« He said that after He has spoken to the people, He will come to me.»

« Is He going to cure you then?»

« I don't know. He said to me: “Have faith.” I can only hope.»

« What did He say? What did He say?»

The people want to know. Jesus' answer is repeated through the crowd.

« In that case, I am going to get my child.»

« And I am bringing my old father here.»

« Oh! If Aggaeus would only come! I'll try... but he will not come.»

Jesus has reached His place. He greets the head of the synagogue who reciprocates the greeting. He is a small, stout, rather elderly man. When speaking to him, Jesus bends down. It is like a palm bending over a shrub which is wider than it is taller.

« What shall I give You?» asks the little man.

« Whatever you wish, or anything at random. The Spirit will be our guide.»

« But... will You be prepared?»

« I am. Give me a roll at random. I tell you: the Spirit of the Lord will guide the choice for the sake of this people.»

The head of the synagogue stretches his hand out to the pile of rolls, he picks one and unrolls it, he stops at a certain point. « Here» he says.

Jesus takes the roll and starts reading at the shown point: « Joshua: “Rise and sanctify the people and say to them: 'Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, because the Lord of Israel declares: the ban is now among you, Israel; you can never stand up to your enemies until you take from among you him who is contaminated by such crime' .”» He stops, He rolls the parchment and hands it back.

The crowd is most heedful. Only one whispers: « We shall hear some very nice words against our enemies!». « It is the King of Israel, the Promised One, Who gathers His people together!»

Jesus stretches out His arms in His usual oratorial attitude. Silence is now perfect.

« Who came to sanctify you, has risen. He has come out from the secrecy of His house, where He prepared Himself for this mission. He purified Himself to give you an example of purification. He established His position with the mighty ones in the Temple and with the people of God, and is now amongst you. It is I. Not as some of you think and hope, with clouded minds and unrest in their hearts. The Kingdom of which I am the future King and to which I call you, is more notable and greater.

I am calling you, Israel, before any other people, because in the fathers of your fathers you received the promise of this hour and of the alliance with the Most High Lord. But His Kingdom will not be established with armed multitudes or wild blood shedding and neither the violent, nor the overbearing, the proud, the wrathful, the envious, the lustful, the avaricious will enter it but only the good, the meek, the continent, the merciful, the humble, the patient and those who love God and their neighbours will be admitted.

Israel! You are not asked to fight against external enemies, but against internal ones. Against those who are in all your hearts. In the hearts of thousands and thousands of your children. Remove the barrier of sin from all your hearts, if you want God to gather you together tomorrow and say to you: “My people, yours is the Kingdom that will never be defeated, or invaded, or undermined by enemies.”

Tomorrow. Which tomorrow? In a year's or a month's time? Oh! Do not be inquisitive! Do not allow an unhealthy thirst to inquire into the future by means which taste of guilty witchcraft. Leave the Python spirit to the heathens. Leave to Eternal God the secrecy of time. As from tomorrow, the morrow that will rise after this evening, and the morrow that will come after tonight and will rise at cock-crow, come and be purified by sincere penance.

Repent of your sins to be forgiven and to be ready for the Kingdom. Remove from yourselves the barrier of sin. Each of you has his own. Each has the one against the ten commandments of eternal salvation. Examine your consciences

with sincerity and you will find your errors. Repent with sincere humility. You must repent. Not just with your mouths. You cannot laugh at or deceive God. But repent with a firm will, that will make you change your ways of living and return to the Law of the Lord. The Kingdom of Heaven is waiting for you. Tomorrow.

Tomorrow? you may ask. Oh! the hour of God is always an early morrow, even when it comes at the end of a life as long as the Patriarchs'. Eternity does not use as a measure of time the slow flowing of a sand glass. And the measures of time which you call days, months, years, centuries are but heartbeats of the Eternal Spirit that keeps you alive. But your souls are eternal and you must adopt for your souls the same measure of time as your Creator does. You must, therefore, say: "Tomorrow will be the day of my death." No, not death for the faithful. But rest of expectation, waiting for the Messiah to open the gates of Heaven.

And I solemnly tell you that only twenty-seven of you here present will die and have to wait. The rest will be judged before their death, and their death will be a transition to God or Mammon without any delay because the Messiah has come, He is amongst you and calls you to give you the Gospel, to teach you the Truth and save you in Heaven.

Do penance! The "morrow" of the Kingdom of Heaven is impending. May it find you pure so that you may possess the eternal day.

Peace be with you.»

A bearded sumptuously dressed Israelite stands up to contradict Him. He says: « Master, what You have stated appears to be in contrast with what is said in the sacred book of Maccabees, glory of Israel. It is said there: "Indeed when evil-doers are not left for long to their own devices but incur swift retribution, it is a sign of great benevolence. In the case of the other nations, the Lord waits patiently for them to obtain the full measure of their sins, before He punishes them." According to what You said, instead, the Most High would appear to be very slow in punishing us, waiting, as for the other nations, the time of Judgement, when the measure of sins is full. Events, indeed, give You the lie. Israel is punished as stated by the historian of the Maccabees. But if what You say is correct, is there no conflict between Your doctrine and the sentence I have quoted?»

« I do not know who you are, but I will give you My answer, whoever you are. There is no conflict in the doctrine, but only in the interpretation of the words. You interpret them in a human sense, I, instead, in a spiritual one. You see everything as referred to the present time and transient things, and you represent the majority of people who think likewise. I represent God and I explain and apply everything to eternal and supernatural matters. It is true, Yahweh did strike you at present because of your pride and because you considered yourselves a "nation" according to the world. But how much He loved you and how patient He is with you, more than with anyone else, granting you the Saviour, His Messiah, that you may listen to Him and be saved before the hour of the wrath of God! He does not want you to be sinners any longer. But if He struck you in the fleeting worldly things, seeing that the injury does not cure your souls, nay it makes them duller and duller, He does not inflict a further punishment, but He grants you salvation. He sends you Him Who cures and saves you! I, Who am speaking to you.»

« Do You not consider Yourself bold in avowing Yourself a representative of God? None of the Prophets dared so much and You... Who are You, Who are speaking? And by whose order do You speak?»

« The Prophets could not say of themselves what I state of Myself. Who am I? The Expected One, The Promised One, the Saviour. You have already heard His Precursor say: "Prepare the way for the Lord... Here the Lord God is coming... Like a shepherd He will feed His flock, although He is the Lamb of the true Passover." Many amongst you heard these words from the Precursor and they saw the heavens brighten with a light that descended in the shape of a dove and they heard a voice speak and say who I am. By whose order do I speak? By the order of Him Who is and Who sends Me.»

« You say that, but You may be a liar or a dreamer. Your words are holy, but Satan sometimes uses deceitful words painted with holiness, to deceive people. We do not know You.»

« I am Jesus of Joseph of the House of David, I was born at Bethlehem Ephrathah, as was promised, named Nazarene, because I live at Nazareth. And that according to the world. According to God I am His Messenger. My disciples know.»

« Oh! They! They can say what they like or what You tell them to say.»

« Another will speak, who does not love Me, and will say Who I am. Wait till I call one of the people present here.»

Jesus looks at the crowd, who are astonished and annoyed at the dispute, and divided between the two opposite doctrines. He looks for someone with His sapphire eyes, and then in a loud voice He calls: « Aggaeus! Come here. It is an order.»

There is great excitement in the crowd. They open out to let a man pass, who is violently shaking all over his body and is supported by a woman.

« Do you know this man?»

« Yes, he is Aggaeus, of Malachi, of Capernaum. He is possessed by an evil spirit which tortures him with sudden fury-fits.»

« Does everybody know him?»

The crowd shout: « Yes, we do.»

« Can any of you say that he has spoken to Me, even for a few minutes?»

The crowd shout: « No, no, he is half-witted, he never leaves his house, and nobody has seen You in it.»

« Woman, bring him here in front of Me.»

The woman pushes and drags him, while the poor man trembles more than ever.

The head of the synagogue warns Jesus: « Be careful! The devil is about to torture him... and then he rushes at people, scratches and bites them.»

The crowd moves away thronging against the walls.

Jesus and the man are now facing each other. There is a moment's struggle. The man, usually mute, seems to have difficulty in speaking, he moans, then his voice turns into words: « What is there between us and You, Jesus of Nazareth? Why have You come to torture us? Why do You want to destroy us, You, the Lord of Heaven and Earth? I know who You are: the Holy of God. No one, in human flesh, was ever greater than You, because in Your flesh of man is enclosed the Spirit of the Eternal Winner. You have already beaten me in...»

« Be quiet! I order you to come out of this man.»

The man has a fit of strange convulsions. He is tossed about by jerks and thrusts, as if someone pulled and pushed him, violently ill-treating him, he shouts in a wild voice, foams at his mouth, and is then thrown down onto the ground. He gets up, astonished and cured.

« Have you heard? What do you say now?» Jesus asks His opponent.

The bearded sumptuous man shrugs his shoulders and, obviously beaten, goes out without replying. The crowd scoff at him and applaud Jesus.

« Silence! This place is sacred! » says Jesus and He orders: « Bring Me the man to whom I promised help from God.»

The sick man comes forward. Jesus caresses him: « You believed Me! Be cured. Go in peace and be just. »

The young man lets out a yell. I wonder what he feels. He kneels down before Jesus, kisses His feet thanking Him: « Thanks from me and from my mother!»

Other sick people come: a little boy with paralysed legs. Jesus takes him in His arms, caresses him and puts him down... and leaves him. The child does not fall, but runs to his mother, who clasps him to her heart, weeping, and in a loud voice blesses « the Holy One of Israel». A little old blind man comes, led by his daughter. He also is cured with a caress on his diseased eyes.

There is a roar of blessing from the crowd.

Jesus makes His way through the crowd smiling, and although He is tall, He would not succeed in pushing through, if Peter, James, Andrew and John did not work generously with their elbows, to make their way and reach Jesus, and then escort Him to the exit onto the square, which is now dark.

The vision ends thus.

60. Cure of Simon Peter's Mother-in-law.

3rd November 1944.

Peter is speaking to Jesus. He says: « Master, I would like to ask You to come to

my house. I did not dare to ask You last Sabbath. But… I would like You to come. »

« To Bethsaida? »

« No, here… to my wife's house. I mean her home. »

« Why do you want that, Peter? »

« Well, for many reasons… also because today I was told that my mother-in-law is ill. If You would cure her, perhaps she… »

« Tell Me, Simon. »

« What I wanted to say is… if You go to her, she would stop… yes, well, You know, it is not the same thing to hear people speak of someone and to see and listen to someone, and if the person in question cures… well… »

« You mean also the ill-feeling would come to an end? »

« No, not exactly ill-feeling. But, You know… there are many opinions in the village, and she… does not know whom she should listen to. Come, Jesus. »

« I will come. Let us go. You will tell those who are waiting for Me that I will speak to them from your house. »

They go as far as a low house, even lower than Peter's house at Bethsaida, and it is also closer to the lake. It is separated from the lake by the pebbly shore and I think that when there is a storm, the waves break against the walls of the house, which, while being low, are very wide, as if several people lived in it.

In the kitchen garden in front of the house, facing the lake, there is only an old gnarled vine, supported by a rustic pergola, and an old fig-tree which the winds, blowing from the lake, have bent towards the house. The ruffled foliage of the tree brushes the walls of the house and beats against the shutters of the little windows, which are now closed as a protection against the bright sunshine. There is nothing but the vine and the fig-tree and a greenish little wall of a low well.

« Come in, Master. »

There are some women in the kitchen, some are busy mending the nets, some are preparing the food. They greet Peter and they bow embarrassed to Jesus, peering up at Him curiously.

« Peace be to this house. How is the patient? »

« Tell Him, you who are the oldest daughter-in-law » three of the women say to another one, who is drying her hands on the edge of her dress.

« Her temperature is very high. The doctor has seen her and he said she is too old to get better and that when the disease goes from the bones to the heart, and gives a temperature, one dies, particularly at an old age. She will not eat any more… I try and prepare something good, even now, see, Simon, I was preparing the soup she used to like so much. I chose the best fish that I got from my brothers-in-law. But I do not think she will be able to eat it. And… she is so restless! She complains, and shouts, and cries, and curses… »

« Be patient, as if she were your mother and God will grant you merit for it. Take Me to her. »

« Rabbi… Rabbi… I don't know if she will be pleased to see You. She does not want to see anybody. I dare not say to her: “I am now bringing the Rabbi in to see you.” »

Jesus smiles calmly. He addresses Peter: « It is your turn, Simon. You are a man and the oldest son-inlaw, you told Me. Go. »

Peter makes a significant grimace and obeys. He walks across the kitchen, and goes into another room and through the door which he closes, I can hear him talking to a woman. He looks out and says: « Come, Master, quick. » And he whispers in a very low, just audible voice: « Before she changes her mind. »

Jesus walks across the kitchen and opens the door wide. Standing on the threshold, He pronounces His sweet, solemn greeting: « Peace be with you. » He goes in, although He gets no reply. He goes near a low bed on which there is lying a little old woman, grey-haired, thin, panting because of the high temperature which causes her wasted face to flush.

Jesus bends over the little bed, smiles at the old woman: « Are you in pain? »

« I am dying! »

« No. You will not die. Do you believe that I can cure you? »

« Why would You want to do that? You do not know me. »

« For Simon, who asked Me… and for you, to give your soul time to see and love the Light. »

« Simon? It would be better if he… How come Simon thought of me? »

« Because he is better than you think. I know him and I am sure. I know him, and I am happy to satisfy him. »

« Would You cure me, then? I will not die, then? »

« No, woman. You will not die as yet. Can you believe in Me? »

« I believe, I believe. It is enough for me not to die! »

Jesus smiles once again. He takes her hand. Her hand, wrinkled and with swollen veins, disappears in the younger hand of Jesus, Who stands straight up, and takes the attitude He normally assumes when working a miracle. He shouts: « Be cured! I want it! Get up! » and He lets her hand go. And her hand falls down without any complaint, whereas before, notwithstanding Jesus had taken it very gently, she groaned when it was moved.

There is silence for a few moments. Then the old woman cries out: « Oh! God of our fathers! But there is nothing wrong with me! I am cured! Come! Come! » Her daughters-in-law rush in. « Look! » says the old woman: « I can move and I feel no pain! And I am no longer feverish! Feel how cool I am. And my heart no longer feels like the blacksmith's hammer. Ah! I am not dying any longer! » Not one word for the Lord!

But Jesus does not mind. He says to the oldest daughter-in-law: « Dress her that she may get up. She is fit to be up. » And He makes for the door.

Simon, mortified, says to his mother-in-law: « The Master has cured you. Have you nothing to say to Him? »

« Certainly. I wasn't thinking of that. Thank You. What can I do to thank You? »

« Be good, very good. Because the Eternal Father has been good to you. And if it is not too much trouble for you, allow Me to rest in your home today. I have been to all the nearby villages the past week, and I arrived here at dawn this morning. I am tired. »

« Certainly! Certainly! You may stay if You wish. » But there is not much enthusiasm in her words. Jesus, Peter, Andrew, James and John go and sit down in the kitchen garden.

« Master!… »

« Yes, Peter? »

« I feel humiliated. »

Jesus makes a gesture, which meant: « Never mind. » He then goes on: « She is not the first, and will not be the last who do not feel immediate gratitude. But I do not seek gratitude. All I want is to give souls the chance to save themselves. I do My duty. Let them do theirs. »

« Ah! There have been other cases like this one? Where? »

« Curious Simon! But I will please you, although I do not like useless curiosity. At Nazareth. Do you remember Sarah's mother? She was very ill when we arrived in Nazareth and we were told that the little girl cried. Since she is good and gentle, and I did not want her to become an orphan and a stepdaughter in future, I went to see the woman… I wanted to cure her… But I had not yet set foot in the house, when her husband and a brother drove Me away, saving: “Away! Go away! We do not want to get into trouble with the synagogue.” For them, for too many, I am already a rebel… I cured her just the same… for the sake of her children. And I said to Sarah in the kitchen garden, caressing her: “I will cure your mother. Go home. Do not cry any more.” And the woman was cured the same moment and the little girl told her, and she told also her father and her uncle… and she was punished for speaking to Me. I know, because the child ran after Me when I was leaving the village… But it does not matter. »

« I would have made her become ill again. »

« Peter! » Jesus is severe. « Is that what I teach you and the others? What have you heard Me say from the very first time you heard Me? Of what have I always spoken as being the first condition to be My true disciples? »

« It is true, Master. I am a real beast. Forgive me. But… I cannot bear the fact that they do not love You! »

« Oh! Peter! You will see much greater indifference! You will have many surprises, Peter! People that the so called “holy” world scorns as being money-changers, who instead will set an example in the world, an example which will not be followed by those who despise them. Heathens who will be My most

faithful ones. Prostitutes who will become pure by strong will power and penance. Sinners who amend their way of living… »

« Listen: that a sinner amends his way… it may well be. But a prostitute and a money-changer!… »

« You do not believe it? »

« I do not. »

« You are mistaken, Simon. But here is your mother-in-law coming towards us.»

« Master, I beg You to come and sit at my table. »

« Thank you, woman. May God reward you. » They go into the kitchen and sit at the table. The old woman serves them with plenty fish, both as soup and roasted. « I have nothing else but this » she apologises. And, to keep up the habit, she says to Peter:

« Your brothers-in-law are doing even too much, all alone as they are, since you went to Bethsaida! If it had only helped to make my daughter richer… But I hear that you are very often absent and you do not go fishing. »

« I follow the Master. I have been to Jerusalem with Him and I am with Him on Sabbaths. I do not spend my time in revelries. »

« But you don't earn any money. Since you want to be the Prophet's servant, you had better come back here again. At least that poor daughter of mine will be fed by her relatives while you are acting the saint. »

« But are you not ashamed of speaking like that in front of Him Who cured you? »

« I am not criticising Him. He is doing His job. I am criticising you, you are a sluggard. In any case, you will never be a prophet or a priest. You are an ignorant sinner, a good for nothing. »

« You are lucky that He is here, otherwise… »

« Simon, your mother-in-law gave you very good advice. You can go fishing even here. I am told that you used to go fishing also at Capernaum. You can come back again. »

« And live here again? But Master, You do not… »

« Be good, Peter. If you are here, you will be either on the lake or with Me. So what difference is it for you if you are or you are not in this house? » Jesus has laid His hand on Peter's shoulder and His calmness seems to pass into the fiery apostle.

« You are right. You are always right. I will do that. But… what about these? » and he points to his partners John and James.

« Can they not come, too? »

« Oh! Our father and above all our mother will be happier if they know we are with You, rather than with them. They will not object. »

« Perhaps Zebedee will come, too » says Peter.

« Quite likely. And others with him. We will come, Master. We will certainly come. »

« Is Jesus of Nazareth here? » asks a little boy appearing at the door.

« He is here, come in. »

A boy comes in, whom I recognize as one of the boys I saw in the first visions of Capernaum, and exactly the one who tumbled down near Jesus' feet, and promised he would be good, so he would get the honey of Paradise.

« My little friend, come here » says Jesus.

The little fellow, somewhat embarrassed because so many are looking at him, takes heart and runs to Jesus, Who embraces him and sits him on His knees; and gives him a bit of His fish on a slice of bread.

« Here, Jesus. This is for You. Also today that person said: « It is the Sabbath. Take this to the Rabbi of Nazareth and tell your friend to pray for me. » He knows that You are my friend!… » The child smiles happily, and eats his bread and fish.

« Well done, little James! You will tell that person that My prayers rise to the Father for him. »

« Is it for the poor? » asks Peter.

« Yes, it is. »

« Is it always the same offering? Let us look. »

Jesus hands over the purse. Peter empties it and counts the coins. « Still the same large sum! But who is this person? Say, boy, who is it? »

« I have not to say, and I will not say! »

« You little rascal! Be good, and I will give you some fruit. »

« I will not speak, whether you insult me or caress me. »

« What a tongue he has! Just listen! »

« Little James is right, Peter. He is keeping his word: leave him alone. »

« Master, do You know who the person is? »

Jesus does not reply. He is busy with the child, to whom He gives another bit of roasted fish, after removing all the bones. But Peter insists, and Jesus is obliged to answer.

« I know everything, Simon. »

« And we are not to know? »

« And will you never be cured of your fault? » Jesus reproaches him, but smiles at the same time. And He adds: « You will soon know. Because if evil wants to be hidden, and cannot always be such, good, even if it wants to be hidden, to be meritorious, will be made known one day, for the glory of God, Whose nature shines in one of His sons. The nature of God: love. And this person understands all that, because he loves his neighbors. Go, James. Take My blessing to that person. »

The vision ends thus.

61. Jesus Preaches and Works Miracles in Peter's House.

4th November 1944.

Jesus has climbed on top of a pile of baskets and ropes at the entrance to the kitchen garden of the house of Peter's mother-in-law. The kitchen garden is crowded with people, and other people are on the lake shore, some sitting on the shore, some on the beached boats. It looks as if He has been speaking for some time, because the sermon has started.

I hear: « … Certainly many times you have thought so in your hearts. But it is not so. The Lord has not lacked in kindness of heart towards His people. Notwithstanding His people lacked in loyalty to Him thousands of times.

Listen to this parable. It will help you to understand. A king had many wonderful horses in his stables. But he was particularly fond of one of them. He gazed fondly at it, even before he had it. Afterwards, when he got it, he put it in a delightful place and he often went to admire his favorite horse, both with his eyes and with his heart, dreaming it would become the wonder of his kingdom. And when the horse rebelled against commands, disobeyed and ran away under another master, the king, in his sorrow and his severity, promised he would forgive the rebel after it had been punished. And loyal as he was, although far away, he watched over his favorite and sent gifts and guardians to it, hoping they would keep his remembrance in the horse's heart. But the horse, although suffering from the exile from the kingdom, was not steady, as the king was, in loving and wishing complete forgiveness. At times it was good, at times bad; neither was its goodness greater than its badness. Nay, it was the other way round. And yet the king was patient and with reproaches and caresses, he endeavored to turn his horse into a dearer and more docile friend. As time went by, the horse became more and more loath. It invoked its king, it cried under the whip of other masters, but it did not really want to belong to the king. It simply did not want to. Oppressed, exhausted, moaning, it did not say: “I am such through my own fault.” Instead, it accused its king for it. The king, after trying everything, decided to make one last effort. “So far” he said, “I have sent messengers and friends. Now I will send my own son. His heart is like my own and will speak the same love as I would, and will make use of the same caresses and gifts as I used, nay, he will be even kinder, because my son is like myself, but made more sublime by love.” And he sent his son. That is the parable. Now tell Me: do you think that king loved his favorite horse? »

The crowd together reply: « He loved it with infinite love. »

« Could the animal complain of its king about all the ill it had suffered after leaving him? »

« No, it could not » reply the people.

« Answer also this question: how do you think that horse will have received the king's son who went to rescue and cure it and take it back once again to the delightful land? »

« With great joy, of course, with gratitude and love. »

« Now, if the king's son said to the horse: “I have come for this reason, to do such and such a thing for you, but now you must be good, obedient, willing and loyal to me”, what do you think the horse replied? »

« Oh! There is no need to ask! Now that it was aware of how much it cost to be expelled from the kingdom, it will have said that it wanted to be as the king's son suggested. »

« Well, then, what was the duty of that horse, according to you? »

« To be even better than it was requested, more affectionate, more docile, to be forgiven for past faults, and out of gratitude for all the good received. »

« And if it did not do that? »

« It would deserve death, because it was worse than a wild beast. »

« My friends, you have judged correctly. But do exactly Yourselves as you would have liked that horse to do. I beseech you, men, the favorite creatures of the King of Heaven, of God, My Father and yours, to be at least as you judge that horse to be.

Because after the Prophets, God sends you His own Son and I implore you, for your good, and because I love you as only God can love , the God Who is in Me to work the miracle of Redemption. Woe to those men who lower themselves to a lower degree than animals! But if it was possible to excuse those who committed sin up to the present time – because too long a time has elapsed since the Law was given and too much worldly dust has settled on the Law – now it is no longer so. I have come to bring once again the word of God. The Son of man is amongst men to lead them back to God. Follow Me. I am the Way, the Truth, the Life. »

The usual whispering of the crowd.

Jesus tells His disciples: « Let the poor come forward. There is a rich offer for them made by one who begs to obtain forgiveness from God. »

Three tattered old men come forward, two blind men and a cripple; they are followed by a widow with seven emaciated children.

Jesus stares at them, one by one, He smiles at the widow and particularly at the children. Nay, He says to John: « Put those over there in the kitchen garden. I want to speak to them. » But He becomes stern, with blazing eyes, when a little old man appears. But He says nothing, for the time being. He calls Peter, whom He asks for the purse received shortly before and for another one containing smaller coins, which are offerings collected from good-hearted people. He empties the coins onto the bench near the well, He counts them, and divides them. He makes six parts. A very big one, all silver coins, and five smaller ones in size, with many bronze coins and a few big ones. He calls the poor, sick people and asks them: « Have you nothing to tell Me? »

The blind men are silent; the cripple says: « May He Who sent You, protect You. » Nothing else. Jesus puts the offering into his good hand.

The man says: « May God reward You. But more than this offering, I would like to be cured by You. »

« You did not ask for that. »

« I am poor, a worm trodden on by the mighty ones, I dared not hope You would have mercy on a beggar. »

« I am Mercy that bends over all miseries calling Me. I refuse no one. All I ask for is faith and love, that I may say: I am listening to You. »

« Oh! My Lord! I believe You and I love You. Save me, then! Heal Your servant! » Jesus lays His hand on the crook-back, He moves it gently, as if He were caressing the man and says:

« I want you to be healed. » The man straightens up, agile and wholesome, uttering endless blessings.

Jesus hands the offering to the blind men and waits an instant before dismissing them… then He lets them go. He calls the old people. He gives the alms to the first one, and helps him to put the coins into his belt pouch. He listens pitifully to the mishaps of the second one, who informs Jesus of the disease of one of his daughters.

« I have but her! And she is dying. What will happen to me? Oh! if only You came! She cannot come, she cannot stand up. She would love to… but cannot. Master, Lord, Jesus, have mercy on us! »

« Where do you live, father? »

« At Korazim. Ask for Isaac of Jonah, named the Adult. Will You really come? Will You not forget our misfortunes? And will You cure my daughter? »

« Do you believe I can cure her? »

« Oh! I do believe it. That is why I am speaking to You about it. »

« Go home, father. Your daughter will be greeting you on the doorstep. »

« But she is in bed and she has not been able to get up for the last three… Ah! I now understand! Oh! Thank You, Rabboni! Blessed are You and He Who sent You! Praise be to God and His Messiah! » The old man goes away, plodding along as fast as he can. But when he is almost outside the kitchen garden he says: « Master, will You come just the same to my poor house? Isaac will be waiting for You to kiss Your feet and wash them with His tears, and offer You the bread of love. Come, Jesus: I will speak to the townsfolk about You. »

« I will come. Go in peace and be happy. »

The third old man comes forward, He seems to be the most ragged. But Jesus has only the big pile of money left. He calls in a loud voice: « Woman, come here with your little ones. »

The young emaciated woman comes forward with her head lowered down. She seems a sad hen with her sad brood of chickens.

« How long have you been a widow, woman? »

« Three years at the moon of Tishry. »

« What age are you? »

« Twenty-seven. »

« Are they all your children? »

« Yes, Master… and I have nothing else. I finished everything… How can I work if no one wants me with all these little ones? »

« God does not abandon even the worm He created. He will not abandon you, woman. Where do you live? »

« On the lake. Three stadia outside Bethsaida. He told me to come here… My husband died on the lake; he was a fisherman. » She Points to Andrew, who blushes and would like to disappear.

« You did well, Andrew, telling the woman to come to Me. » Andrew takes heart and whispers: « The man was a friend of mine, he was good, he died in a storm and lost also his boat. »

« Take this, woman. It will help you for a long time, then another sun will rise on your days. Be good, bring your children up in the Law and you will not be without God's help. I bless you: you arid your little ones. » And He pats them, one by one, with great pitiful love.

The woman goes away pressing her treasure to her heart.

« And what about me? » asks the old man who is left last. Jesus looks at him, but is silent.

« Nothing for me? You are not fair! You gave her six times as much as the others, and nothing to me. Of course… she was a woman! » Jesus looks at him, but is silent.

« Look everybody, and tell me if there is justice! I have come from far away, because I was told that money was given here, and now I see that some get too much and I get nothing. A poor, old, sick man! And He wants us to believe in Him!… »

« My old man, are you not ashamed of telling such lies? Death is behind your back and you lie and endeavor to rob also who is hungry. Why do you want to rob your brothers of the offering that I received to give it with justice? »

« But I… »

« Be quiet! You should have understood by My silence and My action that I had recognized you and you should have followed My example and been silent. Why do you want Me to shame you? »

« I am poor. »

« No, you are a miser and a thief. You live for money and usury. »

« I have never lent on usury. God is my witness. »

« And is this not the most fierce usury, to rob those who are in dire need? Go. Repent. That God may forgive you. »

« I swear… »

« Be quiet! I tell you! It is said: “You shall not swear falsehood”. If I did not respect your old age, I would search you and in your breast I would find a purse full of gold: your real heart. Go away! »

The impudent old man, seeing that his secret has been discovered, goes away without any need for Jesus' thundering voice.

The crowd threaten and scorn him, and they insult him as a thief.

« Be quiet! If he did wrong, do not do the same. He lacks sincerity is dishonest. If you insult him, you lack charity. A brother who makes a mistake is not to be insulted. Everybody has his sins. No one is perfect but God. I was compelled to shame him, because nobody must ever be a thief, and much less steal from poor people. But only the Father knows how much I suffered having to do it. You must also be sorry, seeing that a man in Israel infringes the Law endeavoring to defraud the poor and a widow. Do not be greedy. May your souls, not money, be your treasure. Do not be perjurers. Let your language be as sincere and honest as your actions. Life is not eternal and the hour of death will come. Live in such a way that at the hour of your death peace may be in your souls. The peace of those who lived an honest life. Go home… »

« Have mercy, Lord! This son of mine is deaf because a demon vexes him. »

« And this brother of mine is like an unclean animal, he wallows in the mud and eats excrement. A malignant spirit forces him to do that, and although against his will, he does foul things. » Jesus goes towards the imploring group. He lifts His arms and orders: « Come out of them. Leave to God His creatures. »

Amidst shouts and uproars the two unhappy men are cured. The women leading them kneel down, blessing.

« Go home and be thankful to God. Peace to you all. Go. »

The crowd leave, commenting on the events. The four disciples gather round the Master.

« My friends, I solemnly tell you that all sins can be found in Israel and the demons have taken up their abode there. Neither are the possessed the only ones whose lips are mute, or are driven to live like animals and eat filth. But the most real and numerous possessions are those that make hearts mute to honesty and love, and turn hearts into a sink of filthy vices. Oh! Father! » Jesus sits down depressed.

« Are You tired, Master? »

« Not tired, My dear John, but afflicted because of the state of hearts and the lack of will to grow better. I have come… but man… man… Oh,' Father!… »

« Master, I love You. We all love You… »

« I know. But you are so few… and My eagerness to save is so great! »

Jesus has embraced John, and is resting His head on His disciple's. He is sad. Peter, Andrew and James are near Him, and they look at Him with love and sadness. And the vision ends thus.

62. Jesus Prays at Night.

5th November 1944.

I see Jesus coming out of Peter's house at Capernaum, making as little noise as possible. He obviously spent the night there to make Peter happy.

It is the dead of night. The sky is a starry canopy. The lake faintly reflects the glitter of the sky and, rather than see it, one guesses the peaceful lake is there sleeping under the stars, because of the gentle lapping of the water on the gravel shore.

Jesus sets the door ajar, looks at the sky, the lake and the road. He is thinking. Then He starts walking, not along the lake, but towards the village. He passes through part of it towards the country. He goes into the country, along a little path that leads to the first undulations of an olive-grove. He enters the green, silent peace and prostrates Himself in prayer.

A fervent prayer! He prays kneeling down, and then, as if He were fortified, He stands straight up, His face raised to Heaven, a face made more spiritual by the rising light of a clear, summer dawn. He prays smiling now, whereas before, He was sighing, probably because of some moral grief. His arms are fully outstretched. He seems a living, tall, angelical cross, so gentle is His attitude. He seems to be blessing the whole country, the rising day, the fading stars and the lake, now becoming visible.

« Master! We have been looking for You all over! We saw the door ajar, when we came back with the fish, and we thought You had gone out. But we could not find You. And at last, a peasant, who was loading his baskets to take them to town, told us. We were calling: "Jesus, Jesus!", and he said: "Are you looking for the Rabbi Who speaks to the crowds? He went up that path, up towards the mountain. He must be in Micah's olive-grove, because He often goes there. I have seen Him there before." He was right. Why did You come out so early, Master? Why did You not rest? Was the bed not comfortable? … »

« No, Peter. The bed was comfortable and the room was lovely. But I often do that. To raise My spirit and be united to the Father. Prayer is a strength for oneself and for others. We achieve everything by praying. If we do not receive a grace, which the Father does not always grant – and we must not think it is due to lack of love, instead we must believe that it is the will of an Order which governs the destiny of every man for a good purpose prayer certainly gives us peace and contentment, to enable us to bear so many vexing things, without going off the holy path. It is easy, you know, Peter, to have a clouded mind and an agitated heart because of what is around us! And how can a clouded mind or an agitated heart perceive God? »

« It's true. But we do not know how to pray! We are not capable of saying the lovely words You say. »

« Say the words you know, as best as you can. It is not the words, but the sentiments with which they are uttered that make your prayers pleasant to the Father. »

« We would like to pray as You do. »

« I will teach you also to pray. I will teach you the most holy prayer. But to prevent it from being only a void formula on your lips, I want your hearts to have at least a minimum of holiness, light and wisdom… That is why I instruct you. Later, I will teach you the holy prayer. Why were you looking for Me, is there anything you want of Me? »

« No, Master. But there are many who want so much from You. There were already people coming from Capernaum, and they were poor, sick, depressed people, people of good will and anxious to be taught. When they inquired about You, we said: "The Master is tired and is sleeping. Go away and come back next Sabbath." »

« No, Simon. You must not say that. There is not one day only for mercy. I am Love, Light and Health every day of the week. »

« But… so far You have spoken only on Sabbaths. »

« Because I was still unknown. But as I become known, every day there will be effusions of Grace and graces. I tell you solemnly that the time will come when even the moment of time which is granted to a sparrow to rest on a branch and eat some little grains will not be granted to the Son of man for His rest and meals. »

« But You will be taken ill! We will not allow that. Your kindness must not make You unhappy. »

« And do you think that could make Me unhappy? Oh! If all the world came to Me to listen to Me, to bewail its sins and sorrow on My heart, to be healed in its bodies and souls, and I were worn out speaking, and forgiving and pouring forth My power, I would be so happy, Peter, that I would not even regret Heaven, where I was in the Father! Where were they from, those who were coming to Me? »

« From Korazim, Bethsaida, Capernaum, and there were some even from Tiberias and Gherghesa, as well as from the hundreds of villages around those towns. »

« Go and tell them that I will be at Korazim, Bethsaida and nearby villages. »

« Why not at Capernaum? »

« Because I came for everybody and everybody must have Me, and then… there is old Isaac waiting for Me. We must not disappoint his hopes. »

« Will You wait for us here, then? »

« No, I am going and you will stay at Capernaum to send the crowds to Me; I will come back later. »

« We will be here alone… » Peter is sad.

« Do not be sad. Obedience should make you happy as well as the conviction that you are a useful disciple. And the same applies to the others. »

Peter, Andrew, James and John cheer up. Jesus blesses them, and they part. The vision ends thus.

63. The Leper Cured near Korazim.

6th November 1944.

Since before dawn, as in the detail of a perfect photograph, I see in my spirit a poor leper.

He is really a wreck of a man. He is so ravaged by his disease, that I could not tell his age. Reduced to a skeleton, half naked, his body is in the state of a corroded mummy, with contorted hands and feet, parts of which are missing, so that the miserable limbs no longer seem to belong to a human being. His hands, twisted and clawed, resemble the talons of a winged monster, his feet, are so fragmented and disfigured, that they are almost like the hooves of an ox.

And his head!… I think that the head of anyone left unburied which becomes mummified by sun and wind, must be like the head of this man. A few surviving forelocks, spread here and there, sticking to the yellowish, crusty skin, like dust dried on a skull, very deep set eyes, half open, lips and nose half eaten by the disease and showing cartilage and gums, two embryonic wrecks of outer ears, all his visible body covered by a wrinkled skin, as yellow as some types of kaolin, with bones showing here and there: his skin seems to have the task of keeping all the poor bones together, in its filthy sack, all covered with ugly scars and putrid sores. A real wreck!

I cannot help thinking of the personification of Death wandering on the earth, covered by a wrinkled skin on its skeleton, enveloped in a filthy mantle falling to bits and pieces, holding in its hand not a scythe, but a knotty stick torn from a tree.

He is at the entrance of a remote cave, a real cave, in such a state of ruin that I cannot say whether it was originally a sepulcher, or a hut for wood cutters or the remains of a demolished house. He is looking at the road, over one hundred metres away from his cave, a main road, dusty and still sunny. There is nobody on the road. As far as the eye can see, on the road there are sunshine, dust and solitude. Much higher up, to the northwest, there must be a village or a town. I can see the first houses. It must be at least a kilometre away.

The leper looks and sighs. He takes a chipped bowl and fills it at a brook. He drinks. He goes into a tangle of bushes, behind his cave, bends down and pulls some wild roots out of the ground. He goes back to the brook, he washes them, removing the coarser dirt with the little water of the rivulet and he eats them slowly, taking them painfully to his mouth with his ruined hands. They must be as hard as sticks. He finds difficulty in chewing them and he has to spit many out as he is unable to swallow them, notwithstanding the water he drinks to help himself.

« Where are you, Abel? » shouts someone.

The leper rouses, he has something on his lips that might be a smile. But his lips are in such a bad state that even that outward sign of a smile is vague and shapeless. He replies with a strange, squeaky voice: it reminds me of the cry of certain birds, the exact name of which I do not know: « I am here! I did not believe you were coming any more. I thought something had happened to you. I was sad… If I lose you too, what will happen to poor Abel? » While speaking, he walks towards the road, as far as he can according to the Law, apparently, because at half the way, he stops.

A man comes forward on the road, he is moving so fast that he seems to be running.

« Is that really you, Samuel? Oh! If it is not you I am waiting for, whoever you may be, don't hurt me! »

« It’s me, Abel, it's me! And I am cured. Look how I can run. I am late, I know. And I was worried about you. But when you hear… oh! you will be happy. And I have with me not only the usual crusts of bread, but a whole loaf of good, fresh bread, and it is all for you, and I have some good fish, and some cheese, and it is all for you. I want you to rejoice, my poor friend, and thus get ready for a greater joy. »

« But how have you become so rich? I do not understand… »

« I will tell you. »

« And cured. You do not seem the same man! »

« Listen, then. I heard that there was at Capernaum that Rabbi who is a holy man, and I went… »

« Stop, stop! I am infected. »

« Oh! It does not matter! I am no longer afraid of anything. » The man, who is indeed the cripple cured and helped by Jesus, with his fast step has almost reached the leper and is only a few steps from him. He spoke while walking and smiling happily.

But the leper says once again: « In the name of God, stop. If anyone should see you… »

« I will stop. Look: I am putting the provisions here. Eat, while I speak to you. » He puts a bundle on a large stone, and opens it up. He then withdraws a few steps, while the leper moves forward and throws himself on the rare food.

« Oh! How long it is since I had food like this! How good it is! And I was just thinking that I was going to rest with an empty stomach. Not one merciful soul today… and not even you… I had chewed some roots… »

« Poor Abel! I was afraid of that. But I said: "Well, he may be sad now, but he will be happy after!" »

« Happy, yes, because of this good food. But after… »

« No! You will be happy forever. »

The leper shakes his head.

« Listen, Abel. If you can have faith, you will be happy. »

« But faith in whom? »

« In the Rabbi. In the Rabbi Who cured me. »

« But I am a leper. And at the last stage! How can He cure me? »

« Oh! He can. He is holy. »

« Yes, also Elisha cured Naaman the leper… I know… But I… I cannot go to the Jordan. »

« You will be cured without the need of any water. Listen: this Rabbi is the Messiah, do you understand? The Messiah! He is the Son of God. And He cures everyone who has faith. He says: "I want" and the demons flee, limbs are straightened, and blind eyes see. »

« Oh! I would have faith, I would indeed! But how can I see the Messiah? »

« Exactly… I have come just for that. He is often over there, in that village. I know where He will be this evening. If you want… I said: "I will tell Abel, and if Abel feels he can have faith, I will take him to the Master." »

« Are you mad, Samuel? If I go near houses, I will be stoned. »

« Not near the houses. It will be soon getting dark. I will take you to that thicket, and then I will go and call the Master. I will bring Him to you… »

« Go, go at once! I will go by myself to that place. I will walk in the ditch, behind the hedge, but go, go… Oh! go, my good friend! If you only knew what it is to suffer from this disease. And what it means to hope to be cured!… » The leper no longer is interested in the food. He cries and gesticulates imploring his friend.

« I am going, and you will come. » The cured cripple runs away.

Abel with difficulty climbs down into the ditch coasting the road, as it is full of bushes which have grown on the dry earth. Only in the centre there is a fine stream of water. It is getting dark, and the poor man slides among the bushes, always on the look-out in case he should hear any steps. Twice he has to hide on the bottom: the first time when a man on horseback passes along the road, the second time when three men, laden with hay, pass by going to the village. And he goes on.

But Jesus and Samuel reach the thicket before him. « He will be here before long. He moves very slowly because of his wounds. Please be patient. »

« I am not in a hurry. »

« Will You cure him? »

« Has he faith? »

« Oh!… he was dying of starvation. He saw that food after years of abstinence, and yet, after a few mouthfuls, he left it all to come here. »

« How did you meet him? »

« You know… I lived on charity after my misfortune and I went along the roads from one place to another. I used to pass here every seven days and I met the poor man… one day, when driven by hunger, he had come on the main road looking for something, under a most violent storm. He was searching amongst the garbage, like a dog. I had a chunk of dry bread in my knapsack, the gift of some good people, and I shared it with him. We have been friends ever since, and I bring him some food every week. With what I have… If I have a lot, I can give a lot; if I have little, I give little. I do what I can as if he were my brother. Since You cured me, may You be blessed, I have been thinking of him… and of You. »

« You are good, Samuel; that is why you have been visited by grace. He who loves deserves everything from God. But there is something moving among the branches… »

« Is that you, Abel? »

« Yes, it is me. »

« Come, the Master is waiting for you here, under the walnut tree. »

The leper rises from the ditch and climbs on to the bank, which he crosses and goes into the meadow. Jesus, leaning with His back against a very tall walnut tree, is waiting for him.

« Master, Messiah, Holy One, have mercy on me! » and he throws himself on to the grass at Jesus' feet. With his face still bent down on the ground he says: « My Lord! If You want, You can cleanse me! » He then dares to rise on to his knees, he stretches out his skeleton-like arms, with contorted hands, he lifts his emaciated ruined face… Tears run down from his diseased eye sockets to his corroded lips. Jesus looks at him so pitifully. He looks at that shadow of a man, devoured by the terrible disease, who is so horrible and ill-smelling that only true charity can endure to be near him. And yet, Jesus stretches out His hand, His beautiful wholesome right hand to caress the poor fellow.

The leper, without getting up, throws himself back on his heels, and shouts: « Don't touch me! Have mercy on me! »

But Jesus takes a step forward. Stately, good, kind He lays His fingers on the head devoured by leprosy, and in a low voice, which is full of love and yet most authoritative, He says: « I want it! Be cleansed! » His hand remains on the poor head for a few minutes. « Get up. Go to the priest. Fulfill the prescriptions of the Law. And do not tell anyone what I did for you. But be good. Do not sin any more. I bless you. »

« Oh! Lord! Abel! You are completely cured! » Samuel, seeing the complete change of his friend, shouts out of joy.

« Yes, he is cured. He deserved it because of his faith. Goodbye. Peace be with you. »

« Master! Master! Master! I will not leave You. I cannot leave You. »

« Do what the Law prescribes. We will meet again. Once again I bless you. »

Jesus goes away, nodding to Samuel to stay. And the two friends shed tears of joy, while in the light of a quarter of the moon they go back to the cave for the last rest in that den of misfortune. And the vision ends thus.

64. The Paralytic Cured in Peter's House.

[…] The same day, 9th November, immediately after.

I see the shore of the lake of Gennesaret. And I can see the boats beached by the fishermen; on the foreshore, leaning against the boats, are Peter and Andrew, intent on mending the nets, which their assistants bring them still dripping, having rinsed them in the lake to remove entangled rubbish. About ten yards away, John and James, bent over their boat, are busy at tidying it up, and they are helped by an assistant and by a man about fifty or fifty-five years old, who I think is Zebedee, because the assistant calls him « master » and also because he is very like James.

Peter and Andrew, with their backs to the boat, are working silently knotting the

threads of the nets and fixing corks to them. Now and again they exchange a few words about their work, which, as far as I understand, has not been profitable.

Peter is sorry about it, not because of the loss of profit or the unprofitable work, but he says: « I am sorry, because- what shall we do to feed these poor people? We receive only occasional offerings and I am not going to touch the ten pieces of silver and the seven drachmas we collected during the last four days. Only the Master can tell me to whom and how that money is to be given. And He will not be back here until Sabbath! If we had had a good haul!… I would have cooked the small fish for the poor… and if anyone at home grumbled, I would not have cared. Healthy people can find food for themselves. But sick people!… »

« Above all that paralytic!… They have already travelled so much to bring him here… » says Andrew.

« Listen, brother. I think… we can't remain divided like this, and I don't know why the Master does not want us with Him all the time. At least… I would not see these poor people whom I can't help, and if I saw them I would say to them: "He is here." »

« I am here! » Jesus has come near them, walking quietly on the soft sand.

Peter and Andrew start. They exclaim: « Oh! Master! » and they shout: « James! John! The Master! Come here! »

The two brothers rush towards them. They all draw close to Jesus. Some kiss His tunic, some His hands, and John dares to encircle His waist with his arm, and lean his head on Jesus' chest. Jesus kisses his hair. « What were you talking about? »

« Master… we were saying that we would have liked to have You. »

« Why, My friends? »

« To see You and love You seeing You, and also because of some poor and sick people. They have been waiting for You for over two days… I did what I could. I put them over there, see that hut in that waste land? Over there the handicraftsmen repair the boats. I sheltered there a paralytic, who has a very high temperature, and a little boy who is dying in his mother's arms. I could not send them away to look for You. »

« You did the right thing. But how have you been able to help them and who brought them here? You said they are poor! »

« Yes, Master, they are. Rich people have horses and carts. Poor people have only their legs. They cannot come looking for You as fast as they would like. I did what I could. Look: here are the offerings I have received. I have not touched anything. You will do that. »

« Peter, you could have done that, too. Certainly… My dear Peter, I am sorry that you should be reproached and have extra work because of Me. »

« No, Lord. You must not be sorry about that. It is no trouble for me. I am only sorry I have not been able to be more charitable. But, believe me, I have done, we have all done what we could. »

« I know. I know you have worked and in vain. But if there is no food, your charity remains: alive, active and holy in the eyes of God. »

Some children have rushed round them shouting: « The Master! The Master is here! Here is Jesus, here is Jesus! » and they draw close to Him, Who caresses them while speaking to His disciples.

« Simon, I am going into your house. You will all go and tell the people that I am back and then bring Me the sick ones. »

The disciples go away quickly in different directions. But the whole of Capernaum knows that Jesus has come, thanks to the children who are like bees swarming from the beehive to the various flowers; in our case to the houses, the streets and the squares. They come and go rejoicing, informing their mothers, passers-by, old people sitting in the sun, and they run back to be caressed by Him Who loves them. One of them, a daring boy says: « Speak to us and for us, today, Jesus. You know we love You and we are better than men. »

Jesus smiles at the young psychologist and promises: « I will speak just for you. » And followed by the children, He goes into the house and enters pronouncing His usual greeting of peace: « Peace to this house. » People crowd into the big room at the back of the house, which is used as a store for nets, ropes, baskets, oars, sails, and provisions. Peter must have put it at Jesus' disposal, because everything has been piled up in one comer to make room. The lake cannot be seen from here. Only its gently lapping waves can be heard. Instead one can see the low greenish wall of the kitchen garden, with the old vine and the leafy fig-tree. There are people even on the road, as they pass from the room into the kitchen garden and hence onto the road.

Jesus begins to speak. In the front row, there are five… high-ranking people, who have elbowed their way through the crowd taking advantage of the fear they strike into poor people. Their sumptuous garments and their pride denounce them as Pharisees and doctors. But Jesus wants His little friends around Him, a crown of innocent little faces, of bright eyes, of angelical smiles, all looking up at Him. Jesus speaks and while speaking, now and again He caresses the curly head of a child who is sitting at His feet, resting his head on his little arm bent on Jesus' lap. Jesus is speaking, sitting on a huge pile of baskets and ropes.

« “My Beloved went down to his garden, to the beds of spices, to pasture his flocks in the gardens, and gather lilies… He pastures his flock among the lilies”, says Solomon, the son of David, from whom I descend, I, the Messiah of Israel.

My garden! Which garden is more beautiful and worthy of God than Heaven, where the flowers are the angels created by the Father? And yet, it is not so. The Only Begotten Son of the Father, the Son of man wanted another garden, because it is for the sake of man that I took flesh, without which I would not be able to redeem the faults of the flesh of man. A garden which might have been but little inferior to the heavenly one, if from the earthly Paradise, the children of Adam, the children of God, had spread about, like sweet bees from a beehive, to populate the earth with holiness destined entirely for Heaven. But the enemy sowed brambles and thorns in Adam's heart, and brambles and thorns have overflown from his heart on to the earth. It is no longer a garden, but a wild cruel forest in which fever stagnates and snakes nestle.

And yet the Beloved of the Father still has a garden in this world which is domineered by Mammon. The garden in which He feeds on His celestial food: love and purity; the bed where He picks the flowers dear to Him, flowers not stained with sensuality, greed, pride. These ones. (Jesus caresses as many of the children as He can, patting with His hand the little attentive heads, one big caress that touches them lightly and makes them smile happily). Here are My lilies.

Solomon in all his wealth, did not have a robe more beautiful than the lily that scents the valley, neither did he possess a diadem of a more splendid gracefulness than the one in the pearl chalice of a lily. And yet, for My heart, there is no lily worth one of these. There is no flower-bed, no garden of wealthy people, all cultivated with lilies, that I consider worth only one of these pure, innocent, sincere, simple, little children.

Men and women of Israel! You, great and humble people according to your wealth and position, listen! You are here because you want to know Me and love Me. You must therefore know the first condition to become Mine. I will not speak difficult words. Neither will I give you more difficult examples. I say to you: “Take example from these children.”

Which of you has no children, nephews, or little brothers in their childhood, at home? Are they not a restful comfort, a bond for parents, relatives, friends? Their souls are as pure as a clear dawn, their faces scatter clouds and inspire hope, their caresses dry your tears and give you new strength! Why is there so much power in them, although they are weak, defenseless and still unlearned? Because they have God in themselves, they have strength and wisdom in God. The true wisdom: they know how to love and believe. They know how to believe and want. They know how to live in such love and such faith. Be like them: simple, pure, loving, sincere, faithful.

There is no wise man in Israel greater than the smallest of these children, whose souls belong to God and His Kingdom belongs to them. Blessed by the Father, loved by the Son of the Father, flowers of My garden, may My peace be with you and with whoever will imitate you for My sake. » Jesus has finished.

« Master! » shouts Peter amidst the crowd, « the sick people are here. Two of them can wait until You come out, but this one is crushed amongst the crowd and… he cannot stay here any longer. It is impossible for us to come in. Shall I send him back? »

« No, lower him down through the roof. »

« You are right. We will do that at once. »

I can hear them shuffling on the low roof of the big room, the terrace of which is not built of cement, as the store-room is not really part of the house. The roof is formed with branches covered by chips of stone like slate. I do not know what stone it is. They make an opening through which, by means of ropes, they lower down the little stretcher on which the patient is lying. It is lowered in front of Jesus.

The crowds throng closer to see.

« Both you and who brought you have great faith. »

« Oh! Lord! How could we have no faith in You? »

« Well, I say to you: son (he is a very young man) your sins are forgiven. »

The man looks at him, crying… perhaps he is somewhat disappointed because he was hoping to be cured in his body. The Pharisees and doctors whisper something to one another turning up their noses, foreheads and mouths in disdain.

« Why are you muttering, more in your hearts than with Your lips? According to you, it is easier to say to the paralytic: “Your sins are forgiven” or “Get up, take your little bed and walk away”? You think that only God can forgive sins. But you cannot answer which of these things is greater, because this man, whose whole body is lost to him, has spent a lot of money without being cured. And he can only be cured by God. Now, that you may learn that I can do everything, that you may learn that the Son of man has authority both over bodies and souls, on the earth and in Heaven, I say to him: “Get up. Pick up your bed and walk. Go home and be holy.” »

The man jerks, he shouts, stands up, he throws himself at Jesus' feet, kisses and caresses them, he cries and laughs, and his relatives and the crowd do likewise. The crowd divides into two to let him pass, as if he were triumphant, and they follow him rejoicing. The five resentful men go away, conceited and as stiff as sticks.

And so the mother can go in with her child: a little emaciated babe, still unweaned. She holds him out in her hands saying simply: « Jesus, You love them. You said so. For Your love and for Your Mother! … » and she weeps.

Jesus takes the suckling, who is dying, He presses him against His heart, for a moment He holds the little wan face with its little violet lips and its eyelashes already closed, against His mouth. Only one moment thus: when He removes him from His blond beard, the little face is rosy, the tiny mouth smiles vaguely as infants do, his little eyes look around bright and inquisitive, his little hands, which before were lifeless, ruffle Jesus' hair and beard. And Jesus smiles.

« Oh! My son! » shouts the happy mother.

« Take him, woman. Be happy and good. »

And the woman takes her reborn son and presses him to her heart. And the little one claims his food at once, he searches, finds, opens and sucks, hungry and happy.

Jesus blesses and passes. He goes to the door where is the man with the high temperature.

« Master! Be good! »

« And you, too. Make use of your health in justice. » He caresses him and goes out.

He goes back to the beach, followed, preceded and blessed by many who implore Him: « We did not hear You. We could not get in. Speak also to us. »

Jesus nods assent and as the crowd press Him to the point of suffocating Him, He gets into Peter's boat. But it is not sufficient. The siege continues. « Set the boat afloat and move away a little. »

The vision ends here.

65. The Miraculous Draught of Fishes.

10th November 1944.

The vision begins once again when Jesus starts speaking.

« When all the trees bloom in spring, the happy farmer says: “I will have a good crop” and that hope causes his heart to rejoice. But from springtime to autumn,

from the month of flowers to the month of fruit, how many days, winds, rains, sunshine and storms must pass, and sometimes wars or the cruelty of the mighty ones and diseases of plants, and at times diseases of the men of the fields, so that the plants, no longer hoed up, no longer watered, pruned, supported or cleaned, although they promised copious fruit, wilt and die or bear no fruit!

You follow Me. You love Me. Like plants in springtime you adorn yourselves with purposes and love. Israel, indeed, at the dawn of My mission is like our sweet countryside in the bright month of Nisan. But listen. Like the excessive heat in dry weather, Satan, who is envious of Me, will come to scorch you with his wrath. The world will come with its icy winds to freeze your blooms. And passions will come like storms. And tedium will come like a persistent rain. All My enemies and yours will come to sterilise what should be the fruit of your inclination to bloom in God.

I am warning you, because I know. Will everything then be lost, when I, like a sick farmer, even more than sick: dead, will no longer be able to speak to you and work miracles for you? No. I will sow and cultivate as long as I have time. Then everything will grow and ripen for you, if you keep a good watch.

Look at the fig-tree near the house of Simon of Jonas. Who planted it did not find the right and most favourable spot. Planted as it was near the damp northern wall, it would have withered, if by itself it had not found protection to survive. And it sought sunshine and light. There it is: all bent, but strong and proud, drawing in the rays of the sun from early dawn and converting them into nutrition for its hundreds and hundreds of sweet fruits. It defended itself by itself. It said: “The Creator wanted me, that I may give joy and food to man. And I want to join my will to His.” A fig-tree! A speechless tree! A soulless tree! And will you, children of God, the children of man, will you be inferior to a wooden plant?

Keep a good watch to bear fruits of eternal life. I will cultivate You, and at the end I will give you such a potent juice, that you will never find a more powerful one. Do not allow Satan to laugh at the destruction of My work, of My sacrifice and of your souls. Seek light. Seek sunshine. Seek strength. Seek life. I am the Life, Strength, Sunshine and Light of those who love Me. I have come to take you whence I came. I am speaking to you here, to call You all and point out to you the ten commandments that give eternal life. And with loving advice I say to you: “Love God and your neighbour.” It is the first condition to fulfill everything else well. It is the most holy of the holy commandments. Love. Those who love God, in God and for the Lord God, will have peace both on the earth and in Heaven, for their abode and their crown. »

People go away with difficulty after Jesus' blessing. There are neither sick nor poor people.

Jesus says to Simon: « Call the other two. Let us go on to the lake and cast the net. »

« Master, my arms ache with fatigue: all night I cast and hauled the net, and all in vain. The fish are down at the bottom. I wonder where. »

« Do as I tell you, Peter. Always listen to those who love you. »

« I will do as You say, out of respect for Your word. » And he shouts to the assistants and also to James and John: « Let us go out fishing. The Master wants to go. » And while they are moving away, he says to Jesus: « However, Master, I assure You that it is not the right time. Goodness knows where the fish will be resting just now!… »

Jesus, sitting at the prow, smiles and is silent.

They form a semicircle on the lake and then cast the net. After a few minutes' waiting, the boat is shaken in a strange way, because the lake is as smooth as a glass pane under the midday sun.

« But that is fish, Master! » says Peter, with his eyes wide open.

Jesus smiles and is silent.

« Heave ho! Heave ho! » Peter' orders his assistants. But the boat lists to one side, where the net is: « Hey there! James! John! Quick! Come Quick! With the oars! Quick! »

They rush and the joint efforts of the two crews succeed in hauling in the net without damaging the catch. The two boats draw closer. They are now united. One, two, five, ten baskets. They are all full of wonderful fish, and there are still so many wriggling in the net: live silver and bronze, struggling to escape death. There is only one thing to be done: to empty the net into the bottom of the boats. They do that and the bottoms become a turmoil of agonizing lives. And the crew are up to their ankles in such abundance that the boats sink below the water-line

because of the excessive weight.

« To the shore! Steer! Quick! The sails! Watch the depth line! Have the poles ready to prevent a clash. We have too much weight! »

As long as the manoeuvre lasts, Peter thinks of nothing else. But when he gets ashore, he begins to realise. He understands. He is frightened. « Master! My Lord! Go away from me! I am a sinner! I am not worthy of being near You! » He is on his knees on the damp shore.

Jesus looks at him and smiles: « Get up! Follow Me! I will not leave you any more! From now on, you will be a fisher of men, and your companions with you. Be afraid of nothing. I am calling you. Come! »

« At once, Lord. You look after the boats. Take everything to Zebedee and to my brother-in-law. Let us go. We are all for You, Jesus! Blessed be the Eternal Father for this choice. »

And the vision ends.

66. The Iscariot Finds Jesus at Gethsemane and is Accepted as a Disciple.

28th December 1944.

In the afternoon I see Jesus… in the olive-grove… He is sitting on one of the little ground terraces, in His familiar posture, His elbows resting on His knees, His forearms forward and His hands joined. It is getting dark and the light becomes fainter and fainter in the thick olive-grove. Jesus is alone. He has taken off His mantle as if He were warm, and His white tunic stands out against the green of the surroundings which are made even darker by the twilight.

A man comes down through the olive-trees. He seems to be looking for something or someone. He is tall, and is wearing gay colored garments: a yellow pink hue that makes his big mantle more showy, adorned as it is with swinging fringes. I cannot see his face very well because of the dim light and the distance, and also because the edge of the mantle is lowered over part of his face. When he sees Jesus, he makes a gesture as if to say: « There He is! » and he hastens his step. When he is a few meters away, he greets Him: « Hail, Master! »

Jesus turns round suddenly and looks up, because the man is standing on the next terrace, which is higher up. Jesus looks at him, He is serious, and I would say also sad. The man says once again: « I greet You, Master. I am Judas of Kerioth. Do You not recognize me? Do You not remember? »

« I remember and recognize you. You spoke to Me here with Thomas, last Passover. »

« And You said to me: “Think about it and make up your mind before I come back.” I have made up my mind. I will come. »

« Why are you coming, Judas? » Jesus is really sad.

« Because… The last time I told You why. Because I dream of the Kingdom of Israel and I see You as a king. »

« Is that why you are coming? »

« Yes, it is. I will put myself and everything I possess: capability, acquaintances, friends, fatigue at Your service and at the service of Your mission to rebuild Israel. »

The two are now close, in front of each other, standing, and they stare at each other. Jesus is grave and melancholy. Judas exalted by his dream, is smiling, handsome and young, sprightly and ambitious.

« I did not look for you, Judas. »

« I know. But I looked for You. For days and days I have been putting people at the gates to warn me of Your arrival. I thought You would be coming with some followers and that it would therefore be easy to notice You. Instead… I understood that You had been here, because a group of pilgrims was blessing You as You had cured a sick man. But no one could tell me where You were. Then I remembered this place. And I have come. If I had not found You here, I would have resigned myself to not finding You any more… »

« Do you think it is a good thing for you, that you found Me? »

« Yes, because I was looking for You. I was longing for You, I want You. »

« Why? Why did you look for Me? »

« But I have told You, Master! Did You not understand? »

« I did understand you. Yes, I did. But I want you also to understand Me before you follow Me. Come. We will talk while walking. » And they start walking, one beside the other, up and down the paths that cross one another in the olive-grove. « You want to follow Me for a human reason, Judas. But I must dissuade you. I have not come for that. »

« But are You not the designated King of the Jews? The one of whom the Prophets spoke? Others have come. But they lacked too many things and they fell like leaves no longer supported by the wind. But You have God with You, in fact You work miracles. Where there is God, the success of the mission is guaranteed. »

« You have spoken the truth. I have God with Me. I am His Word. I was prophesied by the Prophets, promised to the Patriarchs, expected by the people. But why, Israel, have you become so blind and deaf that you are no longer able to read and see, to hear and understand the reality of events? My Kingdom is not of this world, Judas. Allow yourself to be convinced of that. I have come to Israel to bring Light and Glory. But not the light and glory of the earth. I have come to call the just of Israel to the Kingdom. Because it is from Israel that the plant of eternal life is to come, and with Israel it is to be formed, the plant, the sap of which will be the Blood of the Lord, the plant that will spread all over the earth, until the end of time. My first followers will be from Israel. My first confessors will be from Israel. But also My persecutors will be from Israel. Also My executioners will be from Israel. And also My traitor will Be from Israel… »

« No, Master. That will never happen. If everyone should betray You, I will remain with You and defend You. »

« You, Judas? And on what do you base your certainty? »

« On my honor as a man. »

« Which is more fragile than a cobweb, Judas. It is God we have to ask for the strength to be honest and faithful. Man!… Man accomplishes human deeds. To accomplish spiritual deeds – and to follow the Messiah with truthfulness and justice is to accomplish a spiritual deed – it is necessary to kill man and make him be born again. Are you capable of so much? »

« Yes, Master. And in any case… Not everybody in Israel will love You. But Israel will not give the Messiah executioners and traitors. Israel has been waiting for You for centuries! »

« I will be given them. Remember the Prophets… Their words… and their end. I am destined to disappoint many. And you are one of them. Judas, you have here in front of you a mild, peaceful poor man, who wishes to remain poor. I have not come to impose Myself and make war. I am not going to contend with the strong and mighty ones for any kingdom or any power. I contend only with Satan for souls and I have come to break the chains of Satan with the fire of My love. I have come to teach mercy, sacrifice, humility, continence. I say to you and to everybody: “Do not crave for human wealth, but work for eternal coins.” You are deceiving yourself if you think I am to triumph over Rome and the ruling classes. Herods and Caesars can sleep tranquilly, while I speak to the crowds. I have not come to snatch anybody's scepter… and My eternal scepter is already ready, but no one, unless one was love as I am, would like to hold it. Go, Judas, and ponder… »

« Are You rejecting me, Master? »

« I reject nobody, because who rejects does not love. But, tell Me, Judas: how would you describe the gesture of a man, who, knowing he is infected by a contagious disease, says to another man who approaches him unaware of the situation, to drink out of his chalice: “Watch what you are doing”? Would you define it hatred or love? »

« I would say it was love, because he does not want the man, unaware of the danger, to ruin his health. »

« Well, define also My gesture likewise. »

« Can I ruin my health coming with You? No, never. »

« You can ruin more than your health, because, consider this carefully, Judas, little will be debited to him who is a murderer, but believes he is doing justice, and he believes it because he does not know the Truth; but a great deal will be debited to him, who knowing the Truth, not only does not follow it, but becomes its enemy. »

« I will not do that. Take me, Master. You cannot refuse me. If You are the Savior and You see that I am a sinner, a sheep astray, a blind man off the right

path, why do You refuse to save me? Take me. I will follow You, even to death… »

« To death! That is true. Then… »

« Then, Master? »

« The future is in God's bosom. Go. We will meet tomorrow at the Fish Gate. »

« Thank You, Master. The Lord be with You. »

« And may His mercy save you. »

And it all finishes.

67. Jesus Works the Miracle of the Broken Blades at the Fish Gate.

31st December 1944.

I see Jesus walking along a shady road all alone. It looks like a fresh little valley, rich in waters. I call it a little valley because it is embanked between two risings of the ground and a rivulet flows in its centre. The place is deserted in the early morning hour. The sun has just risen, a beautiful, clear summer day, and with the exception of the warbling of the birds in the trees and the plaintive cooing of wild doves nesting in the crevices of the barren hill, no other sound is heard. The trees are mostly olive-trees, particularly on the hill on the left-hand side, whereas the other hill is more barren with low lentisk, thorny acacia and agave bushes, etc. Even the rivulet, with very little water lying in the centre of the riverbed, does not seem to make any noise, and flows gently reflecting in its depth the green of the surrounding hills, and thus looks dark emerald.

Jesus crosses a primeval little bridge: the trunk of a tree, half planed, thrown across the torrent, without parapet or any protection, and goes on His way on the other bank. I can now see walls and gates and also some merchants with vegetables and foodstuffs crowding near the gates, still closed, waiting to go into town. Donkeys are busy braying and brawling; also their owners scuffle in robust style. Insults and blows with cudgels are aimed at and given not only to the donkeys' backs, but also to human heads.

Two men are quarrelling in earnest, because the donkey of one of them has helped itself from the beautiful basket of lettuce of the other donkey and has eaten quite a lot of it! Perhaps it is only a pretext to give vent to old ill-feelings. In fact from under their short tunics, which reach down to their calves, they pull out two short large knives, as broad as a hand: they look like short pointed daggers, and they glint in the sun. Screams of women and shouts of men are heard everywhere. But no one tries to separate the men who are ready for a rustic duel.

Jesus, Who was walking, thoughtful, raises His head, He sees the fight and rushes between the two:

« Stop, in the name of God! » He orders.

« No, I want to fix this cursed dog once and for all! »

« And so do I! You are fond of fringes? I'll make a fringe for you with yours bowels! »

The two move fast round Jesus, pushing Him, insulting Him to get rid of Him, endeavoring to strike each other, but without success, because Jesus, moving His mantle carefully, wards off the blows and interferes with their aiming. He gets His mantle torn.

People shout: « Come away, Nazarene. You'll be the loser ». But He does not move and endeavors to calm them, reminding them of God. In vain! The two rivals are mad with rage!

The power of miracle can be seen radiating from Jesus. For the last time He shouts: « I order you to stop it! »

« No! Get out of the way. Go your way, dog of a Nazarene! »

Jesus then stretches out His hands, with His powerful bright look. He does not say one word. But the blades fall in pieces to the ground, as if they were made of glass, and had clashed against a rock.

The two men look at the short, useless handles, left in their hands. Astonishment deadens wrath. Also the astonished crowd shout.

« And now? » asks Jesus, severely. « Where is your strength? »

Also the soldiers on duty at the gate, who rushed out at the latest shouts, stare surprised and one bends down to pick up the fragments of the blades and test them on his nails, not believing they were made of steel.

« And now? » repeats Jesus. « Where is your strength? On what did you base your right? On those bits of metal now lying in the dust? On those splinters of metal which had no other strength but to induce you to a sin of wrath against a brother, thus depriving you of all the blessings of God and consequently of all strength? Oh! how miserable are those who rely on human means to win, and who do not realize that holiness and not violence will make us winners both on the earth and beyond it! Because God is with the just.

Listen, people of Israel, and you, soldiers of Rome. The Word of God speaks to all the sons of man, and the Son of man will not reject the Gentiles. The second commandment of the Lord is a commandment of love for our neighbors. God is good and wants good will in His children. Who is not kindly disposed towards his neighbor, cannot consider himself a son of God neither can he have God in himself. Man is not an animal without reason, that rushes at and bites a prey. Man has reason and a soul. With his reason he must behave as a man. With his soul he must behave as a saint. Who behaves differently, lowers himself below animals; he stoops down to embrace demons because a soul becomes wicked with the sin of wrath.

Love. I say nothing else. Love your neighbor as the Lord God of Israel prescribes. Do not always be of Cain's blood. And why are you so? For the sake of a few coins, you who might have become murderers. For a few palms of land. For a better position. For a woman. What are such things? Are they eternal? No. They last less than a lifetime, which lasts an instant of eternity. And what do you lose if you follow them? The eternal peace promised to the just, and which the Messiah will bring you together with His Kingdom. Come on to the way of Truth. Follow the Voice of God. Love one another. Be honest. Be moderate. Be humble and fair. Go and meditate. »

« Who are You who speak such words and break swords with Your will power? Only One can do such things: the Messiah. Not even John the Baptist is greater than He is. Are You perhaps the Messiah? » three or four people ask Him.

« Yes, I am. »

« You? Are You the One who cures sick people and preaches God in Galilee? »

« I am. »

« I have an old mother who is dying. Cure her! »

« And I, see? I am losing all my strength because of my pains. My children are still young. Cure me! »

« Go home. Your mother this evening will prepare your supper; and you: be healed. I want it! » The crowd roars with joy. They then ask: « Your Name! Your Name! »

« Jesus of Nazareth. »

« Jesus! Jesus! Hosanna! Hosanna! »

The crowd is jubilant. The donkeys now can do what they like, no one pays attention to them. Mothers rush out from the town, as the news has obviously spread and they lift up their little ones. Jesus blesses and smiles. And He endeavors to make His way through the acclaiming crowd to enter the town and go His way. But the crowd will not hear of it. « Stay with us! In Judaea! In Judaea! We are the sons of Abraham, too! » they shout.

« Master! » Judas runs towards Him. « Master, You arrived before me. But what is happening »

« The Rabbi has worked a miracle! Not in Galilee; here! We want Him here! »

« See, Master? The whole of Israel loves You. It is only fair You should stay here, too. Why do You not want to? »

« It is not that I do not want to, Judas. I came here by Myself, that the roughness of the Galilean disciples might not irritate the subtleness of the Judaeans. I want to gather all the sheep of Israel under the scepter of God. »

« That is why I said to You: “Take me”. I am a Judaean, and I know how do deal with my equals. Will You therefore remain in Jerusalem? »

« For a few days. To wait for a disciple, who is also a Judaean. Then I will go through Judaea… »

« Oh! I will come with You. I will accompany You. You will come to my village. I will take You to my house. Will You come, Master? »

« I will come… Have you any news of the Baptist, since you are a Judaean and you live with the mighty ones? »

« I know that he is still in jail, but they want to set him free, because the crowds are threatening a revolt, if they do not get their prophet. Do You know him? »

« Yes, I do. »

« Do You like, him? What do You think of him? »

« I think no one has been more like Elijah than he is. »

« Do You really consider him the Precursor? »

« Yes, he is. He is the morning star announcing the sun. Blessed are those who through his preaching have prepared themselves for the Sun. »

« John is very severe. »

« Not more with others than he is with himself. »

« That is true. But it is difficult to follow him in his penance. You are more kind, and it is easy to love You. »

« And yet… »

« Yet… what, Master? »

« Yet, as he is hated because of his austerity, I will be hated because of My goodness, because they both preach God, and God is disliked by the wicked. But it is to be thus. As he precedes Me in preaching, so he will precede Me in death. Woe to the killers of Penance- and Goodness. »

« Why, Master, have You always such sad forecasts? The crowds love You. You saw that… »

« Because I am sure. Humble people do love Me. But the crowd is not all humble and of humble people. But I am not sad. It is a Placid vision of the future and compliance with the will of the Father, Who sent Me for that. And I have come for that. Here we are at the Temple. I am going to the Bel Nidrasc (1) to teach the crowds. If you wish, you may stay. »

« I will stay with You. There in only one thing I wish: to serve You and let You triumph. »

They enter the Temple, and it all ends.

(1) The authoress does not explain the meaning of « Bel Nidrasc ». However, in view of the fact that she often confuses m and n in Jewish names, it may well be that the correct spelling should be Midrash (a rabbinical comment on the Scriptures). In which case Bel Midrash would be the part of the Temple where doctors used to teach people. In fact the text says: « … Here we are at the Temple. I am going to the Bel Nidrasc to teach the crowds. »

68. Jesus Preaches in the Temple. Judas Iscariot Is with Him.

1st January 1945.

I see Jesus entering the enclosure of the Temple with Judas beside Him. After going through the first terrace, He stops in a porch on the side of a wide yard, paved with multicolored marble. The place is beautiful and crowded.

Jesus looks round and sees a spot He likes. But before turning His steps to it, He says to Judas: « Call the official of the place for Me. I must make Myself known, so that no one may say I break the custom and lack in respect. »

« Master, You are above the custom, and no one more than You is entitled to speak in the House of God, since You are His Messiah. »

« I know, you know, but they do not know. I have not come to scandalize or to teach people to break, not only the Law, but also the custom. On the contrary, I have come to teach respect, humility and obedience and to remove scandals. I therefore want to ask to be allowed to speak in God's name, making the official of the place acknowledge Me as being worthy. »

« You did not do that the last time. »

« The last time I was inflamed by the zeal for the House of God, desecrated by too many things. The last time I was the Son of the Father, the Heir Who in the name of the Father and for the love of My House, acted in His majesty, which is above officials and priests. Now I am the Master of Israel, and I teach Israel also that. After all, Judas, do you think that a disciple is greater than His Master? »

« No, Jesus. »

« And who are you? And who am I? »

« You are the Master, I the disciple. »

« Well then, if you admit that, why do you want to teach your Master? Go and obey. I obey My Father, you must obey your Master. The first condition of the Son of God: to obey without discussing orders, knowing that the Father can give but holy orders. The first condition of a disciple: to obey his Master, knowing that the Master knows, and can give but just orders. »

« It is true. Forgive me. I will obey. »

« I forgive you. Go. And, Judas, listen to one more thing: remember that. Always bear that in mind in future. »

« To obey? Yes, I will. »

« No: remember that I was respectful and humble to the Temple. To the Temple: that is, to the mighty castes; go. » Judas looks at Him, wistfully and inquisitively… but he dare not ask further questions. And he goes away thoughtfully.

… He comes back with a sumptuously dressed personage. « Here, Master, the official. »

« Peace be with you. I ask to teach Israel, amongst the rabbis of Israel. »

« Are You a rabbi? »

« Yes, I am. »

« Who was Your teacher? »

« The Spirit of God Who speaks to Me in His wisdom and enlightens for Me every word of the Holy Scriptures. »

« Are You greater than Hillel, since You say You know all doctrines, without a teacher? How can one be formed if there is no one forming him? »

« As David was formed, an unknown little shepherd, who became a powerful and wise king by God's will. »

« Your Name? »

« Jesus of Joseph of Jacob, of the House of David, and of Mary of Joachim of the House of David, and of Anne of Aaron, Mary, the Virgin married in the Temple by the High Priest, according to the law of Israel, because She was an orphan. »

« Who can prove that? »

« There must still be some Levites here who will remember the event and who were the same age as Zacharias of the class of Abijah, My relative. Ask them, if you doubt My sincerity. »

« I believe You. But who will prove to me that You are capable of teaching? »

« Listen to Me and you will judge yourself. »

« You are free to do it… But… are You not a Nazarene? »

« I was born at Bethlehem of Judah, at the time of the census decreed by Caesar. Banished by unfair orders, the children of David are now everywhere. But the family is of Judah. »

« You know… the Pharisees… all Judaea… throughout Galilee… »

« I know. But be reassured. I was born at Bethlehem, at Bethlehem Ephrathah, whence My family comes; if now I live in Galilee, it is only to fulfill the given sign… »

The official goes away a few yards, hastening to where they call him.

Judas asks: « Why did You not say that You are the Messiah? »

« My words will say so. »

« Which is the sign to be fulfilled? »

« The union of Israel under the teaching of the word of Christ. I am the

Shepherd of Whom the Prophets speak and I have come to gather all the sheep of every region, I have come to cure the sick ones, and put the wandering ones on a good pasture. There is no Judaea or Galilee, no Decapolis or Idumaea for Me. There is only one thing: the Love that sees with one glance only and joins in one embrace only in order to save… » Jesus is inspired. Rays of light seem to be emanating from Him, so happily He smiles at his dream. Judas, amazed, stares at Him.

Some curious people draw near them, fascinated and struck by their different magnificence. Jesus lowers His head and smiles at the little group with a smile, the sweetness of which no painter will ever be able to portray and no believer, who has never seen it, will ever be able to imagine. And He says: « Come if you are anxious to hear eternal words. »

He turns His steps towards the arch of the porch, and leaning against a column, He begins to speak. He refers to the event of the morning as a starting point.

« This morning, on entering Zion, I saw two children of Abraham who were ready to kill each other for a few coins. I could have cursed them in the name of God, because God says: "You shall not kill" and He also says that who does not maintain the Law is to be cursed. But I felt pity for their ignorance of the spirit of the Law and I only prevented them from committing murder, that they may have the opportunity of repenting, knowing God, serving Him in obedience, loving not only those who love them, but also their enemies.

Yes, Israel. A new day is rising for you and the commandment of love is becoming brighter. Does the year begin with the foggy Ethanim, or with the sad Chislev, the days of which are shorter than a dream and its nights longer than a calamity? No, it begins with the flowery, sunny, happy Nisan, when everything smiles and the heart of man, even the most poor and sad one, opens to hope, because summer is coming, with its crops, sunshine and fruit, when it is sweet to sleep on a meadow full of flowers, under a starry sky, and it is easy for man to nourish himself, because every clod of earth bears herbs or fruit to satisfy his hunger.

Here, Israel. Winter, the time of expectation, is over. Here is now the joy of the promise which is being accomplished. The Bread and Wine are about to be ready for your hunger. The Sun is among you. Everything breathes more freely and sweetly under this Sun. Also the precept of our Law: the first and most holy of the holy precepts: "Love your God and love your neighbor".

In the dim light granted to you so far, you were told: "Love those who love you and hate your enemies": you could not have done any better, because the wrath of God still weighed upon you, owing to Adam's sin of estrangement. And your enemy was not only who crossed the borders of your fatherland, but also who did you wrong privately or you thought he had done. Hatred, therefore, was smoldering in every heart, because which man, intentionally or unintentionally, does not give offence to his brother? And which man reaches an old age without being offended?

I say to you: love also those who offend you. Do that, considering that Adam, and every man through him, is a sinner against God, and there is no one who can say: "I have not offended God". And yet, God forgives, not once only He forgives, but dozens of times, He forgives thousands of times, as it is proved by the fact that man still exists on the earth. Forgive therefore, as God forgives. And if you cannot do it out of love for the brother who injured you, do it for the love of God, Who gives you bread and life, Who protects you in your worldly needs, and has arranged all events to procure eternal peace for you in His bosom. This is the new law, the law of God's springtime, of the flowery time of Grace amongst men, of the time that will bear you a matchless Fruit that will open the gates of Heaven for you.

The voice that spoke in the desert is no longer heard. But it is not mute. It still speaks to God on behalf of Israel and still speaks to every Israelite with an honest heart and it says – after teaching you to do penance to prepare the ways to the Lord Who is coming, and to be charitable giving what is surplus to those who lack even what is necessary, and to be honest without extorting and vexing – it says: "The Lamb of God, He Who takes away the sins of the world, Who will baptize with the fire of the Holy Spirit is amongst you. He will clear His threshing-floor and gather His wheat."

Endeavor to recognize Him Whom the Precursor indicates to you. His suffering is imploring God to give you light. See. May your spiritual eyes be opened. You will recognize the Light that is coming. I pick up the voice of the Prophet announcing the Messiah, and with the power I receive from the Father, I amplify it and I add My authority to it and I call you to the truth of the Law. Prepare your hearts for the grace of the oncoming Redemption. The Redeemer is amongst you. Blessed are those who will be worthy of being redeemed, because they are men of good will. Peace be with you. »

Someone asks: « Are You a disciple of the Baptist, since You speak of him with such veneration? »

« I was baptized by him, on the banks of the Jordan, before he was imprisoned. I venerate him because he is holy in the eyes of God. I solemnly tell you that among the children of Abraham there is no one greater in grace than he is. From his birth to his death, the eyes of God will rest upon that blessed man without any feeling of disdain. »

« Did he give You any assurance about the Messiah? »

« His word, which does not lie, pointed out the living Messiah to those present.»

« Where? When? »

« When it was time to do so. »

But Judas feels bound to say to everybody: « The Messiah is He Who is speaking to you. I declare it, because I know Him, and I am His first disciple. »

« Him!… Oh!… » The people move away frightened. But Jesus is so sweet that they gather round Him again. « Ask Him to work some miracles. He is powerful. He can cure. He can read your hearts. He can answer all your questions. »

« Tell Him, on my behalf, that I am not well. My right eye is blind. My left one is already failing… »

« Master. »

« Judas. » Jesus, Who is caressing a little girl, turns round.

« Master, this man is almost blind and he wants to see. I told him you can… »

« I can cure who has faith. Have you faith, man? »

« I believe in the God of Israel. I come here to enter the Bethzatha Pool. But there is always someone before me. »

« Can you believe in Me? »

« If I believe in the angel of the pool, should I not believe in You, Who Your disciple says are the Messiah? »

Jesus smiles. He wets His finger with saliva and lightly touches the diseased eye. « What can you see? »

« I see things without the fog I used to see. Are You not curing the other one? »

Jesus smiles once again. He repeats the operation on the blind eye. « What can you see? » He asks, removing His fingertip from the closed eyelid.

« Ah! Lord of Israel! I can see as well as when I was a little boy, running on the meadows! May You be blessed forever and ever! » The man cries, kneeling at Jesus' feet.

« Go. Be good, now, out of gratitude to God. »

A Levite who arrived towards the end of the miracle, asks: « On what authority do You do such things? »

« Are you asking Me? I will tell you, if you answer a question. According to you, who is greater, a prophet who prophesies the Messiah or the Messiah Himself? »

« What a question! The Messiah is greater: He is the Redeemer promised by the Most High! »

« Well, then, why did the Prophets work miracles? On what authority? »

« On the authority given to them by God to prove to the crowds that God was with them. »

« Well, I work miracles on the same authority: God is with Me, I am with Him. And I thus prove to the people that what I say is true and that the Messiah, with a greater right and a greater power, can do what the Prophets were able to do. »

The Levite goes away pensive and the vision ends.

69. Jesus Teaches Judas Iscariot.

3rd January 1945.

I see Jesus and Judas once again: they are coming out of the Temple, after praying in the area closest to the Holy of Holies, allowed to Jewish males.

Judas would like to remain with Jesus. But the Master objects to his wish. « Judas, I want to be alone at night time. At night, My spirit gets its nourishment from the Father. Prayer, meditation and solitude are more necessary for Me than material food. Who wishes to live for the spirit, and lead others to live the same life, must disregard the flesh, nay, I would say: kill it, to devote all his attention to the spirit. Everybody must do that, you know Judas. You, too, if you really want to belong to God, that is to the supernatural. »

« But we are still on the earth, Master. How can we neglect the flesh and take care only of the spirit? Is what You say not the antithesis of God's command-ment: "You shall not kill"? Does the commandment not forbid also suicide? If life is a gift from God, must we love it, or not? »

« I will not reply to you as I would reply to a simple-minded man, whom it is sufficient to get to raise his soul or his mind to supernatural spheres, so that we can take him with us flying in spiritual kingdoms. You are not a simple-minded person. You were formed in an environment that refined you… and it also marred you with its quibbles and doctrines. Do you remember Solomon, Judas? He was wise, the wisest man of those times. Do you remember what he said, after acquiring all knowledge? "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. To fear God and observe His commandments, that is all that matters to man." Now I tell you that it is necessary to know how to get nourishment, but no poison, from food. And if we know that a food is bad for us, because it causes detrimental reactions in us, as it is stronger than our salutary juices which could counteract its effects, we must take no more of that food, even if it is pleasant to our taste. Plain bread and water from the fountain are better than the sophisticated dishes of the king's table, containing drugs which upset and poison.. »

« What must I leave, Master? »

« Everything you know that upsets you. Because God is peace and if you want to follow the path of God, you must clear your mind, your heart and your flesh of everything that is not peace producing and causes perturbation. I know it is difficult to amend one's way of living. But I am here to help you. I am here to help man to become the son of God once again, to re-create himself by means of a new creation, of an autogenesis wanted by man himself. But let Me reply to your question, so that you may not say that you were left in error through a fault of Mine. It is true that to kill oneself is the same as killing other people. Both our own and other people's lives are the gift of God and only God Who gives life, has the authority to take it. Who kills himself, confesses his own pride, and pride is hated by God. »

« He confesses his pride? I would say his despair. »

« And what is despair but pride? Just think, Judas. Why does one despair? Either because misfortunes persistently perturb him and he wants to overcome them by himself, but is unable to do so. Or because he is guilty and he thinks that he cannot be forgiven by God. In both cases, is not pride the basic reason? The man who wants to do all by himself, is no longer humble enough to stretch out his hand to the Father and say to Him: "I am not able, but You are. Help me, because I hope and wait for everything from You." The other man who says: "God cannot forgive me" says so, because measuring God by his own standards, he knows that another person could not forgive him, if that person had been offended, as he offended God. So here again it is pride. A humble man understands and forgives, even if he suffers for the offence received. A proud man does not forgive. He is proud also because he is not capable of lowering his head and saying: "Father, I have sinned, forgive Your poor guilty son." But do you not know, Judas, that the Father will forgive everything, if one asks to be forgiven with a sincere, contrite, humble, heart willing to rise again to new life? »

« But certain crimes are not to be forgiven. They cannot be forgiven. »

« That is what you say. And it will be true only because man wants it to be true. But, oh! I solemnly tell you that even after the crime of crimes, if the guilty man should rush to the Father's feet – He is called Father, Judas, just for that, and He is a Father of infinite perfection – and crying, implored Him to be forgiven, offering to expiate, without despairing, the Father would make it possible for him to expiate and thus deserve forgiveness and save his soul. »

« Well, then, You say that the men quoted by the Scriptures who killed themselves, did wrong. »

« It is not lawful to do violence to anybody, not even to oneself. They did

wrong. In their limited knowledge of good, perhaps in certain cases, they had mercy from God. But after the Word has clarified the truth and has given strength to spirits with His Spirit, then who dies in despair will no longer be forgiven. Neither in the instant of the personal judgement, nor after centuries of Gehenna, on Doomsday, never! Is that hardness on God's side? No: it is justice. God will say: "You, a creature gifted with reason and supernatural knowledge, created free by Me, you decided to follow the path you chose and you said: 'God will not forgive me. I am separated from Him forever. I think I must apply the law by myself to my own crime. I am parting from life to evade remorse' without considering that you would no longer have felt remorse if you had come on My faithful bosom. And let it be done to you, as you judged. I will not do violence to the freedom I gave you." That is what the Eternal Father will say to the suicide. Meditate on it, Judas. Life is a gift, a gift to be loved. But what gift is it? A holy gift. So love it holily. Life lasts as long as the flesh holds out. Then the great Life, the eternal Life begins. A Life of blissful happiness for the just, of malediction for the unjust. Is life a purpose or a means? It is a means. It serves for a purpose which is eternity. Then let us give life what is required to make it last and serve the spirit in its conquest. Continence of the flesh in all its lusts, in all of them. Continence of the mind in all its desires, in all of them. Continence of the heart in all human passions. Infinite instead is to be the ardour for heavenly passions: love of God and the neighbour, obedience to the divine word, heroism in good and virtue. I have given you the answer, Judas. Are you convinced? Is the explanation sufficient? Be always sincere, and ask When you do not yet know enough: I am here to be your Master. »

« I have understood and it is sufficient. But… it is very difficult to do what I have understood. You can… because You are holy. But… I am a man, young and full of life… »

« I have come for men, Judas. Not for the angels. They do not need a teacher. They see God. They live in His Paradise. They are not unaware of the passions of men, because the Intelligence which is their Life makes them acquainted with everything, also those who are not guardians of men. But, spiritual as they are, they can have but one sin, as one of them had, and he drew to his side those who were weaker in charity: pride, the arrow that disfigured Lucifer, the most beautiful of the archangels, and turned him into the horripilant monster of the Abyss. I have not come for the angels, who, after Lucifer's fall, are horrified even at the shadow of a proud thought. But I have come for men. To make angels of men. Man was the perfection of creation. He had the spirit of the angel and the full beauty of the animal, complete in all its animal and moral parts. There was no creature equal to him. He was the king of the earth, as God is the King of Heaven, and one day, when he would have fallen asleep for the last time on the earth, he would have become king with the Father in Heaven. Satan tore the wings off the angel-man and he replaced them with the claws of a beast and with intense yearning for filth, and lured him into becoming a being which is better described as a man-demon, rather than simply a man. I want to eradicate the disfigurement worked by Satan, as well as the corrupted craving of the contaminated flesh. I want to give back to man his wings, and make him once again king, coheir of the Father and of the Celestial Kingdom. I know that man, if he is willing, can do what I say, to become once again king and angel. I would not tell you things you could not do. I am not one of the rhetors who preach impossible doctrines. I have real flesh, so that through the experience of the flesh, I might learn which are the temptations of man. »

« And what about sins? »

« Everyone can be tempted. Sinners are only those who want to be such. »

« Have You ever sinned, Jesus? »

« No, I never wanted to sin. Not because I am the Son of the Father. But because I wanted and I want to prove to man that the Son of man did not sin because He did not want to sin, and that man can, if he wants, not sin. »

« Have You ever been tempted? »

« I am thirty years old, Judas. And I did not live in a cave upon a mountain. I lived amongst men. And if I had been in the loneliest place in the world, do you think temptations would not have come to Me? We have everything in us: good and evil[1]. We carry everything with us. And the breath of God blows on the good and vivifies it like a thurible of sweet-smelling holy incense. And Satan blows on evil, thus kindling a furious blazing fire. But diligent good will and constant prayer are like damp sand on the hellish fire: they suffocate it and put it out. »

« But if You have never sinned, how can You judge sinners? »

« I am a man and the Son of God. What I might ignore as a man and judge wrongly, I know and judge as the Son of God. After all!… Judas, answer this question of Mine. Will one who is hungry, suffer more by saying: "I will now sit down at the table" or by saying: "There is no food for me"? »

« He suffers more in the latter case, because the simple thought that he is without food, will bring back to him the pleasant smell of food and his bowels will be tortured by biting desire. »

« Right: temptation is as biting as that desire, Judas. Satan makes it more intense, more real, more alluring than any accomplished act. Further, the act satisfies, and at times nauseates; whereas temptations do not subside, but like pruned trees, they grow stronger and stronger. »

« And have You never yielded? »

« No, never. »

« How did You manage? »

« I said: "Father, lead Me not into temptation." »

« What? You, the Messiah, You work miracles and You ask Your Father for help? »

« Not only for help: I ask Him not to lead Me into temptation. Do you think that I, simply because am I, can do without the Father? Oh! no! I solemnly tell you that the Father grants everything to His Son, and that the Son receives everything from the Father. And I tell you that everything the Father will be asked for in My name will be granted. But here we are at Gethsemane, where I live. The first trees can be seen beyond the walls. You live beyond Tophet. It is getting dark already. You had better not come up as far as that. We will meet again tomorrow at the same place. Goodbye. Peace be with you. »

« Peace be with You, too, Master… But I would like to tell You another thing. I will come with You as far as the Kidron, then I will come back. Why do You live in such a humble place? You know, people notice so many things. Do You not know anyone in town with a beautiful house? If You wish, I can take You to some friends. They will give You hospitality because of my friendly attitude towards them; and the house would be more worthy of You. »

« Do you think so? I do not. All classes of people are worthy or unworthy. And without lacking in charity, but to avoid offending justice, I tell you that the unworthy, the mischievously unworthy, are often to be found amongst the great ones. It is not necessary and it is of no use being influential, to be good or to hide sins from the eyes of God. Everything will be turned over under My Sign. And not who is mighty will be great, but who is humble and holy. »

« But to be respected, to impose oneself… »

« Is Herod respected? Is Caesar respected? No, they are endured and cursed both by lips and by hearts. And believe Me, Judas, on good people, or simply on people of good will, it will be easier for Me to impose Myself with modesty rather than with majesty. »

« But… will You always despise the mighty ones? You will make enemies of them! I was thinking of speaking of You to many people I know and who are influential… »

« I will not despise anybody. I will meet the poor as well as the rich, slaves as well as kings, pure people as well as sinners. But if I have to be grateful to those who supply Me with bread and a roof that I may carry on My work, whatever the roof and the bread may be, I will always give My preference to the humble. The great ones already have so many joys. The poor have but their honest conscience, a faithful love, children and the joy of being listened to by those who are above them. I will always be bent over the poor, the afflicted, and sinners. I thank you for your good intention. But leave Me to this place of peace and prayer. Go, and may God inspire you with what is good. »

Jesus leaves the disciple and goes into the olive-grove, and the vision ends.

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(1) Chapters 5 and 6 of this book should be read once again. It will then be clear that the evil temptation did not come to Jesus from inside (see Hebrews 4, 15) but from outside (see Matthew 4, 1-11; Mark 1, 12-13; Luke 4, 1-13). In such light, therefore, is to be understood the expression: « I am thirty years old… » What follows: « We have everything in us: good and evil… put it out » cannot be referred also to Jesus, but only to Judas and all the members of mankind stained by the original sin. Jesus' short speech aims at convincing Judas that man, if he wants, and asks God for help, can overcome all trials and temptations.

70. Jesus Meets John of Zebedee at Gethsemane.

4th January 1945.

I see Jesus going towards the little low white house in the middle of the olive-grove. A young man greets Him. He seems to come from there, because he is holding in his hands pruning and hoeing tools.

« God be with You, Rabbi: » Your disciple John came, and he just left to come and meet You.

« How long ago? »

« Not long, he has just passed that path. We thought You were coming from Bethany… »

Jesus starts walking very fast, He goes round the cliff, He sees John almost running down towards the town and calls him.

The disciple turns round and with his face brightened with joy, he shouts: « Oh! My Master! » and he starts running back.

Jesus receives him with His arms wide open and they embrace each other affectionately.

« I was coming to look for You… We thought You had been to Bethany, as You told us. »

« Yes, I wanted to go. I must start evangelising also the surroundings of Jerusalem. But I remained in town… to teach a new disciple. »

« Everything You do is well done, Master. And is always successful. See? Even now we met very soon. »

They start walking, and Jesus places an arm on the shoulders of John, who, being shorter than Jesus, looks up at Him, obviously very happy for so much intimacy. They thus start going back to the little house. « Have you been here long? »

« No, Master. I left Doco at dawn, along with Simon, to whom I gave Your message. Then we stopped together in the country of Bethany, sharing the food we had, and speaking of You to the peasants we found in the fields. When it was cooler, we parted. Simon went to see a friend of his, to whom he wants to speak about You. He owns almost the whole of Bethany. He has known him for a long time, when their fathers were alive. But Simon is coming here tomorrow. He asked me to tell You that he is happy to serve You. Simon is very clever. I would like to be like him. But I am an ignorant boy. »

« No, John, you are doing very well, too. »

« Are You really satisfied with Your poor John? »

« Yes, I am thoroughly satisfied, My dear John. Thoroughly satisfied. »

« Oh! My Master! » John bends down with eagerness to take Jesus, hand, which he kisses and passes lovingly over his face, as if caressing it.

They have arrived at the little house. They enter the low smoky kitchen. The landlord greets them:

« Peace be with You. »

Jesus replies: « Peace to this house, to you and to those who live here with you. I have a disciple with Me. »

« There will be bread and oil for him, too. »

« I brought some dried fish that James and Peter gave me. And passing by Nazareth, Your Mother gave me some bread and honey for You. I walked all the time without stopping, but it will be dry now. »

« It does not matter, John. It will always have the flavour of My Mother's hands. »

John pulls out his treasures from the knapsack that he had put in a corner. And I see them prepare the dried fish in a strange way. They steep it for a few minutes in hot water, they then put some olive oil on it and they roast it on the fire.

Jesus blesses the food and sits at the table with His disciple. Also the landlord, whose name I hear is Jonah, and his son, sit at the same table. The landlady comes and goes bringing fish, some black olives, boiled vegetables dressed with oil. Jesus offers also some honey. And He offers it to the landlady, spreading it on some bread. « It comes from My beehive » He says. « My Mother looks after the bees. Eat it. It is good. You are so good to Me, Mary, and you deserve much

more than this » He then adds, because the woman does not want to deprive Him of the sweet honey.

The supper ends in a short time, while they hold a brief conversation on common topics. As soon as they finish, and after thanking for the food, Jesus says to John: « Come. Let us go out into the olive-grove for a little while. It is a clear, mild night. It will be pleasant to be out there for a short time. »

The landlord says: « Master, I say "good night" to You. I am tired and also my son is tired. We are going to bed. I will leave the door ajar and the lamp on the table. You know what to do. »

« Go, Jonah. And put out the lamp. There is such a bright moonlight, that we will be able to see without any light. »

« But where will Your disciple sleep? »

« With Me. On My mat there is room also for him. Is that right, John? »

John is enraptured at the idea of sleeping beside Jesus.

They go out into the olive-grove. But before going out, John takes something out of the knapsack in the comer. They walk for a little while and they reach a brow from which the whole of Jerusalem can be seen. « Let us sit down here and talk a little » says Jesus.

But John prefers to sit at Jesus' feet on the short grass, and he rests his arm on Jesus' knees, with his head reclined on his arm, looking now and again at Jesus. He looks like a little boy near the person dearest to him. « It is beautiful also here, Master. Look how large the town seems at night. Larger than by day. »

« It is because the moonlight shades the outlines. See: the borders seem to widen out in a silver brightness. Look at the top of the Temple, up there. Does it not look as if it were suspended in midair. »

« It seems supported by angels on their silver wings. »

Jesus sighs.

« Why are You sighing, Master? »

« Because the angels have abandoned the Temple. Its feature of purity and holiness is now confined to its walls only. Those who should impress it into its soul – because every place has its soul, that is the spirit for which it was built, and the Temple has, or should have, a soul of prayer and holiness – those who should energize such spirit, are instead the first to suffocate it. You cannot give what you do not possess, John. And if there are many priests and Levites living there, not even one tenth of them are capable of giving life to the Holy Place. They give death instead. They transmit the death of their own souls, which are dead to what is holy. They have their formulae. But they do not have the essence of them. They are corpses which are warm only because putrefaction swells them. »

« Have they done You wrong, Master? » John is all upset.

« No. On the contrary they allowed Me to speak when I asked to. »

« Did You ask them? Why? »

« Because I do not want to be the one who starts war. There will be war in any case. Because I will be the cause of a silly human fear for some, and the cause of reproach for others. But this must be written in their book, not in Mine. »

They are quiet for a few moments, then John resumes speaking. « Master, I know Annas and Caiaphas. My family has been on business relations with them, and when I came to Judaea to see John, I used to come to the Temple, and they were good to the son of Zebedee. My father always sends them the best fish. That is the custom, You know? If you want them to be friendly and to continue so, you must do that… »

« I know. » Jesus is serious.

« Well, if You wish, I will speak to the High Priest about You. And… if You want, I know a man who is on business terms with my father. He is a rich fish merchant. He has a lovely big house near the Hippicus Tower, because they are very rich people, but they are also very good. You would be more comfortable and You would not get so tired. To come here, You have to come through the suburb of Ophel, which is so wild and always full of donkeys and quarrelsome boys. »

« No, John. Thank you. But I am all right here. See how much peace there is? I told also the other disciple who made the same suggestion. He said: "To enjoy a higher reputation." »

« I mentioned it that You might not get so tired. »

« I do not get tired. I will walk so much, and I will never tire. Do you know what tires Me? Indifference. Oh! What a burden it is! It is like carrying a weight on your heart. »

« I love You, Jesus. »

« Yes, and you comfort Me. I love you so much, John, and I always will, because you will never betray Me. »

« Betray You! Oh! »

« And yet there will be many who will betray Me… John, listen. I told you that I stayed here to teach a new disciple. He is a young Jew, educated and well known. »

« Well, then. You will have to work much less with him than You have to with us, Master. I am glad that You have someone who is more capable than we are. »

« Do you think I will work less? »

« Yes, if he is less ignorant than we are, he will understand You better, and serve You better, especially if he loves You. »

« What you say is right. But love is not proportionate to education or formation. A virgin loves with all the strength of her first love. That applies also to the virginity of mind. And the beloved penetrates and is more deeply impressed on a virgin heart and a virgin mind, rather than on hearts and minds imbued with other loves. But if God wants… Listen, John. I would ask you to be friendly with him. My heart shudders at the thought of putting you, an unshorn lamb, near the expert in life. But it subsides considering that you may well be a lamb, but you are also an eagle, and if the expert will endeavor to make you touch the ground, which is always muddy, the soil of good human sense, with a stroke of your wings, you will be able to free yourself and desire only the clear blue sky and the sun. That is why I ask you to remain as you are and be friendly to the new disciple, inspiring him with your love, because he will not be loved very much by Simon Peter and the others…»

« Oh! Master! Are You not sufficient? »

« I am the Master. Not everything will be said to Me. You are a companion, a little younger, to whom it will be easier for him to unbosom himself. I am not suggesting you should repeat to Me what he tells you. I detest spies and traitors. But I ask you to evangelize him with your faith, your charity, your purity, John. It is a land defiled by stagnant waters. It must be dried up by the sun of love, purified by the integrity of thoughts, desires and deeds, and cultivated with faith. You can do that. »

« If You say I can… Yes! If You say I can do that, I will do it. For Your sake…»

« Thank you, John. »

« Master, You mentioned Simon Peter. And that reminded me of something I should have told You immediately, but the joy of listening to You made me forget about it. When we went back to Capernaum after Pentecost, we found the usual amount of money from that unknown person. The boy had taken it to my mother. I gave it to Peter, and he handed it back to me, saying I should use some of it on my way back and in my stay at Doco and I should bring You the rest, for whatever need of Yours… because also Peter thought this place might not be comfortable… but You say it is… I took only two coins for two poor people I met near Ephraim. For the rest, I lived with what my mother had given me and what I was given by some good people to whom I preached Your Name. Here is the purse. »

« We will give the money to the poor tomorrow. So Judas also will be acquainted with our custom. »

« Has Your cousin come? How was he so quick? He was at Nazareth and he did not tell me he was leaving… »

« No. Judas is the new disciple. He comes from Kerioth. But you saw him at Passover, here, the evening I cured Simon. He was with Thomas. »

« Ah! It's him? » John is a little perplexed.

« Yes, it is he. And what is Thomas doing? »

« He carried out Your instructions, he left Simon the Cananean and by the sea road he went to meet Philip and Bartholomew. »

« Yes, I want you to love one another, without preferences, helping one another

mutually and bearing with one another. No one is perfect, John. Neither the young nor the old. But if you have a good will, you will reach perfection and what is wanting in you, I will supply. You are like the children of a holy family. In it there are very different characters. One is strong, another is sweet, or brave, or shy, or impulsive or very cautious. If you were all alike, you would be really strong in one character, but very weak in all the others. Whereas you thus form a perfect union, completed by you all. Love unites you, it must unite you, for the sake of God's cause. »

« And for Your sake, Jesus. »

« First the cause of God and then the love for His Christ. »

« I… and what am I in our family? »

« You are the loving peace of the Christ of God. Are you tired, John? Do you want to go back? I will stay here and pray. »

« I will stay, too, and I will pray with You. Let me stay and pray with You. »

« You may stay. »

Jesus says some psalms and John prays with Him. But his voice dies down and he falls asleep with his head on Jesus' lap. Jesus smiles and stretches His mantle on the shoulders of the sleeping disciple and continues to pray mentally.

The vision ends thus.

Then Jesus says:

« Another comparison between My John and another disciple. A comparison that makes the figure of My beloved disciple clearer and clearer.

He is the one who divests himself also of his own way of thinking and judging, in order to be "the disciple". He is the one who gives himself without wishing to withhold even a particle of himself, as his self was before becoming a disciple. Judas is the one who does not want to divest himself of himself. His donation is therefore unreal. He carries with himself his ego diseased with pride, sensuality and greed. He retains his way of thinking. And he thus counteracts the effect of the donation and of Grace. Judas: the first of all the apostles who failed. And they are so many! John: the first of those who become victims out of love for Me. And you are one of them.

My Mother and I are the sublime Victims. It is difficult to reach us, nay it is impossible, because our sacrifice was of total bitterness. But My John! He is the victim that all My lovers can imitate: virgins, martyrs, confessors, evangelizers, servants of God and of the Mother of God, devoted to activity or contemplation: he is an example for everyone. He is the one who loves.

Note their different ways of reasoning. Judas investigates, quibbles, is obstinate, even when he pretends to give in he still has mental reservations. John feels he is nothing, he accepts everything, he does not ask for reasons, he is satisfied with making Me happy. That is the example.

And did you not feel completely peaceful before his simple dear love? Oh! My John! And My little John, whom I want to be more and more like My beloved. Accept everything, always saying as the apostle: "Everything You do, is well done, Master", in order to deserve to always hear Me say to you: "You are My loving peace." I need comfort as well, Mary. Give Me it. My Heart for your rest. »

71. Jesus with Judas Iscariot Meets Simon Zealot and John.

6th January 1945.

I see Jesus with Judas Iscariot walking up and down near one of the gates of the Temple enclosure.

« Are You sure he will come? » asks Judas.

« I am certain. He was leaving Bethany at dawn and at Gethsemane he was to meet My first disciple… »

There is a pause, then Jesus stops and stares at Judas. He is standing in front of him. He studies him. He then places a hand on his shoulder and asks: « Why, Judas, do you not tell Me your thoughts? »

« Which thoughts? I have no special thought, Master, at the present moment. I ask You even too many questions. You certainly cannot complain of my muteness. »

« You ask Me many questions and You give Me many details on the town and its inhabitants. But you do not unburden yourself to Me. What do you think it matters to Me, what you tell Me about the wealth of people and the members of this or that family? I am not an idler who has come here to while away the time. You know why I have come. And you may well realize that I am concerned with being the Master of My disciples, as the most important thing. I therefore want sincerity and trust from them. Was your father fond of you, Judas? »

« He was very fond of me. He was proud of me. When I went back home from school, and even later, when I went back to Kerioth from Jerusalem, he wanted me to tell him everything. He took an interest in everything I did and he would rejoice if they were good things, he would comfort me if they were not so good, if sometimes, You know, we all make mistakes – if I had made a mistake and had been blamed for it, he would show me the fairness of the reproach I had received, or the injustice of my action. But he did it so gently… he seemed an older brother. He always ended by saying: "I am saying this because I want my Judas to be just. I want to be blessed through my son." My father… »

Jesus, Who has been carefully studying His disciple all the time, truly moved at the evocation of his father, says: « Now, Judas, be sure of what I am going to tell you. Nothing will make your father so happy, as your being a faithful disciple. Your father, who brought you up as you said, must have been a just man and his soul will rejoice, where he is awaiting the light, seeing that you are My disciple. But in order to be such, you must say to yourself: "I have found my lost father, the father who was like an older brother to me, I have found him in my Jesus, and I will tell Him everything, as I used to tell my beloved father, over whose death I am still mourning, that I may receive from Him guidance, blessings or a kind reproach." May God grant it, and above all may you behave so that Jesus will always say to you: "You are good. I bless you." »

« Oh! yes, Jesus! If You love me so much, I will strive to be good, as You want and my father wanted me to be. And my mother will no longer have an aching pain in her heart. She used to say: "You have no guide now, my son, and you still need one so much." When she knows that I have You! »

« I will love you as no other man could possibly love you, I will love you so much, I do love you. Do not disappoint Me. »

« No, Master, I will not. I was full of conflicts. Envy, jealousy, eagerness to excel, sensuality, everything clashed in me against the voice of my conscience. Even quite recently, see? You caused me to suffer. That is: no, not You. It was my wicked nature… I thought I was Your first disciple… and, now You have just told me that You already have one. »

« You saw him yourself. Do you not remember that at Passover I was in the Temple with many Galileans? »

« I thought they were friends… I thought I was the first one to be chosen for such destiny, and that I was therefore the dearest. »

« There are no distinctions in My heart between the first and the last. If the first one should err and the last one were a holy man, then there would be a distinction in the eyes of God. But I will love just the same: I will love the holy living man with a blissful love, and the sinner with a suffering love. But here is John coming with Simon. John, My first disciple, Simon, the one of whom I spoke to you two days ago. You have already seen Simon and John. One was ill…»

« Ah! The leper! I remember. Is he already Your disciple? »

« Since the following day. »

« And why did I have to wait so long? »

« Judas?! »

« You are right. Forgive me. »

John has seen the Master, and he points Him out to Simon. They make haste. John and the Master kiss each other. Simon, instead, throws himself at Jesus' feet and kisses them, exclaiming: « Glory to my Savior! Bless Your servant that his actions may be holy in the eyes of God and that I may glorify Him and bless Him for giving You to me. »

Jesus places His hand on Simon's head: « Yes, I bless you to thank you for your work. Get up, Simon. This is John, and this is Simon: here is My last disciple. He also wants to follow the Truth. He is therefore a brother for you all. »

They greet each other: the two Judaeans inquisitively, John heartily.

« Are you tired, Simon? » asks Jesus.

« No, Master. With my health I have recovered a vitality I never felt before. »

« And I know you make good use of it. I have spoken to many people and they all told Me that you have already instructed them about the Messiah. »

Simon smiles happily. « Also last night I spoke of You to one who is an honest Israelite. I hope You will meet him one day. I would like to take You to him. »

« That is quite possible. »

Judas joins in the conversation: « Master, You promised to come with me, in Judaea. »

« And I will. Simon will continue to teach the people on My coming. The time is short, My dear friends, and the people are so many. I will now go with Simon. You two will come and meet Me this evening on the road to the Mount of Olives and we will give money to the poor. Go now. »

When Jesus is alone with Simon, He asks him: « Is that person in Bethany a true Israelite? »

« He is a true Israelite. His ideas are the prevailing ones, but he is really longing for the Messiah. And when I said to him: "He is now among us", he replied at once: "I am blessed because I am living this hour." »

« We shall go to him one day and take our blessing to his house. Have you seen the new disciple? »

« I have. He is young and seems intelligent. »

« Yes, he is. Since you are a Judaean, You will bear more with him than the others will, because of his ideas. »

« Is that a desire, or an order? »

« A kind order. You have suffered and You can be more indulgent. Sorrow teaches many things. »

« If You give me an order, I will be totally indulgent to him. »

« Yes. Be so. Perhaps Peter, and he may not be the only one, will be somewhat upset seeing how I take care and worry about this disciple. But one day, they will understand… The more one is deformed, the more assistance one needs. The others… oh! the others form properly, also by themselves, by simple contact. I do not want to do everything by Myself. I want the will of man and the help of other people to form a man. I ask you to help Me… and I am grateful for the help. »

« Master do You think he will be disappointing You? »

« No. But he is young and was brought up in Jerusalem. »

« Oh! near You he will amend all the vices of that town… I am sure. I was already old and hardened by bitter hatred, and yet I have changed completely after seeing You… »

Jesus whispers: « So be it! » Then in a loud voice: « Let us go to the Temple. I will evangelize the people. »

And the vision ends.

72. Jesus, John, Simon and Judas go to Bethlehem.

7th January 1945

I see, early in the morning, Jesus, Who at the same Gate meets His disciples Simon and Judas. John is already with Jesus. And I hear Him say: « My friends, I ask you to come with Me through Judaea. If it is not too much for you, particularly for you, Simon. »

« Why, Master? »

« It is hard to walk on the Judaean mountains… and perhaps it will be even more painful for you to meet someone who harmed you. »

« As far as the road is concerned, I wish to assure You, once again, that after You cured me, I feel stronger than a young man and no work is heavy for me, also because it is done for You, and now, with You. With regard to meeting people who harmed me, there is no harsh resentment or feeling in Simon's heart, since he became Yours. Hatred has gone together with the scales of the disease. And believe me, I cannot tell You whether You worked a greater miracle in curing my corroded flesh or my soul consumed by hatred. I do not think I am wrong in saying the latter miracle was the greater. A wound of the soul heals

less easily… and You cured me in one instant. That is a miracle. Because one does not recover all of a sudden, even if one wants to with all one's strength and a man does not get rid of a bad moral habit, if You do not destroy that habit with Your sanctifying will power. »

« Your judgement is correct. »

« Why do You not do that with everyone? » asks Judas, somewhat resentful.

« But He does, Judas. Why do you speak like that to the Master? Do you not feel you have changed since you have been in contact with Him? Previously, I was a disciple of John the Baptist. But I have found myself completely changed since He said to me: "Come". » John, who in general very seldom interferes, and never does in the presence of the Master, this time cannot keep quiet. Kind and loving, he lays one hand on Judas' arm as if to calm him down and he speaks to him anxiously and persuasively. He then realises he has spoken before Jesus, he blushes and says: « Forgive me, Master, I spoke in Your stead, but I wanted… I did not want Judas to grieve You. »

« Yes, John. But he did not grieve Me as My disciple. When he is My disciple, then, if he persists in his way of thinking, he will grieve Me. It grieves Me only to notice how much man has been corrupted by Satan who perverts his thoughts. All men, you know! The thoughts of all of you have been misled by him! But the day will come, when you will have the Strength and the Grace of God, you will have Wisdom with His Spirit… you will then have everything to enable you to judge rightly. »

« And will we all judge rightly. »

« No, Judas. »

« But are You referring to us, disciples, or to all men? »

« I refer firstly to you, and to all the others. When the time comes, the Master will nominate His workers and send them all over the world… »

« Are You not doing that already? »

« For the time being, I use you only to say: "The Messiah is here. Come to Him." Later I will make you capable of preaching in My name, of working miracles in My name… »

« Oh! Also miracles? »

« Yes, on bodies and on souls. »

« Oh! How they will admire us, then! » Judas is overjoyed at the thought.

« But, then, we shall not be with the Master… and I will always be afraid to do with my human capacity what comes only from God » says John, and he looks thoughtfully and somewhat sadly at Jesus.

« John, if the Master will allow me, I would like to tell you what I think » says Simon.

« Yes, tell John. I want you to advise one another. »

« Do You already know it is advice? »

Jesus smiles and is quiet.

« Well, I tell you, John, that you must not, we must not be afraid. Let us found upon His wisdom of a holy Master and upon His promise. If He says: "I will send you", it means that He knows that He can send us without any fear that we may do harm to Him or to ourselves, that is to the cause of God, that is so dear to each of us, like a newly-wed bride. If He promises to clothe our intellectual and spiritual misery with the brightness of the power His Father gives Him for us, we must be certain that He will do so and that we will be successful, not by ourselves, but through His mercy. All this will most certainly happen, providing our deeds are free from pride and human ambitions. I think that if we contaminate our mission, which is entirely a spiritual one, with earthly ingredients, then also Christ's promise will no longer stand. Not because of any inability on His part, but because we will strangle such ability with the rope of pride. I do not know whether I have made myself understood. »

« You have spoken very clearly. I am wrong. But you know… I think that after all, to wish to be admired as the Messiah's disciples, so close to Him as to deserve to do what He does, is the same as wishing to increase even more the powerful figure of Christ among people. Praise to the Master, Who has such disciples, that is what I mean » answers Judas.

« What you say is not entirely wrong. But… see, Judas. I come from a caste which is persecuted because… because it misunderstood what and how the Messiah should be. Yes. If we had waited for Him with the correct vision of His

being, we would not have fallen into errors, which are blasphemy against the Truth and a rebellion against the Law of Rome, so that we have been punished both by God and by Rome. We fancied Christ as a conqueror who would free Israel, as a new Maccabaeus, greater than the great Judas… Only that. And why? Because rather than have regard to the interest of God we took care of our own interests: of the fatherland and of the people. Oh! The interests of the fatherland are most certainly sacred. But what are they when compared to the eternal Heavens? In the long hours of persecution, first, and then of isolation, when as a fugitive, I was compelled to hide in the dens of wild beasts, sharing food and bed with them, to escape Roman power and above all the impeachments of false friends; or when, waiting for death I was already foretasting the savour of the sepulchre, in the cave of a leper, how much did I meditate, and how much did I see: I saw the figure of the Messiah… Yours, my humble and good Master, Yours, Master and King of the Spirit, Yours, O Christ, Son of the Father, leading to the Father, and not to the royal palaces of dust, nor to the deities of mud. You… Oh! It is easy for me to follow You… Because, forgive my daring which avows itself to be correct, because I see You as I thought of You, I recognise You, I recognised You at once. No, it was not a question of meeting You, but of recognising One whom my soul had already met… »

« That is why I called you… and that is why I am taking you with Me, now, in this first journey of Mine in Judaea. I want you to complete your recognition… and I want also these, whom age makes less capable of reaching the Truth by means of deep meditation, I want them to know how their Master has come to this hour… You will understand later. There is David's Tower. The Eastern Gate is near. »

« Are we going out by it? »

« Yes, Judas. We are going to Bethlehem first. Where I was born… You ought to know… to tell the others. Also that is part of the knowledge of the Messiah and of the Scriptures. You will find prophecies written in things not as prophecies but as history. Let us go round Herod's houses… »

« The old, wicked, lustful fox. »

« Do not judge. There is God, Who judges. Let us go along the path through these vegetable gardens. We will stop under the shade of a tree, near some hospitable house, until it cools down. We will then go on our way. »

The vision ends.

73. Jesus at Bethlehem in the Peasant's House and in the Grotto.

8th January 1945.

A stony, dusty, flat road, dried up by the summer sun. It runs alongside huge olive-trees, all laden with small newly formed olives. The ground, where it has not been trodden, is strewn with a layer of minute little olive flowers, which have fallen off after pollination.

Jesus, with the three disciples, proceeds in single file along the edge of the road, where the grass is still green, protected by the shade of the olive-trees and consequently there is less dust.

The road turns at a right angle, after which it climbs easily towards a large valley shaped like a horseshoe, on which numerous houses are strewn forming a small town. At the right angle turn of the road, there is a square building surmounted by a little low dome. It is all closed up, as if it were abandoned.

« That is Rachel's sepulchre » says Simon.

« In that case, we have almost arrived. Are we going into town at once? »

« No, Judas, I want to show you a place first… Then we will go into town, and since there is still clear daylight and it will be an evening of moonlight, we will be able to speak to the people. If they will listen to us. »

« Do You think they will not listen to You? »

They have reached the sepulchre, an ancient but well preserved monument, well whitewashed.

Jesus stops to drink at a rustic well nearby. A woman who has come to draw water offers Him some. Jesus asks her: « Are you from Bethlehem? »

« I am. But now at harvest time, I live in the country here with my husband, to look after the vegetable gardens and the orchards. Are You a Galilean? »

« I was born in Bethlehem, but I live at Nazareth in Galilee. »

« Are You persecuted, too? »

« The family is. But why do you say: “You too”? Are there many people persecuted among the Bethlehemites? »

« Don't You know? What age are You? »

« Thirty. »

« Then You were born exactly when… oh! what a calamity! But why was He born here? »

« Who? »

« The One they said was the Saviour. Cursed be the fools who, drunk as they were, thought the clouds were angels and the bleating and braying were voices from Heaven, and in the haze of drunkenness they mistook three miserable people for the holiest people on the earth. Cursed be they! And cursed be those who believe them. »

« But, with all your cursing, you are not telling Me what happened. Why are you cursing? »

« Because… Listen: where are You going? »

« To Bethlehem with My friends. I have business there. I must visit some old friends and take them the greetings of My Mother. But I would like to know many things before, because we have been away, we of the family, for many years. We left the town when I was only a few months old. »

« Before the catastrophe, then. Listen, if You do not loathe the house of a peasant, come and share our bread and salt with us. You and Your companions. We will talk during supper and I will put you all up for the night. My house is small. But above the stable there is a lot of hay, all piled up. The night is clear and warm. If You want, You can sleep there. »

« May the Lord of Israel reward your hospitality. I will be happy to come to your house. »

« A pilgrim brings blessings with him. Let us go. But I shall have to pour six jars of water on the vegetables which have just come up. »

« And I will help you. »

« No, You are a gentleman, Your behaviour says so. »

« I am a worker, woman. This one is a fisherman. Those two Judaeans are well off and employed. I am not. » And He picks up a jar which was lying flat on its big belly near the very low wall of the well, He ties it to the rope, and lowers it into the well. John helps Him. Also the others wish to be as helpful and they ask the woman: « Where are the vegetables? Tell us and we will take the jars there. »

« May God bless you! My back is broken with fatigue. Come… »

And while Jesus is pulling up His jar, the three disciples disappear along a little path… and come back with two empty ones, which they fill up and then go away. And they do not do that three, but ten times. And Judas laughing says: « She is shouting herself hoarse, blessing us. We have given so much water to her salad, that the soil will be damp for at least two days, and the woman will not have to break her back. » When he comes back for the last time, he says: « Master, I am afraid we have been unlucky. »

« Why, Judas? »

« Because she has it in for the Messiah. I said to her: “Don't curse. Don't you know that the Messiah is the greatest grace for the people of God? Yahweh promised Him to Jacob, and after him to all the Prophets and the just people in Israel. And you hate Him?” She replied: “Not Him. But the one whom some drunken shepherds and three cursed diviners from the East called 'Messiah' ”. And since that is You… »

« It does not matter. I know I am placed as a trial and contradiction for many. Did you tell her who I am? »

« No, I am not a fool. I wanted to save Your back and ours. »

« You did well. Not because of our backs. But because I wish to show Myself when I think the time is right. Let us go. »

Judas leads Him as far as the vegetable garden.

The woman empties the last three jars and she then takes Him towards a rustic building in the middle of the orchard. « Go in » she says. « My husband is already in the house. »

They look into a low smoky kitchen. « Peace be to this house » greets Jesus.

« Whoever You are, may You and Your friends be blessed. Come in » replies the man. And he takes out to them a basin of water that they may refresh and clean themselves. Then they all go in and sit round a rough table.

« Thank you for helping my wife. She told me. I had never dealt with Galileans before and I was told that they are rough and quarrelsome. But you have been kind and good. Although already tired… you worked so hard. Are you coming from far? »

« From Jerusalem. These two are Judaeans. The other one and I are from Galilee. But, believe Me, man: you will find good and bad everywhere. »

« That's true. I, the first time I have met Galileans, I have found them to be good. Woman: bring the food. I have but bread, vegetables, olives and cheese. I am a peasant. »

« I am not a gentleman Myself. I am a carpenter. »

« What? You? With Your manners? »

The woman intervenes: « Our guest is from Bethlehem, I told you, and if His relations are persecuted, they were probably rich and learned, like Joshua of Ur, Matthew of Isaac, Levi of Abraham, poor people!… »

« You have not been questioned. Forgive her. Women are more talkative than sparrows in the evening. »

« Were they Bethlehemite families? »

« What? You do not know who they are, and You come from Bethlehem? »

« We ran away when I was a few months old… »

The woman who must be really loquacious, resumes speaking: « He went away before the massacre. »

« Eh! I see that. Otherwise He would not be in this world. Have You never been back? »

« No, never. »

« What a calamity! You will not find many of those Sarah said You want to meet and visit. Many were killed, many ran away, many… who knows!… missing, and it has never been known whether they died in the desert or were killed in jail as a punishment for their rebellion. But was it a rebellion? And who would have remained inactive allowing so many innocents to be slaughtered? No, it is unfair that Levi and Elias should still be alive when so many innocents are dead! »

« Who are those two, and what did they do? »

« Well… at least You will have heard of the slaughter. The slaughter by Herod… Over a thousand babies slaughtered in town, almost another thousand in the country (1). And they were all, or almost all, males, because in their fury, in the darkness, in the scuffle, the killers tore away from their cradles, from their mother's beds, from the houses they assailed, also some baby girls, and they pierced them like sucking baby gazelles shot down by archers. Well: why all that? Because a group of shepherds, who had obviously drank a huge quantity of cider to stand the intense night cold, in a frenzy of excitement, stated they had seen angels, heard songs, received instructions… and they said to us of Bethlehem: “Come. Adore. The Messiah is born.” Just imagine: the Messiah in a cave! In all sincerity, I must admit that we were all drunk, even I, then an adolescent, also my wife, then only a few years old… because we all believed them, and in a poor Galilean woman we saw the Virgin Mother mentioned by the Prophets. But She was with Her husband, a rough Galilean! If She was the wife, how could She be the “Virgin”? To cut a long story short: we believed. Gifts, worshipping… houses opened to give them hospitality!…

Oh! They played their roles very well! Poor Anne! She lost her property and her life, and also the children of her oldest daughter, the only one left because she was married to a merchant in Jerusalem, lost all their property because their house was burned down and the whole holding was laid waste by Herod's order. Now it is an uncultivated field where herds feed. »

« And was it entirely the shepherds' fault? »

« No, it was the fault also of three wizards who came from Satan's kingdom. Perhaps they were accomplices of the three… And we foolishly felt proud of so

much honour! And the poor archsynagogue! We killed him because he swore that the prophecies confirmed the truth of the shepherds' and wizards' words… »

« It was therefore the fault of the shepherds and of the wizards? »

« No, Galilean. It was also our fault. The fault of our credulity. The Messiah had been expected for such a long time! Centuries of expectation. And there had been many disappointments recently because of false Messiahs. One of them was a Galilean, like You, another one was named Theudas. Liars! They… Messiahs! They were nothing but greedy adventurers hunting for a stroke of luck! We should have learned the lesson. Instead… »

« Well, then, why do you curse all the shepherds and magicians? If you consider yourselves fools, too, then you ought to be cursed as well. But the precept of love forbids cursing. One curse attracts another curse. Are you sure you are right? Could it not be true that the shepherds and the magicians spoke the truth, revealed to them by God? Why do you persist in believing they were liars? »

« Because the years of the prophecy were not complete. We thought about it afterwards… after our eyes had been opened by the blood that reddened basins and rivulets. »

« And could the Most High not have advanced the coming of the Saviour, out of an excess of love for His people? On what did the wizards found their statement? You told Me they came from the East… »

« On their calculations concerning a new star. »

« Is it not written: “A star from Jacob takes the leadership, a sceptre arises from Israel”? Is Jacob not the great Patriarch and did he not stop in the land of Bethlehem as dear to him as his eyes, because his beloved Rachel died there? And did the mouth of a Prophet not say: “A shoot springs from the stock of Jesse, a scion thrusts from his roots”? Jesse, David's father, was born here. Is the shoot on the stock, cut at its roots by tyrannical usurpations, is it not the “Virgin” Who will give birth to Her Son, conceived not by deed of man, otherwise She would not be a virgin, but by divine will, whereby He will be the “Immanuel” because: Son of God, He will be God and bring God among the people of God, as His name proclaims? And will He not be announced, as the prophecy says, to the people walking in darkness, that is to the heathens, “by a great light”? And the star the magicians saw, could it not be the star of Jacob, the great light of the two prophecies of Balaam and Isaiah? And the very massacre ordered by Herod, does it not come within the prophecies? “A voice is heard in Ramah… It is Rachel weeping for her children.” It was written that tears should ooze from Rachel's bones in her sepulchre at Ephrathah when, through the Saviour, the reward would come to the holy people. Tears which were to turn into celestial laughter, just as the rainbow is formed by the last drops of the storm, but it says: “Here, the sky is clear.” »

« You are a learned man. Are You a rabbi? »

« Yes, I am. »

« And I perceived it. There is light and truth in Your words. But… Oh! too many wounds are still bleeding in this land of Bethlehem because of the true or false Messiah… I would never advise Him to come here. The land would reject Him as it rejects a stepson who caused the death of the true children. In any case… if it was Him… He died with the other slaughtered children. »

« Where do Levi and Elias live now? »

« Do You know them? » The man becomes suspicious.

« I do not know them. Their faces are unknown to Me. But they are unhappy, and I always have mercy on the unhappy. I want to go and see them. »

« Well, You will be the first one after about thirty years. They are still shepherds and they work for a rich Herodian from Jerusalem, who has taken possession of a lot of the property belonging to the people killed… There is always someone making a profit! You will find them with their herds on the high grounds towards Hebron. But this is my advice: don't let anyone from Bethlehem see You speaking to them. You would suffer from it. We bear them because… because of the Herodian. Otherwise… »

« Oh! Hatred! Why hate? »

« Because it is just. They have done us harm. »

« They thought they were doing good. »

« But they did harm. Let them be harmed. We should have killed them as they had so many people killed through their stupidity. But we had become stupid ourselves and later… there was the Herodian. »

« So, even if he had not been there, after the first desire for revenge, which was

still excusable, would you have killed them? »

« We would kill them even now, if we were not afraid of their master. »

« Man, I tell you, do not hate. Do not wish evil things. Do not be anxious to do evil things. There is no fault here. But even if there was, forgive. Forgive in the name of God. Tell the other people of Bethlehem as well. When your hearts are free from hatred, the Messiah will come; you will know Him then, because He is alive. He already existed when the massacre took place. I am telling you. It was Satan's fault, not the fault of the shepherds and of the magicians that the massacre took place. The Messiah was born here for you, He came to bring the Light to the land of His fathers. The Son of a Virgin Mother of the line of David, in the ruins of the house of David, He granted a stream of Graces to the world, and a new life to mankind… »

« Go away! Get out of here! You are a follower of that false Messiah, Who could but be false, because He brought misfortune to us here in Bethlehem. You are defending Him, so… »

« Be silent, man. I am a Judaean and I have influential friends. I could make you feel sorry for your insult » bursts out Judas, getting hold of the peasant's garments, and shaking him in a fit of violent anger.

« No, No, out of here! I don't want trouble with the people of Bethlehem or with Rome or Herod. Go away, you cursed ones, if you don't want me to leave my mark on you… Out! »

« Let us go, Judas. Do not react. Let us leave him in his hatred. God will not enter where there is bitter hatred. Let us go. »

« Yes, we will go. But you will pay for it. »

« No, Judas, do not say that. They are blind… We shall meet so many on My way. »

They go out following Simon and John, who are already outside, speaking to the woman, round the comer of the stable.

« Forgive my husband, Lord. I did not think I was going to cause so much trouble… Here, take these. You will eat them tomorrow morning. They are newly laid. I have nothing else… Forgive us. Where will You sleep? » (She gives Him some eggs).

« Do not worry. I know where to go. Go and peace be with you for your kindness. Goodbye. »

They walk a short distance, without speaking, then Judas bursts out: « But You… Why not make him worship You? Why did You not crush that filthy swearer down in the mud? Down on the ground! Crushed because he showed no respect for You, the Messiah… Oh! That is what I would have done! Samaritans should be reduced to ashes by means of a miracle! It is the only thing that will shake them. »

« Oh! How many times will I hear that said! But if I should reduce to ashes for every sin against Me!… No, Judas. I have come to create, not to destroy. »

« Yes! And in the meantime they are destroying You. »

Jesus does not reply.

Simon asks: « Where are we going now, Master? »

« Come with Me, I know a place. »

« But if You have never been here after You left, how can You know? » asks Judas, still angry.

« I know. It is not a beautiful place. But I have been there before. It is not in Bethlehem… it is a little outside… Let us turn this way. »

Jesus is in front, followed by Simon, then Judas and John is last… In the silence, broken only by the rustling of their sandals on the small grains of gravel of the path, someone sobbing can be heard.

« Who is crying? » asks Jesus turning round.

And Judas: « It's John. He has been frightened. »

« No, I was not frightened. I had already laid my hand on the knife under my belt… Then I remembered the words You keep repeating: “Do not kill, forgive.” »

« Why are you crying, then? » asks Judas.

« Because I suffer seeing that the world does not love Jesus. They do not know Him, and they do not want to know Him. Oh! It is such a pain! As if someone

tore my heart with burning thorns. As if I had seen someone treading on my mother or spitting upon my father's face… Even worse… As if I had seen Roman horses eating in the Holy Ark and resting in the Holy of Holies. »

« Do not cry, My dear John. Say for this present time and for endless times in future: "He was the Light and He came to enlighten darkness – but darkness did not know Him. He came to the world that had been made for Him, but the world did not know Him. He came to His own town, to His domain, but His own people did not accept Him." Oh! Do not cry like that! »

« That does not happen in Galilee! » says John sighing.

« Well, not even in Judaea » says Judas. « Jerusalem is the capital and three days ago it sang hosannas to You, Messiah! You cannot judge from this place of coarse peasants, shepherds and market gardeners. Also the Galileans, mind you, are not all good. After all, where did Judas, the false Messiah, come from? They said… »

« That is enough, Judas. There is no use in getting angry. I am calm. Be calm, too. Judas, come here. I want to speak to you. » Judas goes near Him. « Take this purse. You will do the shopping for tomorrow. »

« And for the time being, where are we going to lodge? »

Jesus smiles, but does not reply. It is dark. Everything is white in the moonlight. The nightingales sing amongst the olives. A brook is a silvery resounding ribbon. One can smell the scent of hay of the mown fields: a warm, I would say, carnal smell. Bellows and bleats can be heard. And stars, stars and stars… stars strewn on the heavenly curtain, a canopy of living gems, spread over the hills of Bethlehem.

« But here!… There is nothing but ruins here! Where are You taking us? The town is over there. »

« I know. Come. Follow the rivulet, behind Me. A few more steps and then… then I will offer you the abode of the King of Israel. »

Judas shrugs his shoulders and becomes quiet.

A few more steps, then a heap of ruined houses: the remains of houses… A cave between the clefts of a big wall.

Jesus asks: « Have You any tinder? Light it. »

Simon lights a small lamp which he has taken out of his knapsack and he gives it to Jesus.

« Come in » says the Master lifting the lamp. « Come in. This is the nativity room of the King of Israel. »

« You must be joking, Master! This is a filthy den. Ah! I am not going to stay here! I loathe it: it is damp, cold, stinking, full of scorpions and perhaps also snakes… »

« And yet… My friends, here the night of the twenty-fifth of Chislev, Feast of the Lights, Jesus Christ, was born of the Virgin, the Immanuel, the Word of God made flesh, for the love of man: I Who am speaking to you. Also then, as now, the world was deaf to the voices of Heaven speaking to the hearts of men… and it rejected the Mother… and here… No, Judas, do not avert your eyes in disgust from those fluttering noctules, from those green lizards, from those cobwebs, do not lift with disgust your beautiful embroidered mantle, lest it may trail on the ground covered with animal excrement. Those noctules are the daughters' daughters of the ones that were the first toys to be tossed before the eyes of the Child, for Whom the angels sang the "Gloria" heard by the shepherds, intoxicated only by an ecstatic joy, a true joy. The emerald green of those lizards was the first color to strike My eyes, the first, after My Mother's white face and dress. Those cobwebs were the canopy of My royal cradle. This ground… oh! you may tread on it without disdain… It is littered with excrement… but it is sanctified by Her foot, the foot of the Holy, the Most Holy, Pure, Immaculate Mother of God, Who gave birth, because She was to give birth, because God, not man, told Her and covered Her with His shadow. She, the Faultless One, trod on it. You can tread on it, too. And may the purity diffused by Her, by the will of God, rise from the soles of your feet to your heart… »

Simon is on his knees. John goes straight to the manger and cries, leaning his head against it. Judas is terrified… he is overcome by emotion, and no longer worried about his beautiful mantle, he kneels on the ground, takes the edge of Jesus' tunic and kisses it and beats his breast saying: « Oh! My good Master, have mercy on the blindness of Your servant! My pride vanishes… I see You as You are. Not the king I was thinking of. But the Eternal Prince, the Father of future centuries, the King of peace. Have mercy, my Lord and my God, have mercy on me! »

« Yes, you have all My mercy! Now we will sleep where the Infant and the Virgin slept, over there where John has taken the place of the adoring Mother, here where Simon looks like My putative father. Or, if you prefer so, I will speak to you of that night… »

« Oh! yes, Master, tell us of Your birth. »

« That it may be a bright pearl shining in our hearts. And we may tell the whole world. »

« And we may venerate Your Virgin Mother, not only as Your Mother, but also as… as the Virgin! »

Judas was the first to speak, then Simon and then John, whose face smiles and cries, near the manger.

« Come and sit on the hay. Listen… » and Jesus tells them of the night of His birth. « … as the Mother was near Her time to have Her Child, a decree was issued by the imperial delegate Publius Sulpicius Quirinus on instructions from Caesar Augustus, when Sentius Saturninus was governor of Palestine. The decree stated that a census had to be taken of all the people of the empire. Those who were not slaves were to go to their places of origin and register in the official rolls of the empire. Joseph, the spouse of the Mother, was of the line of David and the Mother was also of David's line. In compliance with the decree, they left Nazareth and came to Bethlehem, the cradle of the royal family. The weather was severe… » Jesus continues the story and it all ends thus.

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(1) The real number of babies killed is thirty-two, of which eighteen in the actual town of Bethlehem and fourteen in the nearby country. Also six baby girls were slaughtered as the hired cut-throats could not tell them from baby boys because they were dressed alike, and also because of the darkness and their hurry to kill. The peasant, as is often the case, exaggerates. The above detailed information is given by Maria Valtorta on a separate sheet added to the original manuscript.

74. Jesus Goes to the Hotel in Bethlehem and Preaches from the Ruins of Anne's House.

9th January 1945.

It is an early bright summer morning. The sky seems painted with strokes of a pink brush by little thin clouds looking like strips of frayed gauze, dropped on a smooth turquoise carpet. The air is full of the songs of birds, exhilarated by the bright light… Sparrows, blackbirds, redbreasts whistle, chirp, brawl over a stem, a worm, a twig which they want to take to their nests, or eat, or use as a roost. Swallows dart from the sky down to the little stream to wet their snow white breasts, the tops of which are rust colored, and after receiving the freshness of the water and catching a little fly still asleep on a little stem, they dart straight up into the sky as fast as the flash of a burnished blade, chattering joyfully.

Two blue-headed wagtails, dressed in pale ash-grey silk, are walking gracefully, like two little dames, along the bank of the stream, holding well up their long tails adorned with little velvet black spots, they look at themselves in the water, and, satisfied with their beautiful looks, they resume walking, while a blackbird, a real little rogue of the wood, scoffs at them, whistling at them with his long yellow beak. In the thick foliage of a wild apple-tree growing all alone near the ruins, a nightingale is calling her mate insistently, and she becomes silent only when she sees him coming with a long caterpillar wriggling in the grip of his thin beak. Two city pigeons, which have probably escaped from a dove-cot and have chosen a free dwelling place in the crevices of a ruined tower, give vent to their love effusion by cooing in such a way that the male seems to be endeavoring to seduce the modest female.

Jesus, with arms crossed, looks at all the happy little creatures and smiles.

« Are You already ready, Master? » asks Simon, from behind Him.

« Yes, I am. Are the others still sleeping? »

« Yes, they are. »

« They are young… I washed Myself in that stream… The water is so cold that it clears the mind… »

« I'll go and wash now. »

While Simon, wearing only a short tunic, is washing himself and then puts on his clothes, Judas and John come out. « Hail, Master, are we late? »

« No. It is only daybreak. But now be quick and let us go. »

The two get washed and put on their tunics and mantles.

Jesus, before setting off, picks some little flowers which have grown between the crevices of two stones, and puts them into a small wooden box, in which there are already other items, which I cannot see very well. He explains: « I will take them to My Mother. She will love them… Let us go. »

« Where, Master? »

« To Bethlehem. »

« Again? I do not think the situation is a favorable one for us… »

« It does not matter. Let us go. I want to show you where the Magi came and where I was. »

« In that case, listen. Excuse me, will You, Master? But let me do the talking. Let us do one thing. In Bethlehem and at the hotel, let me speak and ask questions. You Galileans are not awfully liked in Judaea, and much less here than anywhere else. Nay, let us do this: your clothes show that You and John are Galileans. It's too easy. And then… your hair! Why do you persist in wearing it so long? Simon and I will change mantles with you. Simon, give yours to John, I'll give mine to the Master. That's it! See? You already look a little more like Judaeans. Now take this. » And he takes off the cloth covering his head: a yellow, brown, red, green striped length of material, like his mantle, held in position by a yellow cord, he places it on Jesus' head, adjusting it along His cheeks to hide His fair hair. John puts on the very dark green one of Simon. « Oh! That's better now. I have a practical sense. »

« Yes, Judas, you have a practical sense. That is true. Watch, however, that it does not exceed the other sense. »

« Which one, Master? »

« The spiritual sense. »

« No! No! But in certain cases it pays to be more a politician than an ambassador. And listen… be good a little longer… it is for Your own good… Do not contradict me if I should say something… something… which is not true. »

« What do you mean? Why tell lies? I am the Truth and I want no lies in Me or around Me. »

« Oh! I will only tell half lies. I will say that we are all coming back from remote places, from Egypt for instance, and that we are seeking news of dear friends. I will say that we are Judaeans coming back from exile. After all, there is some truth in everything, and I will be speaking, and… one lie more, one lie less… »

« But Judas! Why deceive? »

« Never mind, Master! The world lives on deceit. And at times deceit is a necessity. Well: to make You happy, I will only say that we are coming from far and that we are Judaeans. Which is true for three out of four of us. And you, John, please do not speak at all. You would give yourself away. »

« I will be quiet. »

« Then… if everything works out all right… we shall say the rest. But I do not believe it… I am shrewd, I grasp things at once. »

« I see that, Judas. But I would prefer you to be simple. »

« It does not help much. In Your group, I will be the one in charge of difficult missions. Let me carry on. » Jesus is reluctant. But He gives in.

They set out. They walk round the ruins, then along a windowless massive wall on the other side of which one can hear braying, mooing, neighing, bleating and the queer cry of camels or dromedaries. The wall forms an angle. They go round it. They are now in the square of Bethlehem. The fountain is in the centre of the square, the shape of which is still slantwise, although there is a difference on the side opposite the hotel. Over there, where there was the little house, which I still remember being all silvery in the rays of the Star, there is now a large opening, strewn with ruins. Only the little staircase is still up, with its little landing. Jesus looks and sighs.

The square is full of people around vendors of foodstuffs, utensils, clothes etc. All the goods are on mats or in baskets on the ground, and most of the merchants are also crouched in the centre of their… shops, with the exception of those standing up, shouting and gesticulating with stingy buyers.

« It's market day » says Simon. The main gate of the hotel is wide open and a line of donkeys laden with goods is coming out. Judas is the first to enter. He looks round. Full of haughtiness, he seizes a dirty hostler in short sleeves, that is with a sleeveless short tunic, reaching down to his knees. « Hostler! » he shouts. « The landlord! Quick! Be quick. I am not used to be kept waiting for people. »

The boy runs away, dragging a broom behind him.

« But Judas! What manners! »

« Be quiet, Master. Leave me alone. It is important that they consider us rich people coming from town. »

The landlord rushes in, and he bends down repeatedly in front of Judas, who is impressive in Jesus' dark red mantle worn on top of his sumptuous yellow tunic full of fringes.

« We have come from far, man. We are Judaeans of the Asiatic communities. This gentleman, born in Bethlehem and persecuted, is now looking for some dear friends. We are with Him. We have come from Jerusalem, where we worshipped the Most High in His House. Can You give us some information? »

« My lord… your servant… will do everything for you. Give me your orders. »

« We want some information on many… and particularly on Anne, the woman whose house was opposite your hotel. »

« Oh! poor woman! You will find her only in Abraham's bosom. And her children with her. »

« Is she dead? How? »

« Don't you know of Herod's massacre? The whole world talked about it and even Caesar called him “a pig who feeds on blood”. Oh! What have I said? Don't report me! Are you really a Judaean? »

« Here is the sign of my tribe. So? Speak up. »

« Anne was killed by Herod's soldiers, with all her children, except one daughter. »

« But why? She was so good? »

« Did you know her? »

« Yes, very well. » Judas lies brazen-facedly.

« She was killed because she gave hospitality to those who said they were the father and mother of the Messiah… Come here, into this room… Walls have ears and it is dangerous to talk about certain things. »

They go into a low dark room. They sit down on a low couch.

« Now… I had a wonderful nose. I am not a hotel keeper for nothing. I was born here, the son of sons of hotel keepers. Wiles are in my blood. And I did not take them. I could have found a hole for them. But… poor, unknown Galileans as they were… Oh! no! Hezekiah will not fall into the trap! And I felt… I felt they were different… that woman… Her eyes… something… no, no… She must have had a demon inside Her and She spoke to him. And She brought him… not to me… but to town. Anne was more innocent than a little lamb, and she gave them hospitality a few days later, when She already had the Child. They said He was the Messiah… Oh! the money I made during those days! The census was nothing like it! Many people came here who had nothing to do with the census. They came even from the seaside, even from Egypt to see… and it lasted for months! What a profit I made! The last to come were three kings, three powerful people, three magicians… I would not know! What a train! An endless one! They took all the stables and they paid in gold for so much hay that could have lasted a month, and they went away the following day, leaving it all here. And what gifts they gave to the hostlers and the women!

And to me! Oh! I can only speak well of the Messiah, whether He was a true or false one. He made me earn bags of money. And I had no disasters. None of My family died, because I had just got married. So… but the others! »

« We would like to see the places of the slaughter. »

« The places? But every house was a place of slaughter. There were people killed for miles round Bethlehem. Come with me. »

They go up a staircase into a large terraced roof. From it, one can see a lot of countryside and the whole of Bethlehem spread on the hills like an open fan.

« Can you see the ruined spots? Over there also the houses were burnt down because the fathers defended their children with their weapons. Can you see

over there that kind of a well covered with ivy? Those are the remains of the synagogue. It was burnt down with the arch synagogue who stated that it was the Messiah. It was burnt down by the survivors, who were wild because of the slaughter of their children. We had trouble for that after… And over there, and there, there… see those sepulchers? The victims are buried there.. They look like little sheep spread all over the green, as far as the eye can see. All the innocents and their fathers and mothers… See that vat? Its water was red after the killers washed weapons and hands in it. And the brook at the back here, did you see it? It was pink because of the blood which had flowed into it from the sewers. And there, over there, in front of us. That is what is left of Anne's house. »

Jesus is crying.

« Did You know her well? »

Judas replies: « She was like a sister for His Mother. Is that right, my friend? »

Jesus replies simply: « Yes. »

« I understand » remarks the hotel keeper who becomes pensive.

Jesus bends forward to speak to Judas in a low voice.

« My friend would like to go on those ruins » says Judas.

« Let Him go! They belong to everybody! »

They go downstairs, say goodbye and go out. The host is disappointed. Perhaps he was hoping to earn something.

They cross the square. And they climb the little staircase still left.

« From here » says Jesus, « My Mother made Me wave My hand to the Three Wise Men and we left from here to go to Egypt. » People look at the four men on the ruins. One asks: « Are they relatives of Anne? »

« They are friends. »

A woman shouts: « Don’t do any harm to the poor dead woman, don't you do it, as her other friends did when she was alive, and then they ran away. »

Jesus is standing on the landing against the little wall enclosing it. He is therefore about two meters higher up than the square, with nothing behind Him. The outline of His figure is clearly cut against the sun shining behind Him: it forms a halo around His golden hair, and makes His snow white linen tunic look even whiter as it is the only garment on Him, since His mantle has slipped off His shoulders and is now lying at His feet like a multicolored pedestal. Further back, there is the green unkempt background of what was Anne's kitchen garden and field, now laid waste and strewn with debris. Jesus stretches out His arms. When Judas sees that gesture he says: « Don't speak! It isn't wise! »

But Jesus’ powerful voice fills the square: « Men of Judah! Men of Bethlehem, listen! Women of the land sacred to Rachel, listen! Listen to One Who descends from David, and has suffered because of persecutions and has become worthy of speaking, and is speaking to you to give you light and comfort. Listen. »

The people stop shouting, quarrelling and buying and they gather together.

« He is a rabbi! »

« He certainly comes from Jerusalem. »

« Who is He? »

« What a handsome man! »

« And what a voice! »

« And His manners! »

« Of course, He is of David's House! »

« He is one of ours, then! »

« Let's listen to Him! »

The whole crowd is now gathered near the little staircase which looks like a pulpit.

« In Genesis it is said: “I will make you enemies of each other: you and the woman: She will crush your head and you will strike at Her heel.” It is also said: “I will multiply your pains in childbearing… and the soil shall yield you brambles and thistles.” That was the sentence against man, woman and the serpent. I have come from far to revere Rachel's tomb, and in the evening breeze, in the dew of the night, in the plaintive morning song of the nightingale,

I heard ancient Rachel's sobs being repeated, and they were repeated by the mouths of many mothers of Bethlehem, within their tombs or within their hearts. And I heard Jacob's sorrow roar in the pain of the widowed husbands, deprived of their wives whom sorrow had killed… I cry with you… But listen, brethren of My land. Bethlehem, the blessed land, the least of the towns in Judah, but the greatest in the eyes of God and of mankind, roused Satan's hatred because it was the cradle of the Savior, as Micah says, destined to be the tabernacle on which the Glory of God, the Fire of God, His Incarnate Love was to rest.

"I will make you enemies of each other: you and the woman; She will crush your head and you will strike at Her heel." Which enmity is there greater than the one that aims at a mother's children, the very heart of a woman? And which heel is there stronger than the Savior's Mother's? The revenge of Satan defeated was therefore a natural one: he did not strike at the heel, but at the hearts of mothers, because of the Mother.

Oh! Pains were multiplied when the children were lost after giving birth to them! Oh! great was the trouble of being a childless father after sowing and toiling for the offspring! And yet, Bethlehem, rejoice! Your pure blood, the blood of the innocents has prepared a blazing purple way for the Messiah… »

The crowd, which has become more and more turbulent after Jesus mentioned the Savior and His Mother, is now showing clear signs of agitation.

« Be quiet, Master » says Judas. « And let us go. »

But Jesus does not listen to him. He goes on: « … for the Messiah that the Grace of the God-Father saved from tyrants to preserve Him for His people and its salvation and… »

The shrill voice of a woman shouts: « Five, five I gave birth to, and not one is now in my house. Poor me! » And she yells hysterically. It is the beginning of the uproar.

Another woman, rolls over in the dust, she tears her dress, and shows a breast maimed of its nipple, shouting: « Here, here on this mamma they slaughtered my first-born son! The sword cut off his face and my nipple at the same time. Oh! my Ellis! »

« And what about me! What about me? There is my royal palace. Three tombs in one, watched over by the father: my husband and children together. There, there! If there is a Savior, let Him give me back my children, my husband, let Him save me from despair, from Beelzebub He must save me. »

They all shout: « Our children, our husbands, our fathers! Let Him give them back, if He exists! »

Jesus waves His arms imposing silence. « Brethren of My land: I would like to give you back your children, in their flesh. But I tell you: be good, be resigned, forgive, hope, rejoice in hope and exult in one certainty: you will soon have your children, angels in Heaven, because the Messiah is about to open the gates of Heaven, and if you are just, death will be a new Life and a new Love… »

« Ah! Are You the Messiah? In the name of God, tell us. »

Jesus lowers Him arms, in so sweet and kind a gesture as if He were embracing them all, and He says:

« Yes, I am. »

« Go away! Go away! It's Your fault, then! »

A stone is thrown amid hisses and jeers.

Judas reacts at once in a most praiseworthy way… Oh! if he had always behaved thus! He jumps in front of Jesus, standing on the low wall of the landing, with his mantle wide open and undaunted he protects Jesus from the stones. His face bleeds and he shouts to John and Simon: « Take Jesus away. Behind those trees. I'll follow. Go, in the name of Heaven! » And he shouts to the crowd: « Mad dogs! I am of the Temple and I will report you to the Temple and to Rome. »

The crowd is scared for a moment. Then the shower of stones is resumed at once, but fortunately, they are not experts. And Judas, fearless, gets it, and replies with offensive language to the curses of the crowd. Nay: he catches a stone thrown at him, and he throws it back on the head of an old man who is shouting like a magpie plucked alive! And as they attempt to climb up his pedestal, he quickly picks up an old branch from the ground, (he has now come off the little wall) and he swings it round on backs, heads and hands mercilessly. Some soldiers rush to the spot and with their lances they make their way through the crowd: « Who are You? Why this brawl? »

« I am a Judaean and I have been attacked by these plebeians. A rabbi, well

known to the priests, was with me. He was speaking to these dogs. But they became wild and attacked us. »

« Who are You? »

« Judas of Kerioth, I was a man of the Temple, now I am a disciple of rabbi Jesus of Galilee. I am a friend of Simon the Pharisee, of Johanan the Sadducee, and of Joseph of Arimathaea, the Counsellor of the Sanhedrin, and finally, of Eleazar ben Anna, the Proconsul's great friend, and you can check. »

« I will. Where are you going? »

« I am going to Kerioth with my friend, then to Jerusalem. »

« Go. We will protect your back. »

Judas hands some coins to the soldier. It must be illegal… but quite usual, because the soldier takes them swiftly and cautiously, he salutes and smiles. Judas jumps down from his platform, he goes through the uncultivated field, skipping now and again, and he reaches his companions.

« Are you seriously hurt? »

« No, it's nothing, Master! In any case, it's for You… But I gave them a licking as well. I must be covered with blood… »

« Yes, on your cheek. There is a rivulet here. »

John moistens a small piece of cloth and wipes Judas' cheek.

« I am sorry, Judas… But see… to tell them that we are Judaeans, according to your good practical sense… »

« They are beasts. I believe You are now convinced, Master. And I hope you will not insist… »

« Oh! no! Not because I am afraid. But because it is useless, just now. When they do not want us, we must not curse them, but withdraw praying for the poor, foolish people, who die of starvation and cannot see the Bread. Let us go along this out-of-the-way path, towards the shepherds, if we can find them. I think we will be able to get on to the Hebron road… »

« To have more stones thrown at us? »

« No. To say to them: “I am here.” »

« What?… They will certainly beat us. They have been suffering for thirty years because of You. »

« We will see. » They enter a cool, shady, thick little wood, and I lose sight of them.

75. Jesus and the Shepherds Elias, Levi and Joseph.

11th January 1945.

The hills are becoming much higher and woodier than those around Bethlehem and they rise continuously and eventually form a real chain of mountains.

Jesus is climbing ahead of them all and He looks around, as if He were anxious to find something. He does not speak. He listens more to the voices of the woods than to the apostles', who are a few yards behind Him and are speaking to one another.

A bell rings in the distance, but the wind carries its ding-dong. Jesus smiles. He turns round: « I hear the bells of sheep. »

« Where, Master? »

« I think near that hillock. But the wood prevents Me from seeing. »

John, without uttering one word takes off his tunic – they have all rolled up their mantles and are carrying them across their backs, because they feel warm – and having on only his short tunic, he throws his arms around a tall smooth trunk, which I think is an ash tree, and he climbs up… until he can see. « Yes, Master. There are many herds and three shepherds over there, behind that thicket. » He comes down, and they proceed, sure of their way.

« Will it be them? »

« We shall ask, Simon, and if they are not, they will tell us something… They know one another. »

After approximately one hundred yards, there is a large, green pasture, surrounded on all sides by huge aged trees. Many sheep are grazing on the thick grass of the undulated meadow. Three men are watching over them. One is old: his hair is all white, of the other two, one is about thirty, the other about forty years old.

« Be careful, Master. They are herdsmen… » advises Judas, when he sees Jesus hastening His step.

But Jesus does not even answer. He goes on, tall and handsome in His white tunic, with the setting sun in front of Him. He seems an angel, so bright He is… « Peace be with you, My friends » He greets when He reaches the edge of the meadow.

The three men turn round, surprised. There is silence. Then the oldest one asks: « Who are You? »

« One Who loves you. »

« You would be the first in so many years. Where are You from? »

« From Galilee. »

« From Galilee? Oh! » The man watches Him carefully. Also the other two have come near.

« From Galilee » repeats the shepherd, and he adds in a very low voice, as if speaking to himself: « He came from Galilee, too… From which town, my Lord? »

« From Nazareth. »

« Oh! Well, tell me. Has a Child ever come back to Nazareth, a Child with a woman whose name was Mary and a man called Joseph, a Child, Who was even more beautiful than His Mother, so beautiful that I have never seen a fairer flower on the slopes of Judah? A Child born in Bethlehem of Judah, at the time of the edict? A Child Who later fled, most fortunately for the world. A Child, oh! I would give my life just to hear whether He is alive… He must be a man by now. »

« Why do you say that His flight was a great fortune for the world? »

« Because He was the Savior, the Messiah and Herod wanted Him dead. I was not there when He fled with His father and Mother. When I heard of the slaughter and I came back… because also I had children (he sobs), my Lord, and a wife… (he sobs), and I heard they had been killed (he sobs again), but I swear by the God of Abraham, I was more afraid for Him than for my own family – I heard He had fled and I could not even enquire; I could not even take away my own slaughtered creatures… They threw stones at me, as they do with lepers and unclean people, they treated me like a murderer… and I had to hide in the woods, and live like a wolf… until I found a master. Oh! it's no longer Anne… He is hard and cruel… If a sheep gets hurt, if a wolf preys on a lamb, he either beats me till I bleed or he takes my poor pay, and I have to work in the woods for other people, I must do something, to pay him back three times the value. But it does not matter. I have always said to the Most High: “Let me see Your Messiah, at least let me know that He is alive, and all the rest is nothing.” My Lord, I have told You how the people in Bethlehem treated me, and how my master deals with me. I could have repaid them in their own coins, I could have wronged them, stealing, so that I would not suffer under my master. But I preferred to suffer, to forgive, to be honest, because the angels said: “Glory to God in the Highest Heaven and peace on earth to men of good will.” »

« Is that what they said? »

« Yes, they did, my Lord, You must believe, at least You, Who are good. You must know and believe that the Messiah is born. No one would believe it any longer. But angels do not lie… and we were not drunk, as they said. This man here, was a boy then, and he was the first to see the angel. He drank but milk. Can milk make one drunk? The angels said: “Today, in the town of David the Savior was born, He is Christ, the Lord. And here is a sign for you. You will find a Child wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger.” »

« Did they say exactly that? Did you not misunderstand them? Are you not mistaken, after such a long time? »

« Oh! no! Isn't it, Levi? In order not to forget, – we could not forget in any case, because they were heavenly words and were written in our hearts with a heavenly fire – every morning, every evening, when the sun rises, when the first star starts shining, we repeat them as a prayer, as a blessing, to have strength and comfort in His name and in His Mother's. »

« Ah! You said: “Christ”? »

« No, my Lord. We say: “Glory to God in the Highest Heaven and peace on earth to men of good will, through Jesus Christ Who was born of Mary in a stable in Bethlehem and Who, wrapped in swaddling clothes, was in a manger, He Who is the Savior of the world.” »

« But, in short, whom are you looking for? »

« Jesus Christ, the Son of Mary, the Nazarene, the Savior. »

« It is I. » Jesus is radiant when saying so, revealing Himself to His persevering lovers: persevering, faithful, patient.

« You! Oh! Lord, Savior, Our Jesus! » The three men prostrate themselves on the ground and kiss Jesus' feet, crying with joy.

« Stand up. Get up. Elias and you, Levi and you, whose name I do not know. »

« Joseph, the son of Joseph. »

« These are My disciples, John, a Galilean, Simon and Judas, Judaeans. »

The shepherds are no longer prostrated on the ground, they are kneeling, sitting back on their heels. They worship thus the Savior, with loving eyes, trembling lips, while their faces blanch and blush with joy. Jesus sits down on the grass.

« No, my Lord. You, King of Israel, must not sit on the grass. »

« Never mind, My dear friends. I am poor. A carpenter as far as the world is concerned. I am rich only in My love for the world, and in the love I get from good people. I have come to stay with you, to share the evening meal with you and sleep beside you on the hay, and to be comforted by you… »

« Oh! comfort! We are coarse and persecuted. »

« I am persecuted, too. But you give Me what I am seeking: love, faith and hope, a hope that will last for years and bear flowers. See? You waited for Me and you believed without the least doubt, that I was the Messiah. And I have come to you. »

« Oh! Yes! You have come. Now, even if I die, I will not be upset, by the fact that I hoped in vain. »

« No, Elias. You will live until Christ's triumph and after. You saw My dawn, you must see My glory. And what about the others? You were twelve: Elias, Levi, Samuel, Jonah, Isaac, Tobias, Jonathan, Daniel, Simeon, John, Joseph, Benjamin. My Mother always mentioned your names to Me. Because you were My first friends. »

« Oh! » The shepherds are more and more moved.

« Where are the others? »

« Old Samuel died of old age about twenty years ago. Joseph was killed because he fought at the gate of the enclosure to give time to his wife, who had just become a mother a few hours before, to escape with this man, whom I took with me for the sake of my friend… also to have children around me once again. I took Levi also with me… He was persecuted. Benjamin is a shepherd on Lebanon with Daniel. Simeon, John and Tobias, who now wants to be called Matthew in memory of his father, who was also killed, are disciples of John. Jonah works on the plain of Esdraelon for a Pharisee. Isaac suffers very much from his back which is bent in two, he lives in dire poverty, all by himself at Juttah. We help him as much as we can, but we have all been badly hit and our help is like dew drops on a fire. Jonathan is now the servant of one of Herod's big men. »

« How could you, and particularly Jonathan, Jonah, Daniel and Benjamin get such jobs? »

« I remembered Your relative Zacharias… Your Mother had sent me to him. When we were in the mountain gorges in Judaea, fugitives and cursed, I took them to him. He was good to us. He sheltered and fed us. And he found work for us. He did what he could. I had already taken all Anne's herd for the Herodian… and I remained with him… When the Baptist, grown into a man, began to preach, Simeon, John and Tobias went to him. »

« But now the Baptist is in jail. »

« Yes, and they are keeping watch near Machaerus, with a few sheep, to avoid arousing suspicion. They were given the sheep by a rich man, a disciple of Your relative John. »

« I would like to see them all. »

« Yes, My Lord. We will go and say to them: “Come, He is alive. He remembers us and loves us.” »

« And He wants you to be His friends. »

« Yes, my Lord. »

« But we will go first to Isaac. And where are Samuel and Joseph buried? »

« Samuel in Hebron. He remained in Zacharias' service. Joseph… has no tomb. He was burned with the house. »

« He is no longer in the cruel fire, but in the flames of God's love and will soon be in His glory. I am telling you, and particularly you, Joseph, son of Joseph. Come here, that I may kiss you to thank your father. »

« And my children? »

« They are angels, Elias. Angels who will repeat the “Gloria” when the Savior is crowned. »

« King? »

« No, Redeemer. Oh! What a procession of just people and saints! And in front there will be the white and purple phalanges of the martyrs! As soon as the gates of Limbo are opened, we shall ascend together to the eternal Kingdom. And then you will come and will find your fathers, mothers and children in the Lord! Believe Me. »

« Yes, my Lord. »

« Call Me: Master. It is getting dark, the first evening star is beginning to shine. Say your prayer before supper. »

« Not I. You say it, please. »

« Glory to God in the highest Heaven, and peace on earth to men of good will who have deserved to see the Light and serve it. The Savior is among them. The Shepherd of the royal line is with His herd. The morning Star has risen. Rejoice, just people! Rejoice in the Lord. He Who made the vaults of heaven and has strewn them with stars, Who placed the seas at the boundaries of the land, Who created winds and dew, and fixed the course of seasons to give bread and wine to His children, He is now sending you a more Sublime food: the living Bread that descends from Heaven, the Wine of the eternal Vine. Come to Me, you who are the first of My worshippers. Come to meet the Eternal Father in truth, to follow Him in holiness and receive His eternal reward. » Jesus has said the prayer, standing up, with His arms stretched out, while the disciples and shepherds are on their knees.

They then offer bread and new milk, and since there are only three bowls, or emptied marrows, I do not know which, Jesus is the first to eat, with Simon and Judas. Then John, to whom Jesus hands His cup, with Levi and Joseph. Elias is last.

The sheep are no longer grazing. They gather in a compact group, perhaps waiting to be led to their enclosure. Instead I see the three shepherds taking them into the wood, under a rustic shed formed with branches and enclosed by ropes. They then busy themselves preparing hay beds for Jesus and His disciples. They light fires, probably to keep wild animals away.

Judas and John lie down, and tired as they are, they soon fall asleep. Simon would like to keep Jesus company. But shortly afterwards, he falls asleep too, sitting on the hay leaning against a pole. Jesus remains awake with the shepherds. And they talk of Joseph, of Mary, of the flight into Egypt, of their return… and after such questions about loving friendship, they ask more noble questions: what can they do to serve Jesus? How will they, poor, rough shepherds, be able to do anything?

And Jesus teaches them and explains: « Now I am going to go through Judaea. My disciples will keep in touch with you all the time. Later I will let you come. In the meantime, get together. Make sure that you are all in touch with one another, and that everyone knows that I am here, in this world, as Master and Savior. Let everybody know, as best as you can. I will not promise that you will be believed. I have been mocked at and beaten. They will do the same to you. But as you have been strong and just in your long expectation, persist in being so, now that you are Mine. Tomorrow, we will go towards Juttah. Then to Hebron. Can you come? »

« Of course, we can. The roads belong to everybody and the pastures to God. Only Bethlehem is forbidden by an unfair hatred. The other villages know… but they jeer at us, calling us “topers”. Thus we will not be able to do very much here. »

« I will employ you elsewhere. I will not abandon you. »

« For all our lifetimes? »

« For all My lifetime. »

« No, Master, I will die first. I am old. »

« Do you think so? I do not. One of the first faces I saw, Elias, was yours. It will also be one of the last. I will take with Me, impressed in My eyes, the image of your face deranged by sorrow for My death. But after, you will treasure in your heart the memory of the joy of a triumphal morning, and will thus await death… Death: the everlasting meeting with Jesus, Whom you adored when He was a baby. Also then the angels will sing the Gloria: "for the man of good will." »

I hear nothing more, the sweet vision fades away and ends.

76. Jesus at Juttah with the Shepherd Isaac.

12th January 1945.

A fresh valley resounding with the water of a silvery little torrent flowing foamy southwards among the rocks. The gay freshness of the water spreads out on the little pastures on the banks, but its moisture seems to climb up the very green slopes of the hills. It is a beautiful, varied, emerald green, which from the soil through the bushes and shrubs of the brushwood reaches up to the top of the tall trees of the wood. Many of them are walnut trees. The wood is spotted with many green open spaces, covered with thick grass, which are good, healthy pastures for herds.

Jesus is going down towards the torrent with His disciples and the three shepherds. He stops patiently to wait for a sheep which has been left behind or when one of the shepherds has to run after a lamb which has gone astray. He is the Good Shepherd now. He has provided Himself with a long branch to push aside blackberry, hawthorn and clematis branches, which stick out in all directions, and catch garments. And the stick completes His pastoral figure.

« See? Juttah is up there. We will cross the torrent, there is a ford, which is very useful in summer, without having to use the bridge. It would have been quicker to come via Hebron. But You did not want that. »

« No. We will go to Hebron later. We must always go first to those who suffer. The dead do not suffer any longer when they have been just people. And Samuel was a just man. And if the dead need our prayers, it is not necessary to be near their bones to pray for them.

Bones? What are they? A proof of the power of God Who made man with dust. But nothing else. Also animals have bones. But the skeletons of all animals are not so perfect as a man's skeleton. Only man, the king of creation, has an upright position, as a king over his subjects, and his face looks forwards and upwards without having to twist his neck; man looks upwards, towards the Abode of the Father. But they are still bones. Dust which will return to dust. The eternal Bounty has decided to assemble them again on the eternal Day to give even a greater joy to the blessed souls. Just imagine: not the souls only will be reunited and will love one another as and even more than they did on the earth, but they will rejoice also seeing one another with the same features they had on the earth: dear curly-haired children, like yours, Elias, fathers and mothers with loving hearts and faces like yours Levi and Joseph. Nay, in your case Joseph, it will be the day when at last you will see the faces for which you feel nostalgia. There are no more orphans, no widows among the just, up there…

Prayers for the dead can be said anywhere. It is the prayer of a soul for the soul of a relative to the Perfect Spirit, Who is God, Who is everywhere. Oh! holy freedom of what is spiritual! There are no distances, no exile, no prisons, no tombs… There is nothing that can divide or restrict in painful impotence what is outside and above the chains of the flesh. You will go with your better part, towards your beloved ones. And they will come to you with their better part. And the whole effusion of loving souls will rotate around the Eternal Fulcrum, around God: the Most Perfect Spirit, the Creator of everything that was, is and will be, Love that loves you and teaches you how to love… But here we are at the ford. I can see a row of stones emerging from the shallow water. »

« Yes, Master, it is that one there. At the time of floods it is a roaring waterfall, now there are seven streamlets flowing placidly between the six large stones of the ford. »

In fact six large stones, cut quite squarely, are laid across the torrent, at about a foot from each other and the water, which before them is like a large sparkling

ribbon, is divided into seven minor ones, rushing happily to join together again beyond the ford, forming one only fresh stream which flows, babbling among the stones.

The shepherds watch the sheep crossing, some walk on the stones, some prefer crossing in the stream, only a foot deep, and they drink the pure gurgling water.

Jesus crosses on the stones followed by His disciples. They resume walking on the other bank.

« You told me that You want to inform Isaac that You are here, but You do not want to go into the village? »

« Yes, that is what I want. »

« Well, we had better part. I will go to him, Levi and Joseph will stay with the herd and with You. I'll go up here. It will be quicker. » And Elias starts climbing up the mountain side, towards the white houses which are so bright up there in the sunshine.

I seem to be following him. He is now at the first houses. He goes along a tiny path between houses and kitchen gardens. He walks thus for about ten meters. He then turns into a wider road and then enters the square. I forgot to mention that this is happening in the early morning hours. I am saying so now because the market is still on in the square and housewives and vendors are shouting under the shady trees of the square.

Elias goes resolutely to the point where the square ends and quite an attractive street starts. Perhaps the nicest in the village. At the comer there is a little house, or rather, a room with the door wide open. Almost on the threshold there is a little bed, on which an emaciated sick man is lying, asking all passers-by for alms, in a plaintive voice. Elias dashes in. « Isaac… it's me. »

« You? I was not expecting you. You were here last month. »

« Isaac… Isaac… Do you know why I have come? »

« No, I don't… You are excited. What's happening? »

« I have seen Jesus of Nazareth, He is a man, now, a rabbi. He came looking for me… and He wants to see us. Oh! Isaac! Are you not well? »

Isaac, in fact, has fallen back as if he were dying. But he comes round: « No. The news… Where is He? What is He like? Oh! If I could see Him! »

« He is down in the valley. He sent me to say to you exactly this: “Come, Isaac, because I want to see you and bless you.” I'll call someone now to help me and I'll take you down. »

« Is that what He said? »

« Yes, it is. But what are you doing? »

« I'm going. »

Isaac throws away the blankets, he moves his paralyzed legs, he throws them off the straw mattress, he puts his feet on the floor, he stands up, still somewhat hesitating, and shaky. It all happens in an instant, under Elias' wide open eyes… who at last understands and begins to shout… A little woman looks in curiously. She sees the sick man stand up and cover himself with one of the blankets, since he has nothing else, and run away, shouting like a mad man.

« Let us go… this way, it will be quicker and we will not meet the crowd… Quick, Elias. » They run through a little door of a kitchen garden in the back, they push the gate, made of dry branches, and once outside, they run along a narrow dirty path, then down a little road along kitchen gardens and finally through meadows and thickets, right down to the torrent.

« There is Jesus, over there » says Elias, pointing at Him. « The tall, handsome one, with fair hair, with a white tunic and red mantle… »

Isaac runs, he cuts through the grazing sheep, and with a cry of triumph, joy and adoration he prostrates himself at Jesus' feet.

« Stand up, Isaac. I have come. To bring you peace and blessings. Stand up, that I may see your face. »

But Isaac cannot stand up. Too much excitement at the one time and he remains prostrated, with his face on the ground, crying happily.

« You came at once. You did not worry whether you could… »

« You told me to come… and I came. »

« He did not even close the door or pick up the alms, Master. »

« It does not matter. The angels will watch his house. Are you happy, Isaac? »

« Oh! My Lord! »

« Call Me Master. »

« Yes, my Lord, my Master. Even if you had not cured me, I would have been happy to see You. How could I find so much grace with You? »

« Because of your faith and patience, Isaac. I know how much you suffered… »

« Nothing! nothing! It does not matter! I have found You. You are alive. You are here. That's what matters. The rest, all the rest is over. But, my Lord and my Master, You are not going away any more, is that right? »

« Isaac, I have the whole of Israel to evangelize. I am going… But if I cannot stay, you can always serve and follow Me. Do you want to be My disciple, Isaac? »

« Oh! But I am not capable! »

« Can you avow Who I am? Avow it against jeers and threats? And tell people that I called you and you came? »

« Even if You did not want, I would avow all that. I would disobey You in that, Master. Forgive me for saying so. »

Jesus smiles. « You can see then that you are capable of becoming a disciple! »

« Oh! If that's all one has to do! I thought it was more difficult, that we had to go to school with the rabbis to learn how to serve You, the Rabbi of rabbis… and to go to school at my age… » The man in fact must be at least fifty years old.

« You have done your schooling already, Isaac. »

« Me? No. »

« Yes, you have. Have you not continued to believe and love, to respect and bless God and your neighbor, not to be envious, not to wish what belongs to other people, and even what was your own and you no longer possessed, to speak only the truth, even if it should be harmful to you, not to associate with Satan committing sins? Have you not done all these things, in the last thirty years of misfortunes? »

« Yes, Master. »

« So you see, you have done your schooling. Go on doing so and reveal, in addition, to the world, that I am in the world. There is nothing else to be done. »

« I have already preached You, Lord Jesus. I preached You to the children, who used to come, when I arrived lame in this village, begging for bread and doing some work, such as shearing and dairy work, and the children used to come round my bed, when I got worse and I was paralyzed from my waist downwards. I spoke of You to the children of many years ago, and to the children of present times, who are the sons of the previous ones… Children are good and they always believe… I told them of Your birth… of the angels… of the Star and the Wise Men… and of Your Mother… Oh! Tell me! Is She alive? »

« She is alive and She sends you Her regards. She always spoke of you all. »

« Oh! If I could see Her! »

« You will see Her. You will come to My house one day. Mary will greet you saying: “My friend”. »

« Mary… yes, when you utter that name it is like filling your mouth with honey… There is a woman in Juttah, she is a woman now, she had her fourth child not long ago, but once she was a little girl, one of my little friends… and she called her children: Mary and Joseph the first two, and as she dared not call the third one Jesus, she called him Immanuel, as a good omen for herself, her home and Israel. And she is now thinking of the name to be given to her fourth child, born six days ago. Oh! When she hears that I am cured! And that You are here! Sarah is as good as home made bread, and her husband Joachim is also so good. And their relatives? I owe them my life. They have always helped and sheltered me. »

« Let us go and ask them for hospitality during the hottest hours of the day and to bless them for their charity. »

« This way, Master. It is easier for the sheep and we will avoid the people, who are most certainly excited. The old woman, who saw me getting up, will have certainly told them. »

They follow the torrent, then further south, they depart from it, and take to a

steep path, following a prominence of the mountain shaped like the prow of a ship. Now the torrent flows in the opposite direction to that of those who are climbing. The water runs along a beautiful uneven valley formed by the intersection of two ranges of mountains. I recognize the place. It is unmistakable. It is the scene of the vision of Jesus and the children, which I saw last spring. The usual little dry-stone wall marks the boundaries of the estate, which declines towards the valley. I see the meadow with apple-trees, figtrees, walnut-trees, then the white house surrounded by green lawns, with the protruding wing which protects the staircase and forms a porch and loggia. And there is the little dome on the highest part, the kitchen garden with the well, the pergola and the flower beds…

One can hear a lot of shouting from the house. Isaac walks in front of them all. He goes in. He calls at the top of his voice: « Mary, Joseph, Immanuel! Where are you? Come to Jesus. »

Three little ones run: a girl about five years old, and two little boys, about four and two years of age, the latter still somewhat uncertain when walking. They are dumbfounded when they see the… revived man. Then the little girl shouts: « Isaac! Mummy! Isaac is here! Judith was right. »

A woman comes out of a room, where there is a lot of noisy shouting: the buxom, brown, tall, lovely mother of the past vision, most beautiful in her best dress: a snow-white linen dress, like a rich chemise falling in puckers down to her ankles, tied at her well-shaped waist by a multicolored striped shawl, that covers her wonderful hips dropping in fringes down to her knees at the back, while at the front it is tied under the filigree buckle and its ends are hanging loose. A light veil patterned with rose branches on a beige background is pinned to her black plaits, like a tiny turban, and falls on to her neck in flowing folds and then onto her shoulders and breasts. It is held tight on her head by a small crown of medals tied together by a little chain. Heavy rings hang from her ears, and her tunic is held close to her neck by a silver necklace which passes through eyelets of her dress. She wears heavy silver bracelets on her arms.

« Isaac! What's this? Judith… I thought she had gone mad… But you are walking! What happened? »

« The Savior! Oh! Sarah! He is here! He has come! »

« Who? Jesus of Nazareth? Where is He? »

« Over there! Behind the walnut-tree, and He wishes to know if you will receive Him! »

« Joachim! Mother! Come here, all of you! The Messiah is here! »

Women, men, boys, little ones run out shouting and yelling… but when they see Jesus, tall and stately, they lose heart and become petrified.

« Peace to this house and to you all. The peace and blessing of God. » Jesus walks slowly, smiling, towards the group. « My friends: will you give hospitality to the Wayfarer? » and He smiles even more. His smile overcomes all fears. The husband takes heart: « Come in, Messiah. We have loved You before meeting You. We shall love You more after meeting You. The house is celebrating today for three reasons: for You, for Isaac and for the circumcision of my third son. Bless him, Master. Woman, bring the baby! Come in, my Lord. »

They go into a room decorated for the feast. There are tables with foodstuffs, carpets and branches everywhere.

Sarah comes back with a lovely new-born baby in her arms. She presents him to Jesus.

« May God be always with him. What is his name? »

« No name yet. This is Mary, this is Joseph, this is Immanuel… but this one has no name yet… » Jesus looks at the parents, who are close to each other, He smiles: « Find a name, if he is to be circumcised today… » They look at each other, they look at Him, they open their mouths and close them again without saying anything. Everyone is paying attention.

Jesus insists: « The history of Israel has so many great, sweet, blessed names. The sweetest and most blessed ones have already been given. But perhaps there are still some left. »

The parents cry out together: « Yours, Lord! » and the mother adds: « But it is too holy… »

Jesus smiles and asks: « When will he be circumcised? »

« We are waiting for the circumciser. »

« I will be present at the ceremony. And in the meantime I wish to thank you for

what you have done for My Isaac. He no longer needs the help of good people. But good people still need God. You called your third son: God be with us. But you had God with you ever since you were charitable to My servant. May you be blessed. Your charity will be remembered in Heaven and on the earth. »

« Is Isaac going away now? Is he leaving us? »

« Is that upsetting you? But he must serve his Master. But he will come, and so will I. In the meantime, you will speak of the Messiah… There is so much to be said to convince the world! But here is the person you are expecting. »

A pompous personage comes in with a servant. There are greetings and low bows. « Where is the child? » he asks with haughtiness.

« He is here. But greet the Messiah. He is here. »

« The Messiah! The one who cured Isaac? I heard about it. But.. We will talk about it after. I am in a great hurry. The child and his name. »

The people present are mortified by the man's manners. But Jesus smiles as if the impoliteness was not addressed to Him. He takes the baby, He touches his little forehead with His beautiful fingers, as if He wanted to consecrate him and says: « His name is Jesai » and He hands him back to his father, who goes into another room with the haughty man and other people. Jesus remains where He was until they come back with the child, who is screaming desperately.

« Woman, give Me the child. He will not cry any longer » He says to comfort the distressed mother. In fact, the child, once he is laid on Jesus' knees, is silent.

Jesus forms a group of His own, with the little ones around Him, and also the shepherds and disciples. The sheep that Elias has put in an enclosure are bleating outside. There is the noise of a party in the house. They bring sweets and drinks to Jesus. But Jesus hands them out to the little ones.

« Are You not drinking, Master? Will You not have anything. We are offering it warmly. »

« I know, Joachim, and I accept wholeheartedly. But let Me make the little ones happy first. They are My joy… »

« Pay no attention to that man, Master. »

« No, Isaac. I will pray that he may see the Light. John, take the two little boys to see the sheep. And you, Mary, come closer to Me and tell Me: Who am I? »

« You are Jesus, the Son of Mary of Nazareth, born in Bethlehem. Isaac saw You and he gave me the name of Your Mother, that I may be good. »

« To imitate Her, you must be as good as an angel of God, purer than a lily that blooms on top of a mountain, as pious as the holiest Levite. Will you be like that? »

« Yes, Jesus, I will. »

« Say: Master or Lord, little girl. »

« Let her call Me with My name, Judas. Only when it is uttered by innocent lips, it does not lose the sound that it has on My Mother's lips. Everybody, throughout future centuries, will mention that name, some because of an interest or other, some to curse it. Only innocent people, without any interest and any hatred, will pronounce it with the same love as this little girl and My Mother. Also sinners will invoke Me, because they need mercy. But My Mother and the little ones! Why do you call Me Jesus? » He asks, caressing the little girl.

« Because I love You… as I love my father, mother and my little brothers » she says, embracing Jesus' knees, and smiling with her head turned upwards. And Jesus bends down and kisses her… and it all ends thus.

77. Jesus at Hebron. Zacharias' House. Aglae.

13th January 1945.

« At what time will we be arriving? » asks Jesus Who is walking in the centre of the group behind the sheep, grazing on the grass on the banks.

« At about the third hour. It's almost ten miles » replies Elias.

« Are we going to Kerioth afterwards? » asks Judas.

« Yes, we will go there. »

« Was it not quicker to go to Kerioth from Juttah? It cannot be a great distance. Is that correct, shepherd? »

« About two miles longer, more or less. »

« This way, we will be doing over twenty for nothing. »

« Judas, why are you so worried? »

« I am not worried, Master. But You promised You would come to my house. »

« And I will. I always keep My promises. »

« I sent word to my mother… and after all, You said so Yourself, one can be near the dead also with one's soul. »

« I did. But just think, Judas: you have not yet suffered because of Me. These people have been suffering for thirty years, and they have never betrayed, not even My memory they betrayed. They did not know whether I was dead or alive… and yet they remained faithful. They remembered Me as a newly-born baby, an infant with nothing but tears and the need of milk… and they have always worshipped Me as God. Because of Me they have been beaten, cursed and persecuted as if they were the disgrace of Judaea, and yet their faith has never faltered, neither did it wither under blows, on the contrary it took deeper roots and became stronger. »

« By the way. For some days I have been anxious to ask You a question. These people are Your friends and the friends of God, are they not? The angels blessed them with the peace of Heaven, did they not? *They have been faithful against all temptations, have they not? Would You explain to me, then, why they are unhappy?* And what about Anne? She was killed because she loved You… »

« Are you therefore deducing that to be loved by Me and to love Me brings bad luck? »

« No… but… »

« But you are. I am sorry to see you so closed to the Light and so open to human things. No, never mind John, and you too, Simon. I prefer him to speak. I never reproach. I only want you to open your souls to Me that I may enlighten them. Come here, Judas, listen. You are basing yourself on an opinion which is common to many people of our times and will be common to many in future. I said: an opinion. I should say: an error. But since you do not do so out of malice, but out of ignorance of the truth, it is not an error, it is only an incorrect opinion like a child's. And *you are like children, My poor men.* And *I am here, as a Master, to make adults of you,* capable of telling the truth from the false, good from bad and what is better from what is good. Listen to Me, therefore.

What is life? It is a period of pause, I would say the limbo of Limbo, that the God Father grants you *as trial to ascertain whether you are good or bad children, after which He will allot, according to your deeds, a future life without pauses or trials.* Now tell Me: would it be fair if a man, simply because he has been granted the rare gift of being in the position of serving God in a special way, had also an everlasting wealth throughout his life? Do you not think that he has already been granted a great deal and may therefore consider himself happy, even if human things are against him? Would it not be unfair if he, who already has the light of divine revelation in his heart and the smile of a clear conscience, should also have worldly honors and wealth? And would it not also be unwise?»

« Master, *I would also say that he would be a desecrator.* Why put human joys where You already are? *When one has You* – and they had You, they are the only rich people in Israel because they have had You for thirty years – *one should have nothing else.* We do not put human things on the Propitiatory… and the consecrated vase is used only for sacred uses. And these people are consecrated since the day they saw Your smile… and nothing but You is to enter their hearts, which possess You. I wish I was like them! » says Simon.

« But you wasted no time, immediately after you saw the Master and were cured, in getting back your property » Judas replies ironically.

« That is true. I said I would and I did. But do you know why? How can you judge if you do not know the whole situation? My representative was given precise instructions. Now that Simon Zealot has been cured – and his enemies can no longer harm him, neither can they persecute him because he belongs only to Jesus and to no sect: he has Jesus and nothing else – Simon can dispose of his wealth which an honest and faithful servant kept for him. And I, being the owner for a further short time, gave instructions that the estate should be reorganised, so that I would get more money when selling it and I would be able to say… no, I am not telling what. »

« The angels tell, Simon and they are writing it in the eternal book » says Jesus.

Simon looks at Jesus. Their eyes meet: Simon's express surprise, Jesus' blessing approval.

« As usual. I am wrong. »

« No, Judas. You have a practical sense, you said so yourself. »

« Oh! but with Jesus!… Also Simon Peter was full of practical sense, now instead!… You, too, Judas, will become like him. You have only been with the Master a short time, we have been longer with Him, and we are already better » says John who is always kind and conciliatory.

« He did not want me. Otherwise I would have been His since Passover. » Judas is really bad-tempered today.

Jesus puts an end to the argument by asking Levi: « Have you ever been to Galilee? »

« Yes, my Lord. »

« You will come with Me, to take Me to Jonah. Do you know him? »

« Yes, I do. We always met at Passover. I used to go and see him then. »

Joseph, mortified, lowers his head. Jesus notices and says: « You cannot both come. Elias would be left alone with the sheep. But you will come with Me as far as the Jericho pass, where we will part for some time. I will tell you after what you have to do. »

« What about us? Will we not do anything? »

« Yes, you will, Judas, you will. »

« There are some houses over there » says John, who is walking a few steps in front of the others.

« It's Hebron. Between two rivers with its crest. See, Master? That house there, amidst all the green, a little higher up than the others? That's Zacharias' house. »

« Let us quicken our paces. »

They cover the last stretch of the road very rapidly and go into the village. The sheep's little hooves sound like castanets on the uneven stones of the road, which is paved very roughly. They reach the house. People look at the group of men, who are so different by look, age and garments amongst the white sheep.

« Oh! It's different! There was a gate here! » says Elias. Now in place of the gate there is a metal door which prevents one from seeing, and also the enclosure wall is higher than a man and thus nothing can be seen inside.

« Perhaps it will be open at the back. » They go round a large quadrilateral wall, it is rather a long rectangular one, but the wall is the same height all round.

« The wall was built not long ago » remarks John, examining it. « There is not a scratch on it and there is still lime rubble on the ground. »

« I cannot even see the sepulcher… It was near the wood. Now the wood is outside the wall and… and it seems to belong to everybody. They are gathering firewood in it. » Elias is puzzled.

A man, an old woodcutter, small but strong, who is watching the group, stops sawing a trunk which he has cut down, and goes towards the group. « Whom are you looking for? »

« We wanted to go in, to pray on Zacharias' tomb ».

« There is no tomb any longer. Don't you know? Who are you? »

« I am a friend of Samuel, the shepherd. This… »

« It is not necessary, Elias » says Jesus and Elias keeps quiet.

« Ah! Samuel!… I see! But since John, Zacharias' son, was put into prison, the house is no longer his. And it is a misfortune, because he had all the profit of his property given to the poor people in Hebron. One morning a man came from Herod's court, he threw Jowehel out, he affixed seals, then he came back with bricklayers and they started raising the wall… The sepulcher was over there, in the corner. He did not want it… and one morning we found it all spoiled and half destroyed… the poor bones were all scattered… We put them together again, as well as we could… They are now in a sarcophagus… And in the house of the priest Zacharias, that filthy man keeps his lovers. Now there is a mime from Rome. That is why he raised the wall. He does not want people to see… The house of the priest a brothel! The house of the miracle and of the Precursor! For it is certainly him, if he is not the Messiah. And how much trouble we had because of the Baptist! But he is our great man! He is really great! Even when he was born there was a miracle. Elizabeth was as old as a withered thistle but

she became as fruitful as an apple in Adar, and that was the first miracle. Then a cousin of hers came and She was a holy woman, and She served her and loosened the priest's tongue. Her name was Mary. I remember Her, although we saw Her very rarely. How it happened I don't know. They say that to make Elizabeth happy, She made Zacharias put his mute mouth against Her pregnant bosom or that She put Her fingers into his mouth. I don't know. It is a fact, that after nine months' silence, Zacharias spoke praising the Lord and saying that there was a Messiah. He did not explain more. But my wife was there that day and she assured me that Zacharias, praising the Lord, said that his son would precede Him. Now I say: it is not what people believe. John is the Messiah and he goes before the Lord, as Abraham went before God. That's what it is. Am I not right? »

« You are right with regard to the spirit of the Baptist, who always proceeds before God. But you are not right with regard to the Messiah ».

« Well, the woman who said that She was the Mother of the Son of God – Samuel said so – was it not true that She was? Is She still living? »

« Yes, She was. The Messiah was born, preceded by him who raised his voice in the desert, as the Prophet said. »

« You are the first to say so. John, the last time that Jowehel took him a sheepskin, which he did every year at the beginning of winter, although he was questioned about the Messiah, did not say: "The Messiah is here." When he will say so… »

« Man, I was a disciple of John and I heard him say: "Here is the Lamb of God" pointing to… » says John.

« No, no. He is the Lamb. A true Lamb who grew up by himself, almost without the need of a father and mother. As soon as he became a son of the Law, he lived isolated in the mountain caves overlooking the desert, and he grew up there conversing with God. Elizabeth and Zacharias died, and he did not come. God only was his father and mother. There is no holy man greater than he is. You can ask everyone in Hebron. Samuel used to say so, but the people in Bethlehem must have been right. John is the holy man of God. »

« If someone said to you: "I am the Messiah", what would you say? » asks Jesus.

« I would call him a "blasphemer" and I would drive him away, throwing stones at him. »

« And if he worked a miracle to prove that he was the Messiah? »

« I would say that he was "possessed". The Messiah will come when John reveals himself in his true nature. The very hatred of Herod is the proof. Cunning as he is, he knows that John is the Messiah. »

« He was not born in Bethlehem. »

« But when he is freed, after announcing by himself his impending oncoming, he will reveal himself in Bethlehem. Also Bethlehem is waiting for that. Whilst… Oh! Go, if you have plenty of guts, and talk to the Bethlehemites of another Messiah… and you will see… »

« Have you a synagogue? »

« Yes, about two hundred steps straight ahead. You cannot go wrong. Near it there is the sarcophagus with the violated remains. »

« Goodbye, may God enlighten you. »

They go away. They turn round on to the front of the house.

At the door there is a young woman impudently dressed. She is beautiful. « My Lord, do you wish to come into the house? Come in. »

Jesus stares at her as severe as a judge, but does not speak.

But Judas does, supported by all the others. « Go back in, shameless woman! Do not desecrate us with your breath, ravenous bitch. »

The woman blushes and lowers her head. She is about to disappear abashed and scoffed at by urchins and passersby.

« Who is so pure as to say: "I have never desired the apple offered by Eve?" » asks Jesus severely and He adds: « Show Me him and I will call him a holy man. Nobody? Well, then, if not out of disgust, but out of weakness, you feel unable to go near this woman, you may withdraw. I will not force weaklings into unequal struggles. Woman, I would like to come in. This house belonged to a relative of Mine and is dear to Me. »

« Come in, my Lord, if You do not loathe me. »

« Leave the door open, that the world may see and may not tattle… »

Jesus enters serious and solemn. The woman, subdued, bows down before Him and dares not move. But the quips of the people cut her to the quick. She runs away to the end of the garden, while Jesus goes as far as the foot of the staircase. He looks in through the half open doors but does not go in. He then goes to the place of the sepulcher, where there is now a kind of small pagan temple.

« The bones of the just, also when dry and scattered, ooze a purifying balm and spread seed of eternal life. Peace to the dead who lived doing good! Peace to the pure who are sleeping in the Lord! Peace to those who suffered, but knew no vice! Peace to the real great ones of the world and of Heaven! Peace! »

The woman has reached Jesus, walking along the hedge that protects her.

« My Lord! »

« Woman. »

« Your Name, my Lord. »

« Jesus. »

« I never heard it. I am Roman: a mime and dancer. I am an expert only in lust. What is the meaning of Your name? My name is Aglae and… and it means: vice. »

« Mine means: Savior. »

« How do You save? And whom? »

« Those who are anxious to be saved. I save by teaching to be pure, to prefer sorrows to honors, to desire good at all costs, » Jesus speaks without bitterness, without even turning towards the woman.

« I am lost… »

« I am the One seeking who is lost. »

« I am dead. »

« I am the One who gives Life. »

« I am filth and falsehood. »

« I am Purity and Truth. »

« You are also Bounty, You do not look at me. You do not touch me, You do not tread on me. Have mercy on me… »

« First, you must have mercy on yourself. On your soul. »

« What is the soul? »

« It is what makes a god of man and not an animal. Vice and sin kill it, and once it is killed, man becomes a repulsive animal. »

« Will it be possible for me to see You again? »

« Who looks for Me, finds Me. »

« Where do You live? »

« Where hearts need doctors and medicines to become honest again. »

« In that case… I will not see You again… I live where no doctor, medicine or honesty is wanted. »

« Nothing prevents you from coming to where I am. My name will be shouted in the streets and will reach you. Goodbye. »

« Goodbye, my Lord. Allow me to call You “Jesus”. Oh! Not out of familiarity! … But that a little of salvation may come to me. I am Aglae, remember me. »

« I will. Goodbye. »

The woman stays at the end of the garden, Jesus comes out of it severe. He looks at everybody. He sees perplexity in His disciples and hears jeers from the Hebronites. A servant closes the door.

Jesus goes straight along the road. He knocks at the synagogue.

A resentful old man looks out. He does not even give Jesus time to speak. « The synagogue is forbidden, in this holy place, to those who deal with prostitutes. Go away. »

Jesus turns away without replying and continues walking along the road. His

disciples follow Him. They begin to speak when they are outside Hebron.

« You asked for trouble, Master » says Judas. « A prostitute, of all people! »

« Judas, I solemnly tell you that she will surpass you. And now, since you are reproaching Me, what do you say of the Judaeans? In the most holy places in Judaea we have been scoffed at and driven away… That is the truth. The day will come when Samaria and the Gentiles will worship the true God, and the people of the Lord will be soiled with blood and a crime… a crime in comparison with which the sins of prostitutes who sell their bodies and their souls, will be a very small thing. I was not able to pray on the tomb of My cousins and of the just Samuel. It does not matter. Rest, holy bones, rejoice, souls, that dwelt in them. The first resurrection is near. Then the day will come when you will be shown to the angels as the souls of the servants of the Lord. »

Jesus stops speaking and the vision ends.

78. Jesus at Kerioth. Death of Old Saul.

14th January 1945.

I am under the impression that the steepest part, that is the closest tangle of Judaean mountains, is between Hebron and Juttah. But I may be mistaken, and this valley may be wider, opening on to wider horizons, with isolated mountains emerging here and there, not forming any real chain. It may be a valley between two chains of mountains. I do not know. It is the first time I see it, and I am puzzled. The fields are not very large, but they are well cultivated with various cereals: mainly barley and rye. There are also some nice vineyards in the sunny parts. Higher up, I can see some lovely forests of Pinetrees and fir-trees and other trees typical of woody places. A reasonably good road leads into a small village.

« This is the suburb of Kerioth. Please come to my country house. My mother is waiting for You there. We will go to Kerioth afterwards » says Judas who is beside himself with excitement.

I omitted to mention that only Judas, Simon and John are now with Jesus. The shepherds are not here. Perhaps they remained in the pastures of Hebron or they have gone back towards Bethlehem.

« As you wish, Judas, but we could have stopped even here to meet your mother. »

« Oh! No! It is only a farm house. My mother comes here at harvest time. But she lives in Kerioth. And do You not want my town people to see You? Do You not want to take Your light to them? »

« I certainly do, Judas. But you already are aware that I do not mind the humility of the place that gives Me hospitality. »

« But today You are my guest… and Judas knows how to be hospitable. »

They walk for a few more yards among houses spread about the country, while men and women look out, called by children. It is obvious that their curiosity has been awakened. Judas must have sent word warning them.

« Here is my poor house. Forgive its poverty. »

But, after all, the house is not a hovel: it consists of a large and well kept ground floor only, in the middle of a thick flowering orchard. A small private clean road leads from the main road to the house.

« May I go ahead of You, Master? »

« Yes, go. »

Judas goes.

« Master, Judas has done things in great style » says Simon, « I rather suspected he would. But now I am certain. Master, You keep saying, and quite rightly, spirit… But he… he does not see things that way. He will never understand You… or perhaps only very late » he adds not to grieve Jesus. Jesus sighs and is silent.

Judas comes out with a woman who is about fifty years old. She is rather tall, but not so tall as her son, who has her same dark eyes and curly hair. But her eyes are kind and rather sad, whereas those of Judas are imperious and shrewd.

« I greet You, King of Israel » she says prostrating herself in a real salutation of a subject. « Allow Your servant to give You hospitality. »

« Peace to you, woman. And may God be with you and your creature. »

« Oh! yes! With my creature. » It sounds more like a sigh than a reply.

« Stand up, mother. I have a Mother, too, and I cannot allow you to kiss My feet. I kiss you, woman, in My Mother's name. She is a sister of yours… in love and in the painful destiny of the mother of those who are marked. »

« What do You mean, Messiah? » asks Judas somewhat worried.

But Jesus does not reply. He is embracing the woman, whom He has kindly raised up from the ground and is now kissing her cheeks. And, holding her hand, He walks toward the house.

They go into a cool room, which is shaded by light striped curtains. Cold drinks and fresh fruit are already laid out. But first of all Judas' mother calls a maidservant who brings in water and the landlady would like to take off Jesus' sandals and wash His dusty feet. But Jesus objects. « No, mother. A mother is too holy a person, particularly when she is honest and good, as you are, to be allowed to take the attitude of a slave… »

The mother looks at Judas… an unusual look. She then goes away. Jesus has refreshed Himself. When He is about to put on His sandals, the woman comes back with a new pair. « Here, Messiah. I think I have done the right thing… as Judas wanted… He said to me: "A little longer than mine, but the same width."»

« But why, Judas? »

« Will You not let me offer You a gift? Are You not my King and my God? »

« Yes, Judas. But you must not give so much trouble to your mother. You know what I am like… »

« I know. You are holy. But You must appear as a holy King. That is how one imposes oneself. – In the world, where nine tenths of the folk are foolish people, we must impose ourselves with our appearance. Trust me. »

Jesus has fastened the red leather open-work straps of the new sandals, which reach up to His ankles. They are much nicer than His plain sandals of a workman, and they resemble Judas' sandals, which are like shoes with open-work showing parts of his feet.

« Also the tunic, my King. I prepared it for Judas… But he makes a present of it to You. It's a linen one: cool and new. Allow a mother to put it on You… as if You were her son. »

Jesus looks at Judas once again… but does not speak. He unties the lace of His tunic, round His neck, and lets His wide tunic fall on to the floor and thus is left with only His short under-tunic. The woman puts on Him the lovely new garment. She offers Him a belt, which is richly embroidered braid, from which a cord hangs down, decorated with very thick tassels. Jesus must feel comfortable in the cool clean clothes, but He does not seem very happy. In the meantime the others have cleaned themselves.

« Come, Master. They come from my poor orchard. And this is honeyed water, prepared by my mother. Perhaps, Simon, you would prefer this white wine. Have some. It is the wine of my vineyard. And what about you, John? Will you have the same as the Master? » Judas is overjoyed at pouring the drinks into beautiful silver cups, thus showing his wealth.

His mother is not very talkative. She looks… looks… at Judas, and even more at Jesus, and when Jesus, before eating, offers her the nicest fruit (possibly very big apricots, they are yellow red fruits, certainly not apples) and He says to her: « First of all to mother, always », her eyes well with tears.

« Mother, is the rest ready? » asks Judas.

« Yes, son. I think I have done everything well. But I was brought up here and I have always lived here and I do not know… I do not know the habits of kings. »

« Which habits, woman? Which kings? What have You done, Judas? »

« Are You not the promised King of Israel? It is time that the world should salute You as such, and that must happen for the first time here, in my town, in my house. I revere You as such. For my sake, and for the respect due to Your names of Messiah, Christ, King, which the Prophets gave You by Yahweh's command, do not give me the lie. »

« Woman, friends, please. I must speak to Judas. I have precise instructions to give him. »

The mother and the disciples withdraw.

« Judas: what have you done? Have you understood so little of Me so far? Why lower Me to the extent of making Me only a mighty man of the world, nay: a

man intriguing to become mighty? And do you not understand that *that is an offence, nay an obstacle to My mission?* Yes. Do not deny it. It is an obstacle. Israel is subjected to Rome. You know what happened when they raised against Rome someone who seemed a mob-leader and aroused the suspicion of creating an insurrection. Only a few days ago you heard how pitiless they were against a Child because they were afraid He might be a king according to the world. And yet you!…

Oh! Judas! What do you expect from the sovereignty of the flesh? What do you expect? I gave you time to think and decide. I spoke to you very clearly from the very first time. I also sent you away because I knew… because I know, I read and see what is in you. *Why do you want to follow Me, if you do not want to be as I want you?* Go away, Judas. *Do not harm yourself and do not harm Me… Go away.* It is better for you. *You are not a suitable worker for this task.* It is by far too much above you. *In you there is pride, there is greed and all its three branches, there is arrogance…* even your mother must be afraid of you… you are inclined to falsehood… No, My follower must not be like that. Judas, I do not hate you, I do not curse you. I only say to you, and I am saying it with the grief of one who knows he cannot change the person he loves, *I only say to you: go your way, make your way in the world, since that is what you want, but do not stay with Me.*

My life!… My royal palace! How small and mean they are! *Do you know where I will be a King? When I will be proclaimed King?* When I will be raised up, upon an ill-famed piece of wood and My own blood will be My purple, and My crown will be a wreath of thorns and My insignia a mocking poster and the curses of all the people, of My people, will be the trumpets, the tambourines, the organs, the citherns saluting the proclamation of the King. And do you know by whose deed all this will happen? *By the deed of one who did not understand Me.* One who will have understood nothing. One, whose heart was a hollow piece of bronze, which pride, sensuality and avarice had filled with their humours, which will generate coils of snakes that will be used to chain Me and… and to curse him. The others are not so well aware of My destiny. Please do not tell them. Let us keep this to ourselves. In any case it, is a reproach… and you will keep quiet to avoid saying: “I was reproached”… Is that clear, Judas? »

Judas has blushed so much, that he looks purple. He is standing before Jesus, mortified, his head lowered… He kneels down and he cries with his head on Jesus' knees: « I love you, Master, Don't reject me. Yes, I am proud and foolish, but don't send me away. No. Master. I will never do it again. You are right. It was thoughtless of me. But there is some love in my mistake. I wanted to honor You… and I wanted the others to honor You as well… because I love You. You said so three days ago: “When you make a mistake without malice, out of ignorance, it is not an error, but an imperfect judgement: like the error of children, and I am here to make adults of you.” Here I am, here against Your knees… You said You would be a father to me… and I am here against Your knees as if they were my father's, and I ask You to forgive me, and to make an “adult” of me, a holy adult… Don't send me away, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus… Not everything is wicked in me. You know: I left everything for you and I have come. You are much more than the honors and victories I got serving other people. You are indeed the love of poor unhappy Judas who would like to give You nothing but joy, and is instead the cause of pain for You… »

« That is all right, Judas. I forgive you once again… » Jesus looks tired… « I forgive you, hoping… hoping that in future you will understand Me. »

« Yes, Master. But, now, do not give me the lie, otherwise I will be laughed at. Everybody in Kerioth knows that I was coming with David's Descendant, the King of Israel… and the town has made preparations to welcome You… I thought I was doing a good thing… showing You what one must do to be respected and obeyed… and I also wanted to show John and Simon, and through them, all the others who love You but treat You as their equal… Also my mother would be mocked at, as the mother of a mad liar. For her sake, my Lord… And I swear that I… »

« Do not swear to Me. Swear to yourself, if you can, that You will not commit such a sin again. For the sake of your mother and your fellow citizens I will not shame you by going away without stopping here. Stand up. »

« What will You tell the others? »

« The truth… »

« No, don't. »

« The truth: that I gave you instructions for today. It is always possible to tell the truth in a charitable way. Let us go. Call Your mother and the others. »

Jesus is rather severe. He smiles again only when Judas comes back with his mother and the disciples. The woman gazes at Jesus, but she gains confidence

when she sees His kind disposition. I get the impression she is in great distress.

« Shall we go to Kerioth? I have rested and I wish to thank you, mother, for all your kindness. May Heaven reward you and grant rest and peace to your late husband, for all your charity to Me. »

The woman tries to kiss His hand, but Jesus caresses her head and thus prevents her from doing so.

« The wagon is ready, Master. Come. »

Outside, in fact, an ox cart is just arriving. It is a comfortable cart, on which they have placed cushions as seats and a red tent as a cover.

« Get on, Master. »

« Your mother, first. »

The woman gets on and then Jesus and the others.

« Sit here, Master. » (Judas no longer calls Him king).

Jesus sits in front, and Judas sits beside Him. The woman and the disciples are behind. The man driving the cart goads the oxen walking beside them.

It is a short journey: about four hundred meters, probably a little more. The first houses of Kerioth are now visible and it looks like a decent little town. A little boy on the sunny road is watching and he immediately dashes away. When the cart reaches the first houses, the notables and the people welcome Him; the houses are decorated with draperies and branches. The people shout with joy and bow down deeply. Jesus, from the height of His shaking throne, can but greet them and bless them.

The cart moves on and after crossing a square it turns into a street, where it stops before a house the door of which is already wide open. Two or three women are standing at the door. They stop and get off. « My house is Yours, Master. »

« Peace to it, Judas. Peace and holiness. »

They go in. Beyond the hall there is a large room, with low divans and inlaid furniture. The notables of the place and other people go in with Jesus. There is a lot of bowing and curiosity: a showy joyfulness. An impressive elderly man delivers a speech: « it is a great honor for the land of Kerioth to receive You, my Lord. A great fortune! A happy day! It is a great fortune to have You and to see that a son of Kerioth is Your friend and assistant. May he be blessed because he met You before everyone else! And may You be blessed ten times ten because you have revealed Yourself: You are the one Who has been expected for generations and generations. Speak, my Lord and King. Our hearts are anxious to hear Your word, just as the land parched by a fiery summer awaits the first soft showers in September. »

« Thank you, whoever you are. Thank you. And thanks to these citizens whose hearts have honored the Word of the Father, and the Father Whose Word I am. Because You must understand that thanks and honor are due not to the Son of man, Who is speaking to you, but to the Most High Lord, for this time of peace during which He re-establishes the broken paternity with the sons of man. Let us praise the true Lord, the God of Abraham Who had mercy on and loved His people and granted them the promised Redeemer. Glory and praise not to Jesus, the servant of the Eternal Will, but to the loving Will. »

« Your words are the words of a holy man: I am the chief of the synagogue. Today it is not a Sabbath. But come to my house, to explain the Law, since You are anointed with Wisdom, rather than with royal oil. »

« I will come. »

« Perhaps my Lord is tired… »

« No, Judas, I am never tired of speaking of God and I am never anxious to disappoint the hearts of men. »

« Come, then » the synagogue chief insists. « The whole of Kerioth is out there waiting for You. »

« Let us go. »

They go out. Jesus is between Judas and the arch synagogue, around them there are the notables and the crowds. Jesus passes through them blessing.

The synagogue is on the square. They go in. Jesus goes to the lectern. He begins to speak, bright in His beautiful robes, His face inspired, His arms stretched out in His usual attitude.

« People of Kerioth, the Word of God is speaking to you. Listen. He Who is speaking to you is but the Word of God. His sovereignty comes from the Father

and will return to the Father after Israel has been evangelized. May your hearts and minds be opened to the truth, so that you may be freed from errors and confusion.

Isaiah said: "For all the footgear of battle, every cloak rolled in blood, is burnt and consumed by fire. For there is a Child born to us, a Son given to us, and dominion is laid on His shoulders; and this is the name they give Him: Wonder-Counselor, Mighty-God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace." That is My Name. We leave to Caesar and the Tetrarchs their preys. I will commit a robbery. But not a robbery deserving to be punished by fire. On the contrary I will snatch from Satan's fire many of his preys and I will take them to the Kingdom of peace, of which I am the Prince, and to the future century: the eternal time of which I am the Father.

"God", says David, from whose stock I descend, as was prophesied by those who saw the future because of their holiness which was so pleasing to God, that He chose them as His messengers, "God elected one only… my son… but the work is great: this palace is not for man but for God." It is so. *God, the King of kings, elected one person only: His Son, to build His house in the hearts of men.* And He has already prepared the materials. Oh! How much gold of charity! and copper, silver, iron, rare wood and precious stones! They are all gathered in his Word Who makes use of them to build God's abode in you. *But if man does not help the Lord, the Lord will build His dwelling place in vain.* One must reply to gold with gold, to silver with silver, to copper with copper, to iron with iron. That is, love is to be given for love, continence to serve Purity, perseverance to be loyal, strength to be steadfast. And one must carry stones today, wood tomorrow: a sacrifice today, a deed tomorrow and thus build. *You must always build the Temple of God in your hearts.*

The Master, the Messiah, the King of everlasting Israel and of God's eternal people, calls you. But He wants you to be pure for the work. *Relinquish pride: praise is due to God. Relinquish human thoughts: the Kingdom belongs to God.* Be humble and say with Me: "All things are Yours, Father. Everything that is good is Yours. Teach us how to know You and serve You in truth." Say: "Who am I?" And acknowledge that you will be something only when you become purified dwellings into which God may descend and rest.

You are all pilgrims and strangers in this world, learn how to gather together and proceed towards the promised Kingdom. The road: *the commandments fulfilled not because of fear of a punishment, but out of love for You, holy Father.* The Ark: *a perfect heart in which the nourishing manna of wisdom is treasured and the branch of a pure will is certain to bloom.* And come to the Light of the world, that your houses may be bright with light. I bring you the Light. Nothing else. I have no riches and I do not promise worldly honors. But I possess all the supernatural wealth of My Father and *I promise the eternal honor of Heaven to those who will follow God with love and charity.* Peace be with you. »

The people who have listened attentively, begin to murmur somewhat agitated. Jesus speaks to the head of the synagogue. Other people, perhaps the notables, join the group.

« Master, but are You not the King of Israel? We were told… »

« I am. »

« But You said… »

« That I neither possess nor promise worldly Wealth. I can speak but the truth. Yes, it is so. I know what you think. But the error is due to a misinterpretation and your great respect for the Most High. You were told: "The Messiah is coming" and you thought, like many in Israel, that Messiah and king were the same thing. Raise your minds higher up. Look at this beautiful summer sky. Do you think it ends there, where the air seems a sapphire vault? No, the most pure, the most azure spheres are beyond it, up as far as Paradise, which no one can imagine, where the Messiah will lead all the just who die in the Lord. The same difference exists between the Messiah's royalty, as understood by men, and His true Royalty: which is entirely divine. »

« But will we, poor men, be able to raise our minds so far up? »

« Yes, if you only want to. And if you want to, I will help you. »

« How shall we call You, if You are not a king? »

« Call Me Master, or Jesus, as you wish. I am a Master and I am Jesus, the Savior. »

An old man says: « Listen, my Lord. Some time ago, a long time ago, at the time of the edict, we heard here that the Savior was born in Bethlehem… and I went there with other people… I saw a little Baby, exactly like all other new-born babies. But I adored Him with faith. Later I heard that there was a holy man,

whose name is John. Which is the true Messiah? »

« The One you adored. The other is His Precursor: a great saint in the eyes of the Most High. But he is not the Messiah. »

« Was it You? »

« It was I. And what did you see around the new-born Child? »

« Poverty and cleanliness, honesty and purity… A kind grave carpenter, whose name was Joseph, a carpenter but of the House of David, a young mother, fair and kind, whose name was Mary, before whose grace the most beautiful roses of Engedi turn pale and the lilies of the royal flower beds seem misshapen, and a Child with large blue eyes and pale gold hair… I saw nothing else… And I can still hear the voice of the Mother say to me: "On behalf of My Creature I say to You: may the Lord be with you until the eternal meeting and may His Grace come towards you on your way." I am eighty-four years old… my way is near its end. I was no longer expecting to meet the Grace of God. Instead I have found You… and now I do not wish to see any other light than Yours… Yes. I see You as You are in this merciful attire, which is the flesh You have taken. I see You! Listen to the voice of a man who sees the Light of God while dying! »

The people press round the old inspired man, who is in Jesus' group. No longer leaning on his walking stick, he lifts his trembling arms and raises his white head, which, with its byparted beard, seems the head of a patriarch or a prophet.

« I see Him: The Chosen, Supreme, Perfect One, Who descended here out of love, I see Him rise again to the right hand side of the Father and become One with Him. But… Oh! He is not just a Voice' or an incorporeal Essence, as Moses saw the Most High, or as Genesis tells the First Parents heard Him and spoke to Him in the evening breeze. I see Him as real Flesh rising to the Eternal Father. Blazing Flesh! Glorious Flesh! Oh! Pomp of Divine Flesh! Oh! Beauty of the Man-God! He is the King! Yes. The King. Not of Israel: of the world. All the royalties of the earth bow to Him and all the scepters and crowns fade away in the splendour of His scepter and jewels. He has a crown on His head and a scepter in His hand. He wears a rational on His chest: it is adorned with pearls and rubies, the brightness of which was never seen before. Flames issue from it as if it were a blazing furnace. There are two rubies on His wrists and buckles with rubies are on His holy feet. There is so much light from the rubies! Admire, peoples, the Eternal King! I see You! I see You! I am rising with You… Ah! Lord! Our Redeemer!… The light increases within my soul… The King is decorated with His own Blood! The crown is a wreath of bleeding thorns. The scepter is a cross… Here is the Man! He is here! It is You!… Lord, for the sake of Your sacrifice have mercy on Your servant, Jesus, I commend my soul to Your mercy. » The old man, who so far had stood up, rejuvenated by the fire of prophecy, suddenly collapses and would fall if Jesus were not quick in holding him up against His chest.

« Saul. »

« Saul is dying! »

« Help! »

« Be quick. »

« Peace to the just man who is dying » says Jesus, Who has slowly knelt down to support the old man, who has become heavier and heavier.

There is silence.

Then Jesus lays him down on the ground. And He stands up. « Peace to his soul. He died seeing the Light. In his expectation which will be a short one, he will already see the face of God and will be happy. There is no death, that is parting from life, for those who died in the Lord. »

The people, after a little while, go away commenting. The elders, Jesus, His disciples and the archsynagogue remain.

« Did he prophesy, Lord. »

« His eyes saw the Truth. Let us go. »

They go out.

« Master, Saul died enraptured by the Spirit of God. We touched him, are we clean or unclean? »

« Unclean. »

« And what about You? »

« I am just like the others. I do not change the Law. The Law is law and an Israelite fulfills it. We are unclean. Within the third and the seventh day we shall

get purified. Till then, we are unclean. Judas, I am not going back to your mother's. I do not want to take uncleanliness to her home. Send her word by someone who can go there. Peace to this town. Let us go. »

I do not see anything else.

79. Jesus on His Way Back Stops with the Shepherds near Hebron.

15th January 1945.

Jesus is walking with His disciples on a road along the torrent. The road is not really running along the torrent. The torrent is below; high above, on the side of the mountain there is a twisting road, as is easily found in mountain places. John is almost purple, laden like a porter, with a big heavy satchel. Judas is carrying Jesus' bag and his own. Simon has only his bag and the mantles. Jesus is now wearing his own clothes and sandals. But Judas' mother must have had His tunic washed, because it is no longer creased.

« How much fruit! How beautiful are those vineyards on those hills! » says John, who is always in good humour, notwithstanding the heat and the fatigue. « Master, is this the river on the banks of which our fathers picked the miraculous grapes? »

« No, it is another one, farther south. But the whole region was blessed with rich fruit. »

« It is not so blessed now, although still beautiful. »

« Too many wars have devastated the country. Israel was made here… but it had to be fecundated by its own blood and by the blood of its enemies. »

« Where will we find the shepherds? »

« Five miles from Hebron, on the banks of the river you were enquiring about. »

« Beyond that hill, then. »

« Correct. »

« It's very warm. The summer… Where are we going after, Master? »

« To a place which is even warmer. But I ask you to come. We shall travel by night. The stars are so bright that there is no darkness. I want to show you a place… »

« A town? »

« No… A place… that will make you understand the Master… perhaps better than do His words. »

« We lost some days over that stupid incident. It spoiled everything… and my mother who had prepared so much, was disappointed. I cannot understand why You wanted to segregate Yourself with the purification… »

« Judas, why do you call stupid a fact that was a grace for a true believer? Would you not like such a death for yourself? He had waited all his life for the Messiah, and although an elderly man, he had gone along uncomfortable roads, to adore Him, when he was told: “He is here.” He had kept My Mother's word for thirty years in his heart. He was enraptured by the fire of love and faith in the last hour granted to him by God. His heart burst out of joy and was burnt, like a pleasing holocaust, by the fire of God. Which destiny could be better? He spoiled the feast you had prepared? You can see in that the answer of God. The things of man are not to be mixed with the things of God… Your mother will have Me again. The old man would not have had Me again. The whole of Kerioth can come to Christ, the old man had no more strength to do so. I am happy that I held the old dying father against My heart and I commended his soul. With regard to the rest… Why give scandal lacking respect for the Law? One must walk in front of the others if one wants to say: “Follow me.” And to lead people on to a holy path, one must walk on the same path. How could I have said, or how could I say: “Be faithful”, if I were faithless? »

« I think that error is the cause of our decay. The rabbis and Pharisees crush the people with their precepts and then… then they behave like the man who desecrated John's house, making it a place of sin » remarks Simon.

« He is one of Herod's… »

« Yes, Judas, but the same faults are to be found also in the classes which are said – by themselves of course – to be holy. What do you say about it, Master? » asks Simon.

« I say that only if there is a handful of true yeast and true incense in Israel, the bread will be made and the altar perfumed. »

« What do you mean? »

« I mean that if there is anyone coming to the Truth with a sincere heart, the Truth will spread like the yeast in the mass of flour and like incense all over Israel. »

« What did that woman say to You? » asks Judas. Jesus does not reply. He instead addresses John: « Your load is heavy and you are tired. Give it to Me. »

« No, Jesus, I am used to carrying weights and in any case… the thought of Isaac's joy makes it light. »

They go round the hillock. Elias' sheep are in the shade of the wood, on the other side. And the shepherds, sitting in the shade are watching them. When they see Jesus they start running.

« Peace to you. You are here? »

« We were worried about You… because of the delay… and we didn't know whether to come and meet You or obey… then we decided to come so far… and thus obey Your instructions and satisfy our love at the same time. You were to be here many days ago. »

« We had to stay… »

« Nothing… wrong? »

« No, My friends, nothing. A faithful believer died on My breast. Nothing else. »

« What do you think should have happened, shepherd? When things are well arranged… Certainly one must know how to prepare them and prepare also hearts to receive them. My town paid every honor to Christ. Did they not, Master? »

« Yes, they did. Isaac, on our way back we called at Sarah's. Also the town of Juttah, without any preparation other than its simple goodness and the truth of Isaac's words, understood the essence of My doctrine and learned how to love with a holy practical unselfish love. She sent you some clothes and food, Isaac, and everybody wanted to add something to the alms you left on your bed, because you are now back in the world and you lack everything. Take this. I never take money. But I accepted this because it is purified by charity. »

« No, Master, You keep it. I… I am used to doing without it. »

« You will now have to go to the various villages, to which I will send you. And you will need it. A workman is entitled to his pay, also If he deals with souls… because there is still a body to be nourished, as if it were a donkey helping its master. It is not much. But you will manage. John has some clothes and sandals in that bag. Joachim took some of his own. They may be too big… but there is so much love in the gift! »

Isaac takes the bag and goes behind a bush to dress. He was still barefooted and was wearing his strange gown made from a blanket.

« Master » says Elias. « That woman… the woman who is in John's house… three days after You left and we were pasturing the sheep on the meadows of Hebron – they belong to everybody, the meadows, and they could not send us away – she sent her maid to us with this bag and told us that she wanted to speak to us… I don't know whether I did the right thing… but the first time I gave the bag back to her and said: “I do not want to listen to her”… Then she sent this message: “Come in Jesus' name” and I went. She waited until her… well, the man who keeps her, had gone… How many things she wanted to know. But I… didn't tell her very much. Out of prudence. She is a prostitute. I was afraid it might be a trap for You. She asked me who You are, where You live, what You do, if You are a gentleman… I said: “He is Jesus of Nazareth, He goes everywhere, because He is a Master, and He goes round Palestine teaching”; I said You are a poor man, a simple workman, made wise by Wisdom… Nothing else. »

« You did well » says Jesus, and Judas at the same moment exclaims: « You did the wrong thing! Why did you not say that He is the Messiah, the King of the world? The proud Roman woman should be crushed under the blow of God's splendour. »

« She would not have understood me… In any case how could I be sure that she was sincere? When you saw her, you said what she is. Was I to throw holy things, and everything that is Jesus is holy, into her mouth? Was I to endanger Jesus, giving too much information? Anyone may hurt Him, but I will not. »

« John, let us go and tell her who the Master is, and explain the holy truth to her.

»

« Not me. Unless Jesus tells me. »

« Are you afraid? What can she do to you? Do you loathe her? The Master did not. »

« I am not afraid, neither do I loathe her. I feel sorry for her. But I think that if Jesus wanted, He could have stopped to teach her. He did not do it… it is not necessary for us to do it. »

« At the time there were no signs of a conversion… Now… Show me the bag, Elias. » And Judas, who is sitting on the grass, empties the bag on his mantle. Rings, armlets, bracelets and a necklace roll out: yellow gold on the dark gold of Judas' mantle. « They are jewels!… What can we do with them? »

« They can be sold » says Simon.

« They are troublesome things » remarks Judas, who, however, admires them.

« That's what I told her, when I took them; I also said: "Your master will beat you." She replied: "They do not belong to him. They are mine and I do what I want with them. I know it is the gold of sins… but it will become good if used for the poor and the holy. That they may remember me" » and she was crying.

« Go and see her, Master. »

« No. »

« Send Simon. »

« No. »

« Well, I'll go. »

« No. » Jesus' « No » is sharp and peremptory.

« Was I wrong, Master, in speaking to her and taking that gold? » asks Elias, when he sees Jesus so serious.

« You did nothing wrong. But there is nothing more to be done. »

« But perhaps that woman wants to redeem herself and she needs to be taught… » Judas objects once again.

« There are already in her so many sparks capable of starting a fire which will burn her vices and purify her soul and repentance will render her innocent once again. A few minutes ago I spoke to you of the yeast which is mixed with the flour and turns it into holy bread. Listen now to a short parable.

That woman is the flour. A flour in which the Evil One has mixed his hellish powders. I am the yeast. That is, *My word is the yeast.* But if there is too much chaff in the flour, or if sand, or little stones or ashes are mixed in it, is it possible to make bread with it, even if the yeast is good? It is not possible. It is necessary to patiently remove the chaff, the ashes, stones and sand from the flour.

Then *Mercy passes by and offers the first sieve… The first one: made with short basic truths, which may be understood by one entangled in the net of total ignorance, vice and Gentilism.* If the soul accepts it, the first purification begins. The second takes place by means of the sieve of the soul itself, which compares its own being with the Being that revealed Itself. And the soul is horrified. And it starts its work. By means of a more and more particular operation, after the stones, the sand and the ashes, it reaches the point of removing also that part of the flour consisting of grains too heavy and too coarse to make good bread. The soul is now ready. Mercy then passes by once again and penetrates into the flour now ready – that is a preparation too, Judas – and raises it and turns it into bread. *But it is a long operation: an operation of the "will power" of the soul.*

That woman already has in herself the minimum which was fair to give her and which may be used by her to accomplish her work. *Let her do it, if she wishes to, but we must not disturb her.* Everything upsets a soul which is working: curiosity, unadvised zeal, intolerance as well as excessive compassion. »

« We are not going to see her, then? »

« No. And that none of you may be tempted to, let us leave at once. There is shade in the wood. We will stop at the foot of the Terebinth Valley. And we will part there. Elias will go back to his pastures with Levi: Joseph will come with Me as far as the Jericho ford. Later… we will meet again. You, Isaac, continue what you did at Juttah, going from here, through Arimathaea and Lydda, to Doco. We will meet there. It is necessary to prepare Judaea, and you know how to do it. Exactly as you did at Juttah ».

« And what about us? »

« You? You will come, as I said, to see My preparation. Also I prepared for My

mission. »

« Did You go to a rabbi's? »

« No. »

« Did You go to John? »

« I was only baptized by him. »

« Well, then? »

« Bethlehem spoke with its stones and its hearts. Also where I am taking you, Judas, the stones and a heart, Mine, will speak to you and give you the answer. »

Elias, who has brought some milk and brown bread, says: « While waiting for You, I tried, and Isaac tried with me, to convince the people in Hebron… But they will not believe, they will not take an oath, they do not want anyone but John. He is their "holy man" and they do not want anyone else. »

« It is a sin quite common to many places and many present and future believers. They look at the workman, not at the master who sent the workman. They ask the workman questions and they do not even say to him: "Tell your master." They forget that there is a workman only because there is a master and that it is the master who instructs the workman and enables him to work. They forget that the workman can intercede, but only the master can concede. In this case God and His Word with Him. It does not matter. The Word is sorry but bears no grudge. Let us go. »

The vision ends.

80. Jesus Returns to the Mountain Where He Fasted and to the Rock of Temptation.

17th January 1945.

A most beautiful dawn in the wilderness, seen from the height of a mountain side. It is daybreak. A few stars are still visible and a very thin arc of a waning moon looks like a silver comma on the dark blue velvet of the sky.

The mountain is completely isolated, that is, it is not linked to any other chain of mountains. But it is a real mountain, not a hill. The top is much higher up, but even from the middle of its slope one commands a very wide horizon, because one is well above ground level. In the fresh morning air, as the faint white-greenish dawn light becomes clearer and clearer, profiles and details slowly become visible, whereas before they were hidden in the fog that precedes daybreak, a fog that is darker than night, because the light of the stars seems to diminish and fade away in the transition from night to day. I thus see that the mountain is rocky and barren, split by gorges forming grottoes, caves and inlets in its side. It is a real wilderness: only where there is some earth capable of receiving and retaining the moisture of the rain, are there a few green tufts, mainly stiff thorny plants, with very few leaves, and low hard bushes of grass similar to thin green sticks, the name of which I do not know.

Below there is an even more barren plain, a flat stony ground that becomes more arid as it stretches out towards a dark spot, much longer than wider, at least five times longer than wider, which I think must be a dense oasis, which has sprung up in so much bleakness, because of underground waters. But when the light becomes brighter, I see that it is nothing but water. Stagnant, dark, dead water. A lake of infinite sadness. In the still feeble light it reminds me of the vision of the dead world. It seems to be drawing to itself all the darkness of the sky and all the gloominess of the surrounding area, dissolving in its still water the deep green of the thorny shrubs and stiff grass that for miles and miles around it and above it, are the only decoration of the earth. And after filtering so much gloom it seems to spread it around once again. How different it is from the sunny, smiling lake of Gennesaret!

High above, looking at the clear blue sky, which is becoming clearer and clearer, looking at the light progressing from the east in deeper and deeper brightness, one's soul rejoices. But looking at the huge, dead lake, gives one a stab in the heart. Not one bird flies over the water. Not one animal is on its shore. Nothing.

While I am watching so much desolation, I am roused by the voice of my Jesus: « Here we are at the place I wanted. » I turn round. I see Him behind me, with John, Simon and Judas, near the rocky slope of the mountain, where there is a little path, or rather, where the long erosion of waters, in the rainy months, has formed throughout centuries, a very shallow channel, a drain for the water flowing from the mountain top and which is a path for wild goats rather than for

men.

Jesus looks around and repeats: « Yes, this is the place to which I wanted to bring you. Here Christ prepared for His mission. »

« But there is nothing here! »

« You are quite right, there is nothing. »

« With whom were You? »

« With My soul and with the Father. »

« Ah! You stayed only for a few hours! »

« No, Judas. Not a few hours. Many days… »

« But who served You? Where did You sleep? »

« My servants were the wild asses that came to sleep in their caves, where I also had taken shelter. My maidservants were the eagles that said to Me with their harsh cries: "It's daylight" and they flew away to attack their prey. My friends were the little hares that came up almost to My feet, gnawing at the wild herbs. My food and My drink were the same food and drink of the wild flower: the night dew and the sunshine. Nothing else. »

« But why? »

« To prepare well, as you say, for My mission. *Things well prepared for are successful.* You said so yourself. And My thing was not a trifle, a useless thing which would glorify Me, the Servant of the Lord, but it was to make men understand what the Lord is, and by means of such understanding, make Him loved in the spirit of truth. *The servant that is concerned with his own triumph, and not with the Lord's, is a miserable man!* The servant who is anxious to make a profit, who dreams he will sit on a high throne built on the interests of God, which have been lowered down to the earth, whereas they are celestial interests, is also a miserable servant. He is no longer a servant, except in outer appearance. He is a merchant, a trafficker, a deceitful person, who deceives himself and men and would like to deceive also God… a wretched man who believes he is a prince, whilst he is a slave. *He belongs to the Evil One, his king of falsehood.* Here, in this cave, Christ for many days lived fasting and praying to get ready for His mission. And where would you have suggested I should have gone to prepare, Judas? »

Judas is puzzled and bewildered. Eventually he replies: « I would not know… I was thinking… to a rabbi… or with the Essenes… I do not know. »

« And was it possible for Me to find a rabbi who would tell Me more than the power and wisdom of God were telling Me? And could I – I the Eternal Word of the Father, Who was present when the Father created man and am aware of the immortal soul by which he is animated and of the power of free capable judgement with which he was endowed by the Creator – would I have gone to derive science and skill from those who deny the immortality of souls, final resurrection and also the freedom of man to act, attributing virtues and vices, holy and wicked deeds to a destiny, which they say is fated and uncontrollable? Certainly not!

You have a destiny. In the mind of God Who creates you, there is a destiny for you. It is the wish of the Father. *And it is a destiny of love, of peace, of glory: "the holiness of being His children."* That is the destiny that was present in the divine mind when Adam was fashioned with dust and will be present until the creation of the last soul of man.

But the Father does not denigrate you in your position of kings. If a king is a prisoner, he is no longer a king: he is an outcast. *You are kings because you are free in your small individual kingdoms. In your "ego".* You can do what you like and how you like. Before you and on the boundaries of your small kingdom you have a friendly King and two enemy powers. *The Friend shows you the rules that He gives to make His followers happy.* He shows them and says: "Here they are. *With them, your eternal victory is certain.*" He, The Wise and Holy One, shows them to you so that *you may put them into practice, if you want to,* and thus receive eternal glory.

The two enemy powers are Satan and the flesh. By flesh I mean your flesh and the world: they are, the pomps and enticements of the world, that is, the riches, feasts, honors and powers which are obtained from the world and in the world, but are not always obtained honestly and they are used even less honestly when eventually a man reaches them. Satan, the master of the flesh and of the world, speaks also on behalf of the world and of the flesh. *He, too, has his rules…* Oh! He certainly has! And as your "ego" is enveloped in the flesh, and the flesh is attracted by the flesh, as metal chips are attracted by a magnet, and the singing of the Seducer is sweeter than the warble of a nightingale in love in the moon-

light and among perfumed rose bushes, *it is easier to follow those rules,* and incline towards those powers and say to them: "I consider you my friends. Come in." *Come in…* Have you ever seen an ally who remains honest forever, without asking a hundredfold return for the help he has given? That is what those powers do. *They go in… And they become the masters.* Masters? No: galley sergeants. They tie you, men, to the galley bench, they fasten you with chains, they do not allow you to raise your head from their yoke, and their lash leaves bleeding marks on your backs if you attempt to escape. You either must bear to be torn to pieces and become a heap of shattered flesh, so useless, as flesh, as to be rejected and kicked aside by their cruel feet, or you must die under their blows.

If you can bear that martyrdom, *then Mercy will come,* the Only One who can still have mercy on that revolting misery, which the world, one of the masters, now loathes and at which the other master, Satan, throws the arrows of his revenge. And Mercy, the Only One, passes by, bends down, picks it up, doctors it, cures it and says: "Come. Do not be afraid. Do not look at yourself. Your wounds are but scars, but they are so numerous that you would be horrified, as they disfigure you. But I do not look at them. *I look at your good will.* Because of your good will, you are marked. Therefore I say to you: I love you. Come with Me." And He takes it to His Country. *You then understand that Mercy and the friendly King are the same person. You find the rules He had shown to you and you did not want to follow.* Now you want them… and first you reach the peace of your conscience, then the peace of God. Tell Me, now. Was that destiny imposed by the Only One on everybody, or did each choose it for himself? »

« It was chosen by each person. »

« You are right, Simon. Was it possible for Me to go to those who deny the blessed resurrection and the gift of God, to be taught? I came here. I took My soul of the Son of man and I gave it its finishing touches and I thus finished the work of thirty years of humility and preparation in order to be perfect when starting My mission. Now I ask you to stay with Me for a few days in this cave. Our stay will be less depressing because we shall be four friends joining in our efforts against sadness, fears, temptation and the desires of the flesh. I was by Myself. It will be less painful, because *it is now summer* and up here, the mountain winds lessen the heat. *I came here at the end of the Tebeth moon* and the wind blowing down from the snowy tops was harsh. It will be less trying because it will be shorter and also because we have the necessary food to satisfy our hunger and in small leather flasks that I asked the shepherds to give you, there is enough water to last us for the days of our stay. I… I must snatch two souls from Satan. *It can only be done by penance.* I ask you to help Me. It will be a training for you. *You will learn how to snatch victims from Mammon: not so much with words as with sacrifice…* Words!… The satanic uproar prevents one from hearing them… *Every soul which is a prey of the Enemy is enveloped in an eddy of infernal voices…* Do you want to stay with Me? If you do not want to, you may go and we will meet at Tekoah, near the market. »

« No, Master, I will not leave You » says John, while Simon at the same time exclaims: « You extol us by wanting us to be with You in this redemption. » Judas… does not appear to be terribly enthusiastic. But he puts a good face on… destiny and says: « I will stay. »

« Well, take the flasks and the bags and put them inside, and before the sun gets hot, break some wood and gather it near the crevice. The nights are severe, even in summer, and not all the animals are gentle. Light a branch at once. Over there, a branch of that gummy acacia. It burns very well. We will search in the crevices and with the fire we will drive out asps and scorpions. Go. »…

… The same spot on the mountain. But it is night now. A starry night. I think that the beauty of such a nocturnal sky can be enjoyed only in such almost-tropical countries. The stars are wonderfully large and bright. The bigger constellations seem clusters of diamond chips, of clear topazes, of pale sapphires, of mild opals and soft rubies. They tremble, they light up, they go out like glances hidden for an instant by eyelashes, and light up again more beautiful than before. Now and again a star swoops across the sky and I wonder to where it disappears. A streak of light that seems a jubilant cry of a star capable of flying over wide landscapes.

Jesus is sitting at the entrance of the cave and is speaking to the three disciples who are sat in a circle round Him. They must have lit a fire, because in the middle of them, some brands are still as bright as embers and they cast their ruddy glow on the four faces.

« Yes. Our stay is over. The last time it lasted forty days… And I would repeat that it was still winter up here… and I had no food. A little more difficult than this time, was it not? I know that you have suffered even now. The little food we

had and I gave you was nothing, particularly for hungry young people. It was barely sufficient to prevent you from collapsing. And the water even less so. The heat is intense during the day. And you will say that it was not so in winter. But then there was a dry wind blowing from that mountain top and it parched My lungs, and it rose from the plain loaded with desert dust and it dried more than this summer heat which can be assuaged by sucking the juice of those acidulous fruits that are almost ripe. The mountain in winter gave only wind and frost-bitten herbs near bare acacias. I did not give you everything because I kept the last bread and cheese and the last flask of water for our way back… I know what My return journey was like, exhausted as I was in the desert solitude… Let us pick up our things and go. Tonight is even clearer than the night we came here. There is no moon. But light is pouring from the sky. Let us go. Remember this place. *Remember how Christ prepared and how the apostles prepare.* Let the apostles prepare as I teach them. »

They get up. Simon stirs the embers with a stick, and before scattering them with his foot, he rekindles the fire throwing some dry herbs on it, and from the flame he lights a branch of acacia and holds it up at the entrance of the cave, while Judas and John pick up mantles, bags and small leather flasks of which only one is still full. He then puts the branch out, rubbing it against the rock, he takes his satchel, puts on his mantle like all the rest, and ties it at his waist so that it may not hinder him in walking.

Without speaking, one behind the other, they go down a very steep path, putting to flight small animals grazing on the scanty grass not yet parched by the sun. It is a long and uncomfortable journey. At last they reach the plain. It is not easy to walk even there, where stones and stone splinters undermine their feet, sliding under them and hurting them also, because the thick dust of the path conceals them and it is therefore impossible to avoid them. Further, naked thorny bushes scratch them and catch the lower part of their garments. But they can walk faster. High above, the stars are lovelier and lovelier.

They walk and walk for hours. The plain is more and more barren and depressing. Little scales sparkle in small crevices and holes of the ground. They look like dirty scales of diamond chips. John bends down to look at them.

« It is the salt of the subsoil which is saturated with them. It comes to the surface with the spring waters and then dries up. That is why life is impossible here. The Eastern Sea spreads its death for many miles around, through deep veins in the ground. Only where fresh spring waters counteract its effects, is it possible to find plants and ease » explains Jesus.

They go on walking. Jesus stops at the hollow rock where I saw Him tempted by Satan. « Let us stop here. Sit down. It will soon be daybreak. We have walked for six hours and you must be hungry, thirsty and tired. Take this. Eat and drink, sitting here, near Me, while I tell you something that you will repeat to your friends and to the world. » Jesus has opened His satchel and has pulled out bread and cheese, which He cuts and hands out, and from His flask He pours out some water into a small jug which He hands round, too.

« Are You not eating, Master? »

« No, I will speak to you. Listen. Once a man asked Me whether I had ever been tempted. He asked Me whether I had ever committed sin, and whether, when tempted, I had ever given in. And he was surprised because, in order to resist temptation, I, the Messiah, had asked the Father for help, saying: “Father, lead Me not into temptation.”»

Jesus speaks slowly, calmly as if He were relating an event with which none of them was acquainted… Judas lowers his head as if he were embarrassed. But the others are so intent on looking at Jesus, that they do not notice him.

Jesus goes on: « Now, My friends, you will learn something of which that man had only a faint idea. After My Baptism I came here: I was clean, *but one is never clean enough with regard to God, and the humility in saying: “I am a man and a sinner” is already a baptism which makes the heart clean.* I had been called “the Lamb of God” by the holy prophet who saw the Truth and saw the Spirit descend upon the Word and anoint Him with its chrism of love, while the voice of the Father filled the Heavens saying: “This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased.” You, John, were present when the Baptist repeated those words… After being baptized, although I was clean both by My nature and by appearance, I wanted to “prepare”. Yes, Judas. Look at Me. May My eyes tell you what My mouth does not yet speak. Look at Me, Judas. Look at your Master, Who although was the Messiah, did not consider Himself superior to man, on the contrary, *knowing He was the Man, He wanted to be so in everything, except in yielding to evil.* Exactly so. »

Judas has now raised his head and looks at Jesus in front of him. The light of the stars causes Jesus' eyes to sparkle as if they were two stars fixed in a pale face.

« *If one wants to prepare to be a teacher one must have been a pupil.* I, as God, knew everything. *My intelligence enabled Me to understand also the struggles of man, both by intellectual power and in an intellectual way,* that is without any practical experience. But then some poor friend of Mine, some poor son of Mine, could have said to Me: "You do not know what it is to be a man and have senses and passions." And it would have been a fair reproach. I came here, or rather on that mountain, to prepare… not only for My mission… *but also for temptation.* See? I was tempted where you are now sitting. By whom? By a mortal being? No. His power would have been too limited. I was tempted by Satan himself.

I was exhausted. I had not eaten for forty days… But while I was engrossed in prayer, everything had been forgotten in the joy of speaking to God, rather than forgotten, it had been made endurable. I felt it as a discomfort of a material nature, confined to matter only… I then came back to the world… I was back in the ways of the world… And I felt the needs of those who are in the world. I was hungry. I was thirsty. I felt the biting cold of the desert night. My body was worn out with lack of rest, of a bed and with a long journey made in such a state of weariness that I could go no farther…

Because I am made of flesh too, My dear friends. Real flesh. And my flesh is subject to the weakness common to all the flesh. And, with My flesh, I have a heart. Yes, *I took the first and second of the three parts that form man.* I took the physical part with all its needs and the morals with their passions. And whilst, with My will, I subdued all the bad passions at birth, I let the holy passions grow like mighty age-old cedars, that is *filial love, love for the fatherland, friendship, work,* everything that is best and holy. And here I felt nostalgia for My far away Mother, here I felt the need of Her care for My human frailty, here I felt once again the pain of parting from the Only One Who loved Me with perfect love, here I realized what sorrow is laid aside for Me and I was grieved at Her sorrows, poor Mother, Who will have to shed so many tears for Her Son and because of the wickedness of men, that She will be left tearless. And here I experienced the weariness of the hero and of the ascetic who in an hour of forewarning realize the uselessness of their efforts… I cried… *Sadness... a lure for Satan.* It is not a sin to be sad in painful circumstances. *It is a sin to go beyond sadness and fall into inertness and despair.*

But Satan comes at once when he sees anyone in spiritual languor. He came. Dressed as a kind traveller. He always takes a kind appearance… I was hungry… and thirty years old. He offered to help Me. First he said to Me: "Tell these stones to become bread." But before… yes… even before, he spoke to Me about woman. Oh! He knows how to speak of her. He knows her very well. He corrupted her first, to make her his ally in corruption. I am not only the Son of God. I am Jesus, the workman of Nazareth. I said to that man, who was speaking to Me then, the one who asked Me whether I had experienced temptations and almost accused Me for being unjustly blessed, because I had not sinned: "*The act subsides when satisfied. A rejected temptation does not fade away, but becomes stronger also because Satan instigates it.*" I resisted the temptation both of lust of woman and hunger for bread. And you must know that Satan proposed woman to Me as the best ally to succeed in the world, and he was quite right, from a human point of view.

Temptation did not give up because of My remark: "Man does not live on his senses only" and he spoke to Me of My mission. He wanted to seduce the Messiah after failing with the young Man. And he incited Me to crush the unworthy ministers of the Temple with a miracle… A miracle, the fire of Heaven, is not to be bent to form a wicker wreath to crown ourselves… And *we must not put God to the test, asking for miracles for human purposes.* That is what Satan wanted. The reason mentioned by him was an excuse; the truth was: "Boast of being the Messiah", as he wanted to lead Me to another lust: *the lust for pride.* He was not daunted by My reply: "You must not put the Lord your God to the test" and he circumvented Me with the third power of his nature: gold. Oh! gold. Bread is a great thing, and woman an even greater one for those longing for food or pleasure. To be acclaimed by the crowds is a very great thing for man. How many crimes are committed for these three things! But gold… gold! It is a key that opens, a circle that joins, it is the beginning and end of ninety-nine of human actions. *For bread and a woman man becomes a thief. For power he becomes also a murderer. But for gold he becomes an idolator.* The king of gold, Satan, offered Me his gold if I adored him. I pierced him with the eternal words: "You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only." It happened here. » Jesus is now standing. He seems taller than usual in the flat nature surrounding Him, in the slightly phosphorescent light of the stars. Also the disciples get up. Jesus goes on speaking, staring intently at Judas.

« Then the angels of the Lord came… The Man had won the treble battle. The Man knew what it meant to be a man and had won. He was exhausted. The struggle had been more exhausting than the long fast… But the spirit was

triumphant… I think that Heaven was startled at My becoming a perfect creature endowed with knowledge. I think that from that moment I got the power of working miracles. *I was God. I had become the Man. Now, by defeating the animal nature connected with man's nature, I was the Man-God. And I am.* And as God I am omnipotent. And as Man I am omniscient. Do as I did, if you want to do what I do. *And do it in memory of Me.*

That man was amazed at My asking the Father's help, and at My praying not to be led into temptation. That is, not to be left at the mercy of temptation beyond My strength. I think that that man will no longer be amazed, now that he knows. *I ask you to do the same in My memory and to win as I did.* And never doubt My nature of true Man and true God, seeing how strong I was in all the temptations of life, and how I won the battles of the five senses, of sensuality and of sentiments. *Remember all that.* I promised to take you where it would be possible for you to know the Master… from the dawn of His day, a dawn which is as pure as the one which is now rising, to the noontide of His life. The noon which I left to go and meet My human evening… I said to one of you: *"I also prepared"; you now see it is true.* I thank you for your company in the return to the place of My birth and the place of My penance. My first contacts with the world had sickened and depressed Me. It is too ugly. My soul has now been nourished with the lion's marrow: *the union with the Father in prayer and solitude.* And I can go back to the world and take My cross upon Me once again, the first cross of the Redeemer: the cross of the contact with the world. With the world, in which there are too few souls called Mary, called John… Now listen, and you in particular, John. We are going back towards My Mother and our friends. I beg you not to mention to My Mother the harshness which has been opposed to the love of Her Son. She would suffer too much. She will suffer so much because of man's cruelty… but do not let us give Her the chalice now. It will be so bitter when it is given to Her! So bitter that it will creep like poison into Her holy viscera and veins and will gnash them and freeze Her heart. Oh! Do not tell My Mother that Bethlehem and Hebron rejected Me like a dog! Have mercy on Her! You, Simon, are old and good, and thoughtful as you are, you will not speak, I know. You, Judas, are a Judaean, and will not speak out of patriotic pride. But you, John, are a Galilean, and young, do not commit a sin of pride, criticism and cruelty. Be silent. Later… later you will tell the rest what I now ask you be silent about. There is already so much to be said about Christ. Why add to it what is Satan's work against Christ? My dear friends, do you promise Me that? »

« Oh! Master! We do promise. Be certain of it. »

« Thank you. Let us go to that small oasis. There is a spring, a well full of cold water and there is shade and greenery. The road towards the river passes near it. We will find food and refreshment till evening. By starlight, we will reach the river, the ford. And we will wait for Joseph or join him if he is already back. Let us go. » And they set out while the first pinkish hue in the sky, in the east, announces the rising of a new day.

81. At the Jordan Ford. Meeting with the Shepherds John, Matthias and Simeon.

18th January 1945.

I see the Jordan ford once again: the green road coasting the river on both banks, beaten by many travellers on account of its `lade. Lines of little donkeys come and go, as well as many people. On the bank of the river, three men are pasturing a few sheep.

Joseph is on the road, waiting, and he looks up and down.

Jesus appears in the distance, with His three disciples, at the junction of the river path with the main road. Joseph calls the shepherds, who lead the sheep on to the road, driving them along the grassy bank. They walk fast towards Jesus.

« I haven't got the courage… What shall I say to greet Him? »

« Oh! He is so good! Say: "Peace be with You." He always says that. »

« Yes, He… but we… »

« And what about me? I am not even one of His first worshippers, and He is so fond of me… oh! so fond! »

« Which one is it? »

« The tallest One, with fair hair. »

« Matthias, will we tell Him of the Baptist? »

« Of course we will! »

« Will He not think that we preferred the Baptist to Him? »

« No, Simeon. If He is the Messiah, He can see into the hearts of men, and in ours He will see that in the Baptist we were still looking for Him. »

« Yes, you are right. »

The two groups are now a few yards apart. Jesus is already smiling His indescribable smile. Joseph hastens his step. Also the sheep begin to run urged by the herdsmen.

« Peace be with you » says Jesus raising His arms as if He were embracing them. And He specifies:

« Peace to you, Simeon, John and Matthias, faithful to Me, and faithful to John the Prophet! Peace to you, Joseph » and He kisses him on his cheeks. The other three are now on their knees. « Come, My friends. Under these trees, on the exposed river-bed and let us talk. »

They go down and Jesus sits on a large protruding root, the others on the ground. Jesus smiles and looks at them intently, one by one: « Let Me become familiar with your faces. Your souls are already known to Me, souls that seek and love what is good contrary to all worldly yearnings. Isaac, Elias and Levi send you their regards, and there are other greetings, from My Mother. Have You any news of the Baptist? »

The men, so far gagged by embarrassment, take heart. They find words at last: « He is still in jail. Our hearts tremble for him, because he is in the hands of a cruel man who is dominated by an infernal creature and is surrounded by a corrupted court. We love him… You know that we love him and that he deserves our love. After you left Bethlehem, we were persecuted by men… but we were distressed and disheartened because we had lost You, rather than by their hatred, and we were like trees uprooted by the wind. Then, after years of suffering, like a man, whose eyelashes have been stitched, endeavors to see the sun, but cannot, also because he is closed in a prison, but feels the warmth of the sun on his body, we felt that the Baptist was the man of God, foreseen by the Prophets to prepare the way to His Christ and we went to him. We said: "If the Baptist precedes Him, if we go to the Baptist, we will find Him." Because, my Lord, it was You we were looking for. »

« I know, and you found Me. And now I am with you. »

« Joseph told us that You came to the Baptist. But we were not there that day. Perhaps he had sent us somewhere. We serve him, in spiritual matters, when he asked us, with so much love, and we listened to him with love, although he was so severe, because he was not You – the Word – but he always spoke words of God. »

« I know. And do you know this man? » and He points to John.

« We saw him with the other Galileans in the crowds which were most faithful to the Baptist. And, if we are not mistaken, you are the one whose name is John, and of whom he used to say to us, his closest disciples: "Here: I am the first, he is the last. And then: he will be the first and I the last." But we never understood what he meant. »

Jesus turns round to His left side where John is and He draws him against His heart and with a most kind smile He explains: « He meant that he was the first to say: "Here is the Lamb" and that John here will be the last of the friends of the Son of man, to speak of the Lamb to the crowds; but that in the heart of the Lamb, John is the first, because he is dearer than any other man to the Lamb. That is what he meant. But when you see the Baptist – You will see him again, and you will serve him again until the predetermined hour – tell him that he is not the last in Christ's heart. Not so much because of the blood, as on account of his holiness, he is loved as much as John. And remember that. If the saint in his humility proclaims himself "last", the Word of God proclaims him equal to the disciple who is dear to Me.. Tell him that I love this disciple because he has the same name and because I find in him the signs of the Baptist, who prepares the souls for Christ. »

« We will tell him… But will we see him again? »

« Yes, you will. »

« Yes, Herod dare not kill him for fear of the people and at his court, which is full of greed and corruption, it would be easy to free him if we had a lot of money. But, although there is quite a lot – because friends have given a lot – there is still a lot missing. And we are afraid we will not be in time… and he may be killed. »

« How much do you think you need for the ransom? »

« Not for his ransom, Lord. He is hated too much by Herodias and she has too much control of Herod, to think of the possibility of a ransom. But I think that all the greedy people of the kingdom have gathered at Machaerus. Everybody is anxious to have a good time and stand out, from the ministers down to the servants. And to do that, they need money… We have also found who would let the Baptist out for a large sum of money. Perhaps also Herod would prefer that… because he is afraid. Not for any other reason. He is afraid of the people and afraid of his wife. In that way, he could please the people, and his wife could not accuse him of disappointing her. »

« And how much does that person want? »

« Twenty silver talents. But we have only twelve and a half. »

« Judas, you said that those jewels are beautiful. »

« Yes, beautiful and valuable. »

« How much will they be worth? I think you are an expert. »

« Yes, I am a good judge. Why do You want to know how much they are worth, Master? Do You want to sell them? Why? »

« Perhaps… Tell Me: how much will they be worth? »

« At least six talents, if they are sold well. »

« Are you sure? »

« Yes, Master. The necklace by itself, so big and heavy, of the purest gold, is worth at least three talents. I have examined it carefully. And also the bracelets… I don't know how Aglae's thin wrists could hold them. »

« They were her shackles, Judas. »

« That's true, Master… But so many would like to have such beautiful shackles! »

« Do you think so? Who? »

« Well… many people! »

« Yes, many who are human beings only by name… And do you know a possible buyer? »

« So, do You want to sell them? And is it for the Baptist? But look, it's cursed gold! »

« Oh! Human inconsistency! You have just said with evident desire, that many people would love to have that gold, and then you say it is cursed?! Judas, Judas!… It is cursed, indeed. But she said: "It will be sanctified if it is used for poor and holy people" and that is why she gave it, that who benefits by it, may pray for her poor soul that like the embryo of a future butterfly swells in the seed of her heart. Who is holier and poorer than the Baptist? He is equal to Elijah in his mission but greater than Elijah in holiness. He is poorer than I am. I have a Mother and a home… And when one has such things, and pure and holy as I have, one is never forlorn. He no longer has a home, and he has not got even the tomb of his mother. Everything has been violated and desecrated by human iniquity. So who is the buyer? »

« There is one in Jericho and there are many in Jerusalem. But the one in Jericho!!! He is a shrewd Levantine gold-beater, a usurer, a middleman, a pander, he is certainly a thief, probably a killer, he is definitely persecuted by Rome. He has changed his name to Isaac, to be considered a Hebrew… But his real name is Diomedes. I know him very well… »

« Yes, we see that! » intervenes Simon Zealot, who speaks little, but notices everything. And he asks:

« How come you know him so well? »

« Well… you know… In order to please certain mighty friends. I went to see him… and did some business… You know… we of the Temple… »

« I know… you do all sorts of jobs » Simon ends with cold irony. Judas flares up, but keeps silent.

« Will he buy? » asks Jesus.

« I think so. He has plenty money. Of course, one must be skilful in selling because the Greek is shrewd and if he realizes he is dealing with an honest person, with a nestling dove, he plucks him mercilessly. But if he has to deal with a vulture like himself… »

« You ought to go, Judas. You are the right man. You are as sly as a fox and as raptorial as a vulture. Oh! Forgive me, Master. I spoke before You! » says Simon Zealot again.

« I am of the same opinion, and I will therefore tell Judas to go. John, you will go with him. We will meet again at sunset, and the meeting place will be the market square. Go. And do your best. »

Judas gets up at once. John's eyes are imploring like a chastened puppy's. But Jesus is speaking to the shepherds and does not notice John's imploring look. And John sets out behind Judas.

« I would like to see you happy » says Jesus.

« You will always make us happy, Master. May God bless You for it. Is that man a friend of Yours? »

« Yes, he is. Do you think he should not be? »

The shepherd John lowers his head, and keeps silent. Simon, the disciple, speaks: « Only who is good, can, see. I am not good, and therefore I do not see what Bounty sees. I see the exterior. Who is good penetrates also into the interior. You, John, see as I do. But the Master is good… and sees… »

« What do you see in Judas, Simon? I want you to tell Me. »

« Well, when I look at him, I think of certain mysterious places which look like dens of wild beasts and malarial ponds. Only a huge tangle can be seen and one is frightened, and keeps clear… Instead… behind it there are turtle-doves and nightingales and the soil is rich in healthy waters and beneficial herbs. I want to believe that Judas is like that… I think he must be, because You chose him. And You know… »

« Yes, I know… There are many flaws in the heart of that man… But he has some good points. You saw that yourself in Bethlehem and in Kerioth. And his good points which are humanly good are to be raised to a spiritual goodness. Judas will then be as you would like him to be. He is young… »

« Also John is young… »

« And in your heart, you conclude that he is better. But John is John! Love poor Judas, Simon, I beg you.. If you love him… he will appear to be better. »

« I endeavor to love him, for Your sake. But he breaks all my efforts as if they were water canes… But, Master, there is only one law for me: to do what You want. I will therefore love Judas, although something within me shouts against him and towards myself. »

« What, Simon? »

« I do not know exactly what it is: something that resembles the cry of the night watchman… and says to me: “Do not sleep! Watch!” I do not know. That something has no name. But it is here… in me, against him. »

« Forget about it, Simon. Do not trouble to give it a definition. It is better not to know certain truths… and you might be mistaken. Leave it to your Master. Give Me your love, and you can be sure that it makes Me happy… »

And it all ends.

82. Judas Iscariot Tells of How He Sold Aglae's Jewels to Diomedes.

19th January 1945.

The market place in Jericho. It is not morning, but evening: a very warm summer evening at sunset. Of the morning market, there are only traces: remains of vegetables, heaps of excrement, straw fallen from donkeys' baskets and rags… All is covered with flies, and ferments in the heat of the sun and stinks disgustingly. The large square is empty. There are few passersby, some quarrelsome urchins throwing stones at the birds perched on the trees. Some women go to the fountain. Nothing else.

Jesus arrives from a side street, and looks round. He does not see anybody yet. He waits patiently, leaning against the trunk of a tree, and finds the opportunity of speaking to the boys about charity, that starts with God and from the Creator descends to all creatures.

« Do not be cruel. Why do you want to annoy the birds of the air? They have their nests up there, and their little ones. They do not harm anyone. They give us

their chirping and cleanliness, because they eat the rubbish left by men and the insects that are harmful to crops and fruit. Why wound them, or kill them, depriving the little ones of their fathers and mothers, or the latter of their little ones? Would you be glad if a wicked man came to your house and destroyed it, or killed your parents, or took you away from them? No, you would not be happy. Well, then, why do to these innocent creatures what you would not like done to yourselves? How will you, refrain one day from doing harm to men if, children as you are now, you harden your hearts, and hurt defenseless, kind little creatures such as these birds? Do you not know that the Law says: "Love your neighbor as yourself"? Who does not love his neighbor does not even love God. And who does not love God, how can he go to His House and pray to Him? God might say to him, and he does say it in Heaven: "Go away. I do not know you. You, My son? No, you are not. You do not love your brothers, you do not respect in them the Father Who created them, so you are not a brother and a son, but an illegitimate child: a stepson to God, a stepbrother to your brothers." See how the Eternal Lord loves? In the cold months, He makes His little birds find the barns full of hay, so that they may nest there. In the hot months, He protects them from the sun with the foliage of trees. In winter the corn in the fields is just covered with earth and it is easy for them to find the seed and nourish themselves. In summer they quench their thirst with the juice of fruits, and they build solid, warm nests with hay and the wool left on brambles by sheep. And He is the Lord. You, little men, created by Him like the little birds, and therefore their brothers in creation, why do you want to differ from Him and think that you can be cruel to these little animals? Be merciful with everybody, not depriving anyone of what is due to one: both amongst men and animals, your servants, your friends and God… »

« Master? » calls Simon « Judas is coming. »

« … and God will be merciful with you, and will give you everything you need, as He does with these innocent creatures. Go and take the peace of God with you. » Jesus makes His way through the boys and some of the adults who had joined them, and goes towards Judas and John, who are coming from another street. Judas is jubilant. John smiles at Jesus… but does not seem very happy.

« Come, come, Master. I think I have done well. But come with me. It is not possible to speak here in the street. »

« Where, Judas? »

« To the hotel. I have already booked four rooms… oh! nothing special, don't worry. Only to rest in a bed after so much discomfort in all this heat, and to have a meal like men and not like birds perched on branches, and also to talk in peace. I sold the jewels very well, didn't I, John? »

John nods in assent but not very enthusiastically. But Judas is so pleased with his work that he does not notice either that Jesus is not very happy at the prospect of comfortable lodgings or that John is even less enthusiastic about his transactions. And he goes on: « As I had sold at a higher price than I had estimated, I said: "It is fair that I should take a small amount, one hundred coins, for our beds and meals. If we are exhausted, although we always had something to eat, Jesus must be completely worn out." I am obliged to ensure that my Master is not taken ill! An obligation of love, because You love me, and I love You… There is room also for you and the sheep » he says to the shepherds. « I have seen to everything. »

Jesus does not say one word. He follows him with the others.

They arrive in a smaller square. Judas says: « See that house without any windows opening on the street and with such a narrow little door that it looks like a fissure? It's Diomedes, the goldbeater's house. It looks like a poor house, doesn't it? But there is enough gold in there to buy the whole of Jericho and… Ah! Ah! » Judas laughs maliciously… « amongst all that gold many jewels and plates can be found, as well as other things, belonging to the most influential people in Israel. Diomedes… oh! they all pretend they do not know him, whereas they are all acquainted with him: from the Herodians down to… to everybody. On that plain, smooth wall, one could write: "Mystery and Secret". If those walls could speak! Then you would not be scandalized at the way I negotiated this business, John! You… you would die, choked with amazement and scruples. By the way, listen, Master. Never send me again with John on certain business. He almost ruined everything. He cannot take a hint, he cannot deny things, whereas with shrewd men like Diomedes one must be quick and outspoken. »

John grumbles: « You were saying certain things. So unforeseen and so… so… Yes, Master. Do not send me again. I am only good at being kind and loving… I… »

« It is most unlikely that we shall ever need such transactions again » answers Jesus, very seriously.

« That is the hotel over there. Come, Master. I will do the talking, because I arranged everything. »

They go in, and Judas speaks to the landlord, who has the sheep taken to a stable, while he himself takes the guests into a little room where there are two mat-beds, some chairs and a table already laid. He then withdraws.

« I will tell you what happened at once, Master, while the shepherds are settling the sheep. »

« I am listening. »

« John can say whether I am telling the truth. »

« I do not doubt it. No oath or witness is required among honest men. Tell Me. »

« We arrived in Jericho at midday. We were wet with perspiration, like pack-animals. I did not want to give Diomedes the impression that I was in urgent need. So first of all, I came here, I refreshed myself, I put on clean clothes, and I got John to do the same. Oh! He would not hear of having his hair sorted and perfumed. But I had made out my plans, on my way here!… When it was almost evening, I said: "Let's go." By that time, we were well rested and fresh like two wealthy people on a pleasure trip. When we were about to arrive at Diomedes' abode, I said to John: "Always agree to what I say. Do not contradict me, and be quick in taking a hint." But I should have left him outside! He did not help at all. On the contrary… Fortunately, I am as quick as two people, and I managed.

The exciseman was coming out of his house. "Very well!" I said. "If he is coming out, we will find the money and what I want to make a comparison." Because the exciseman, being a usurer and a thief like all his kind, always has necklaces taken with threats and usury from the poor people whom he taxes more than is fair, in order to have plenty to spend in feasting and women. And he is very friendly with Diomedes, who buys and sells gold and flesh… We went in after I had made myself known. I said: we went in. Because there is a difference between going into the entrance hall, where he pretends to be doing an honest job, and going down into the underground room, where he does his real business. One must be well known to him to be introduced there. As soon as he saw me, he said: "Do you want to sell more gold? We are going through hard times, and I have little money." His usual old story. I replied: "I have not come to sell, but to buy. Have you any jewels for a lady? But they must be beautiful, valuable, heavy, in pure gold!" Diomedes was amazed. And he asked me: "Do you want a woman?" "Never mind that" I replied to him. "They are not for me. They are for this friend of mine who is getting married and wishes to buy the jewels for his beloved bride."

At this point, John began to behave like a child. Diomedes, who was looking at him, saw him turn purple, and being a filthy old man, he said: "Ah! the boy has only heard his bride being mentioned, and he is in heat. Is your woman very beautiful?" he asked. I kicked John to rouse him, and to make him understand not to behave foolishly. But he replied "Yes" as if he had been strangled and Diomedes became suspicious. Then I spoke: "Whether she is beautiful or not is none of your business, old man. She will never be one of the women on account of whom you will go to hell. She is an honest virgin, and will soon be an honest wife. Show us your gold. I am his best man and it is my task to help the young man… I am a Judaean citizen." "He is a Galilean, is he not?" Your hair always gives you away. "Is he rich?" "Yes, very."

We then went downstairs, and Diomedes opened his coffers and treasure-chests. But tell the truth, John. Did we not seem to be in Heaven with all the jewels and all the gold? Necklaces, wreaths, bracelets, ear-rings, hairnets of gold and precious stones, hairpins, buckles, rings… Ah! what magnificence! With much haughtiness, I picked a necklace more or less like Aglae's, and rings, buckles, bracelets, everything like I had in my bag, and the same quantity. Diomedes was surprised and he kept asking: "What! Some more? But who is this man? And who is the bride? A princess?" When I had everything I wanted, I said: "The price?"

Oh! What a string of preparatory moaning on the times, taxes, risks, thieves! And another string of assurances on his honesty! And then his reply: "Just because it's you, I'll tell you the truth. Without any exaggeration. But not even one penny less. I want twelve silver talents." "Thief!" I said. And I went on: "Let's go, John. In Jerusalem we will find someone who is not such a thief as he is" and I pretended I was going out. He ran after me. "My great friend, my beloved friend, come, listen to your poor servant. I cannot accept less. It's impossible. Look. I'll make an effort at the cost of ruining myself. I'll do it because you have always honored me with your friendship, and you made me do good business. Eleven talents, there you are. That is what I would pay if I had to buy that gold from someone starving. Not a penny less. It would be like bleeding my veins." Is that not what he said? He made me laugh and he disgusted me at the same time.

When I saw he was quite determined on the price, I pulled a fast one on him. “Dirty old rascal. Bear in mind that I do not want to buy, on the contrary, I want to sell. This is what I want to sell. Look. It is as beautiful as yours. Gold from Rome in the latest fashion. It will sell like hot cakes. You can have it for eleven talents. Exactly what you asked for yours. You fixed the price, and you pay.” You should have heard him. “This is treachery! You betrayed the esteem I held you in! You want to ruin me! I cannot pay all that!” he shouted. “You appraised its value. So pay!” “I cannot.” “Look, I'll take it to somebody else.” “No, my friend, don't”, and he stretched out his hooked hands towards Aglae's heap of gold. “Well, then, pay: I should ask for twelve talents. But I will be satisfied with the last price you asked.” “I cannot.” “Usurer! Look, I have a witness here and I can report you as a thief…” and I mentioned other virtues of his which I will not repeat on account of this boy…

At last, as I was anxious to sell and settle the matter quickly, I whispered something in his ear, something that I will not keep… What weight has a promise made to a thief? And I clenched the bargain at ten and a half. We came away while he was crying and offering his friendship and… women. And John was almost in tears. What does it matter if they think you are a depraved man! Nothing, providing you are not. Don't you know that the world is like that, and that you are a failure in the world? A young man who has not had any experience of women? Who do you think will believe you? Or if they believe you, well! I would not like them to think of me what they may think of you, if they believe you do not desire women.

Here, Master. Count them Yourself. I had a pile of coins. But I went to the exciseman and I said to him: “Take this rubbish and give me the talents Isaac gave you.” That was the last bit of information I got after closing the matter. But the last thing I said to Isaac-Diomedes was: “Remember that the Judas of the Temple exists no more. Now I am the disciple of a holy man. Pretend therefore that you never met me, if your life is dear to you.” And I was on the point of wringing his neck because he gave me a sharp answer. »

« What did he say to you? » asks Simon, coldly.

« He said: “You, the disciple of a holy man? I will never believe it, or I will soon see your holy man here, asking for a woman.” He said: “Diomedes is an old disgrace of the world. But you are a new one. And I may still change, because I became what I am when I was old. But you will not change. You were born like that.” Filthy old man! He denies Your power, see? »

« And being a good Greek, he speaks the truth. »

« What do you mean, Simon? Are you referring to me? »

« No. I am referring to everyone. He is a man who knows gold and men's hearts the same way. He is a thief, the most filthy of all the filthy trades. But one perceives in him the philosophy of the great Greeks. He knows man, the animal with seven sinful jaws, the octopus that suffocates goodness, honesty, love and many other things, both in itself and in others. »

« But he does not know God. »

« And would you like to teach him? »

« Yes, I would. Why? It's the sinners that need to know God. »

« True. But… the master must know Him to teach Him. »

« And do I not know Him? »

« Peace, My friends. The shepherds are coming. Do not let us upset their souls with our quarrels. Have you counted the money? That is enough. Fulfill all your actions as you fulfilled this one, and I repeat it once again, in future, if you can, do not tell lies, not even to accomplish a good deed. »

The shepherds come in.

« My friends. Here are ten and a half talents. The amount is short of one hundred coins which Judas has kept for the hotel expenses. Take them. »

« Are You giving them all? » asks Judas.

« Yes, every penny. I do not want a farthing of that money. We have the offerings of God and of those who honestly seek God… and we will never lack what is necessary. Believe Me. Take the money and be happy, as I am, for the Baptist. Tomorrow, you will go towards his prison. Two of you: that is John and Matthias. Simeon and Joseph will go to Elias to report to him and to be taught for the future. Elias knows. Later, Joseph will come back with Levi. The meeting place, in ten days time, is at the Fish Gate in Jerusalem, at sunrise. And now, let us eat and rest. Tomorrow, at dawn, I will leave with My disciples. I have nothing else to tell you for the time being. Later, you will hear from Me. »

And everything fades out while Jesus is breaking the bread.

83. Jesus Cries on Account of Judas and Simon Zealot Comforts Him.

20th January 1945.

The country where Jesus is, is very fertile. There are magnificent orchards and vineyards, with huge bunches of grapes beginning to turn gold or ruby. Jesus is sitting in an orchard, and is eating some fruit offered to Him by a farmer.

Perhaps He has just finished speaking, because the man says to Him: « It's a pleasure for me, Master, to quench Your thirst. Your disciple had spoken to us of Your wisdom, nevertheless, we were astonished when we listened to You. Close as we are to the Holy City, we often go there to sell our fruit and vegetables, and we then go up to the Temple and listen to the rabbis. But they do not speak as You do. We used to come away saying: “If that is so, who will be saved?” With You, it is entirely different! Oh! We seem to be so light-hearted! Although adults, we feel like children in our hearts. I am a… rough man and I am not good at making myself understood. But I am sure You understand me! »

« Yes, I do. You mean that, although you have an adult's knowledge and maturity after listening to the Word of God, You feel simplicity, faith and purity revive in your heart, as if you were a child once again, without fault or malice, but with so much faith, as when you were taken to the Temple for the first time by your mother, or you prayed on her knees. That is what you mean. »

« Yes, that, just that. You are fortunate because you are always with Him » he then says to John, Simon and Judas who are sitting on a low wall, eating juicy figs. And he ends saying: « And I am honored because You were my guest for one night. I am not afraid of any misfortune in my house, because You have blessed it. »

Jesus replies: « A blessing is efficacious and lasting if the souls of men are faithful to the Law of God and to My doctrine. Otherwise its grace-giving ceases. And it is only fair. Because if it is true that God grants sunshine and fresh air to the good and to the bad, that they may live, and that they may become better if they are good, and they may be converted if they are bad, it is also just that the Father's protection should turn elsewhere as a punishment for the wicked, to remind them of God, by means of some pain. »

« Is pain not always evil? »

« No, My friend. It is evil from a human point of view, but from a supernatural one it is good. It increases the merits of just people, who accept it without despairing or rebelling and they offer it, as they offer themselves with resignation, as a sacrifice to expiate their own imperfections and the faults of the world, and it is a redemption for those who are not good. »

« It is so difficult to suffer! » says the farmer, who has been joined by his relatives, about ten people in all, adults and children.

« I know that man finds it difficult. And knowing that he would find it so difficult, the Father had not given His children any sorrow. It came with sin. But how long does sorrow last on the earth? in the life of a man? A short time. It is always short, even if it lasts a whole lifetime. Now I say: is it not better to suffer for a short time rather than forever? Is it not better to suffer here than in Purgatory? Consider that time there is multiplied a thousand times to one. Oh! I solemnly tell you: you ought not to curse pain, but bless it, and you should call it “grace” and “mercy”. »

« Oh! Your words, Master! They are as pleasant to us as honeyed water from a cool amphora is to a man parched with thirst in summer. Are You really going away tomorrow, Master? »

« Yes, I am going tomorrow. But I will come back again. To thank you for what you have done for Me and My friends, and to ask you for some more bread and a rest. »

« You will always find them here, Master. »

A man with a donkey laden with vegetables comes near.

« Here I am. If your friend wishes to go… My son is going to Jerusalem for the big Parasceve market. »

« Go, John. You know what you have to do. In four days' time we will meet again. My peace be with you. » Jesus embraces John and kisses him. Simon does the same.

« Master » says Judas. « If You will allow me, I would like to go with John. I am anxious to see a friend of mine. He goes to Jerusalem every Sabbath. I would go with John as far as Bethphage and then I will proceed on my own… He is a friend of our family… You know… my mother told me… »

« I have not asked you any question, My friend. »

« It breaks my heart having to leave You. But in four days' time I will be with You once again. And I will be so faithful that I will even bore You. »

« You may go. In four days' time, at dawn, be at the Fish Gate. Goodbye and may God watch over you. »

Judas kisses the Master and goes near to the little donkey that begins to trot along the dusty road. It is evening and the country becomes silent. Simon watches the peasants irrigating their fields. Jesus has not moved from the place where He was sitting. He then gets up, goes round to the back of the house, and walks along the orchard. He wants to be alone. He goes as far as a thicket of huge pomegranate trees and low bushes, which I think must be gooseberries. But I am not sure, because there are no berries on them and I am not familiar with the leaves of these plants. Jesus hides behind the thicket. He kneels down. He prays… and then He bends down with His face on the ground, on the grass and He weeps. I realize that He is crying because of His deep, interrupted sighs. A disheartened crying, without sobs, but so sad.

Some time passes thus. It is now twilight. But it is not yet so dark as to prevent seeing. And in the faint light Simon's disfigured but honest face suddenly appears above a bush. He looks round for something and sees the crouched figure of the Master, completely covered by His dark blue mantle which confuses Him with the dark ground. Only His fair hair and His hands joined in prayer catch the eye: His hands protrude above His head which rests on His wrists. Simon looks at Him with his large kind eyes. He understands that Jesus is sad because of His sighing and he utters: « Master », with his thick almost purple lips.

Jesus looks up.

« You are crying, Master? Why? May I come near You? » Simon's expression is one of astonishment and sorrow. He is definitely not a handsome man. In addition to his disfigured features and his dark olive complexion, he bears the deep bluish marks of the scars caused by his disease. But his glance is so gentle that his ugliness disappears.

« Come, Simon, My friend. »

Jesus is sitting on the grass. Simon sits beside Him.

« Why are You sad, Master? I am not John and I am not capable of giving You what John gives you. But I would like to give You every possible comfort, and I am only sorry that I am not able to do so. Tell me. Have I displeased You these last few days to the extent that it depresses You to stay with me? »

« No. My good friend. You have never displeased Me since the first moment I saw you. And I think you will never cause Me to shed tears. »

« Well, then, Master? I am not worthy of Your confidence. But, on account of my age, I could be Your father and You know how anxious I have always been to have children… Allow me to caress You as if You were my son and let me be a father and mother to You in this hour of pain. It is Your Mother that You are in need of to forget so many things… »

« Oh! Yes! It is My Mother! »

« Well, while waiting to have comfort in Her, grant Your servant the joy of consoling You. You are crying, Master, because someone has displeased You. For several days Your face has been like the sun darkened by clouds. I have been watching You. Your goodness hides the wound, that we may not hate him who wounds You. But the wound is a painful and abhorrent one. But tell me, my Lord: why do You not remove the source of Your pain? »

« Because it would be useless from a human point of view and it would not be charitable. »

« Ah! You are aware that I am speaking of Judas! It is because of him that You are suffering. How can You, the Truth, tolerate that liar? He lies shamelessly. He is more deceitful than a fox and more closed than a rock. He has now gone away. What for? How many friends has he got? I am sorry to leave You. But I would like to follow him and see… Oh! My Jesus! That man… send him away, my Lord. »

« It is useless. What is to be, shall be. »

« What do You mean? »

« Nothing special. »

« You allowed him to go with pleasure, because You were disgusted with his behavior at Jericho. »

« It is true, Simon. I tell you once again: what is to be, shall be. And Judas is part of this future. He is to be there, too. »

« But John told me that Simon Peter is very frank and full of ardour… Will he suffer Judas? »

« He must stand him. Also Peter is destined for a part, and Judas is the canvas on which he must weave his part, or, if you prefer so, Judas is the school where Peter will learn more than with anyone else. Also idiots are capable of being good with John and understanding souls like John's. But it is difficult to be good with people like Judas, and to understand souls like Judas' and to be a doctor and priest for them. Judas is your living teaching. »

« Ours? »

« Yes. Yours. The Master will not be on the earth forever. He will leave after eating the hardest bread and drinking the sourest wine. But you will stay to continue Me… and you must know. Because the world does not end with the Master. It will last longer, until the final return of Christ and the final judgement of man. And I solemnly tell you that for every John, Peter, Simon, James, Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, there are at least seven Judases. And many, many more!… »

Simon is thoughtful and silent. He then says: « The shepherds are good. Judas scorns them. But I love them. »

« I love them and praise them. »

« They are simple souls, such as You like. »

« Judas has lived in town. »

« His only excuse. But there are many people who have lived in towns, and yet… When will You come to my friend? »

« Tomorrow, Simon. And I will come with pleasure, because we are by ourselves, just you and I. I believe he is a learned and experienced man, like you. »

« And he suffers a lot… In his body and even more in his heart. Master… I would like to ask You a favor: if he does not speak to You of his grief, please do not ask him any question about his family. »

« I will not. I am on the side of those who suffer, but I do not force anybody's confidence. Tears deserve respect. »

« And I did not respect them… But I felt so sorry for You… »

« You are My friend and you have already given a name to My sorrow. I am an unknown Rabbi for your friend. When he knows Me… then… Let us go. It is dark. Do not let us keep our tired guests waiting. Tomorrow at dawn we will go to Bethany. »

Jesus then says:

« My little John, how many times have I cried with My face on the ground because of men! And you would like to suffer less than I did?

Also amongst you, good people are in the proportion that existed between good people and Judas. And the better one is, the more one suffers. But also for you it is necessary to learn by studying Judas, and I say that particularly for those who are responsible for the spiritual care of souls. Each of you, priests, is a “Peter”. And you have to forgive and retain. But how much power of observation you must have, how much union with God, what great pains you must take and how many comparisons with the method of the Master you must make, in order to be a priest as it is your duty to be!

Some people may think that what I am saying is useless, human, impossible. They are the usual people who deny the human phases of Jesus' life and they make of Me a being so remote from human life as to be only a divine being. What happens then to the most holy Humanity, to the sacrifice of the Second Person in becoming flesh? Oh! I was truly a Man amongst men. I was the Man. And that is why I suffered in seeing the traitor and ungrateful people. That is why I rejoiced on account of those who loved Me or were converted to Me. That is why I shuddered and cried before Judas' spiritual corpse. I shuddered and cried before My dead friend. But I knew that I would call him back to life and I rejoiced seeing his soul already in Limbo. Here… I had the Demon in front of Me. And I will say no more.

Follow Me, John. Let us give men also this gift. And then… Blessed are those who listen to the Word of God and strive to do what it says. Blessed are those

who want to know Me in order to love Me. In them and to them I shall be a blessing. »

84. Jesus Meets Lazarus at Bethany.

21st January 1945.

It is a very clear summer dawn. Rather than dawn, it is early morning, because the sun is already above the horizon and is rising higher and higher smiling at the charming earth. Every stem is sparkling with dew. All the night stars seem to have turned into gold and gem dust for all the stems and all the leaves; even for the stones strewn on the ground, the silicious chips of which, wet with dew, seem diamond powder or gold dust.

Jesus and Simon are walking along a little road which departs from the main one at a sharp angle like a V. They are going towards magnificent orchards and fields of flax as tall as a man, almost ready to be cut. Other fields, farther away, show only large bright red spots of poppies amongst the yellow stubble.

« We are already in the property of my friend. You can see, Master, that the distance was within the prescription of the Law. I would never take the liberty of deceiving You. Behind that apple orchard there is the garden wall and the house. I made You come along this short cut to be within the prescribed mile. »

« Your friend is very wealthy! »

« Yes, very. But he is not happy. He owns property also elsewhere. »

« Is he a Pharisee? »

« His father was not. He… is very observant. I told You: a true Israelite. »

They walk a little farther. There is a high wall, and beyond it, trees and trees, with the house just emerging through them. There is a rise in the ground here, which, however, does not allow one to see the garden, so beautiful that we would call it a park.

They go round the corner. The wall runs level and from its top entwined branches of roses and sweet smelling jasmins hang down, splendid in their dewy corollas. There is the heavy wrought iron gate. Simon knocks with the heavy bronze knocker.

« It is too early to go in, Simon » remarks Jesus.

« Oh! My friend gets up at sunrise, as he finds comfort only in his garden or in books. Night is a torture for him. Please do not delay further to give him Your joy. »

A servant opens the gate.

« Good morning, Aseus. Tell your master that Simon Zealot has come with his Friend. »

The servant runs away after letting them in, saying: « Your servant greets you. Come in, Lazarus' house is open to his friends. »

Simon, who is familiar with the place, does not go to the central avenue, but he turns along a path running in the direction of a jasmin bower between rose hedges.

Shortly afterwards Lazarus comes forward from the bower. He is thin and pale, as I have always seen him, and tall; his short hair is neither thick nor curly, while his little sparse beard is confined to the lower part of his chin. He is wearing a snow white linen garment, and walks with difficulty like one suffering from leg trouble.

When he sees Simon he waves His hand affectionately and then, as best as he can, he runs towards Jesus and throws himself on his knees, bending down to the ground to kiss the hem of Jesus' tunic, saying: « I am not worthy of so much honor. But since Your holiness stoops to my misery, come, my Lord, come in and be the Master in my poor house. »

« Rise, My friend. And receive My peace. »

Lazarus gets up and kisses Jesus' hands and looks at Him with veneration not devoid of curiosity. They walk towards the house.

« How anxiously have I waited for You, Master! Every morning, at dawn, I would say: “He will come today”, and every evening I said: “I have not seen Him today, either.” »

« Why were you expecting Me so anxiously? »

« Because… whom are we in Israel expecting, but You? »

« And do you believe that I am the Expected One? »

« Simon has never lied, neither is he a boy that gets excited over nothing. Age and sorrow have made him as mature as a wise man. In any case… even if he had not recognized Your true nature, Your deeds would have spoken and said that You are a "Saint" Who accomplishes the deeds of God, must be a man of God. And You accomplish them. And You do things in a way that says how truly You are the Man of God. My friend came to You because of the fame of Your miracles and he received a miracle. And I know that Your way is strewn with miracles. Why, then, not believe that You are the Expected One? Oh! It is so sweet to believe what is good! We have to feign to believe as good, many things which are not good, for peace sake, because it would be useless to change them; many dubious words that seem adulation, praise, kindness of heart, and instead are sarcasm and blame, poison concealed by honey, we must pretend we believe them, although we know they are poison, blame, sarcasm… we must do so because… it is not possible to do otherwise, and we are weak against a whole world which is strong, and we are alone against a whole world which is hostile to us… why, then, should we have difficulty in believing what is good? On the other hand the time is ripe and the signs of the time are here. What might still be missing to make belief certain and beyond all possible doubt, should be supplied by our anxiety to believe and to appease our hearts in the certainty that the expectation is finished and that the Redeemer has come, the Messiah is here… He Who will give peace to Israel, and to the children of Israel, Who will let us die without anguish, knowing that we have been redeemed, and will enable us to live without that nostalgic feeling for our dead ones… Oh! the dead! Why mourn their death, if not because, as they have no longer any children, they have not yet the Father and God? »

« Has your father been dead long? »

« Three years, and my mother seven… but I no longer lament their deaths… I also would like to be where I hope they are awaiting Heaven. »

« In which case you would not have the Messiah as your guest. »

« That is true. Now I am in a better position than they are, because I have You… and my heart calms down because of this joy. Come in, Master. Grant me the honor of making my house Yours. Today is the Sabbath and I cannot invite friends to honor You… »

« Neither do I wish that. Today I am all for Simon's friend and Mine. »

They go into a beautiful hall, where some servants are ready to receive them. « Please follow them » says Lazarus. « You will be able to refresh yourselves before the morning meal. » And while Jesus and Simon go into another room, Lazarus gives instructions to the servants. I can see that the house belongs to wealthy people and it is also a very refined one…

… Jesus drinks some milk, which Lazarus insists on serving Him personally, before sitting at the table for the morning meal.

I hear Lazarus addressing Simon and saying to him: « I have found the man who is willing to purchase your property, and to pay the price which your agent fixed as a fair one. He will not deduct one drachma. »

« But is he willing to comply with my conditions? »

« Yes, he is. He accepts everything, providing he gets the property. And I am happy because at least I know who my neighbor is. However, as you do not want to be present at the transaction, so he also wishes to remain unknown to you. And I would ask you to yield to his request. »

« I see no reason why I should not. You, my friend, will take my place… Whatever you do, is well done. It is enough for me that my faithful servant is not put out… Master, I am selling, and as far as I am concerned, I am happy that I have nothing more that may tie me to anything which is not Your service. But I have an old faithful servant, the only one left after my misfortune and, as I have already told You, he has always helped me during my isolation, looking after my property, as if it were his own, nay, with the help of Lazarus, passing it off as his own, in order to save it and thus subsidize me. Now it would not be fair if I should leave him homeless, now that he is old. I have decided that a small house, near the boundary of the property, should be his and that part of the money should be given to him for his future maintenance. Old people, You know, are like ivy: having lived always in one place, they suffer too much being torn away from it. Lazarus wanted my servant with him, because he is good. But I preferred thus. The old man will not suffer so much… »

« You are good, too, Simon. If everybody were as just as you are, My mission would be easier… » remarks Jesus.

« Do You find the world averse, Master? » asks Lazarus.

« The world?… No. The strength of the world: Satan. If he were not the master of men's hearts and did not hold them in his possession, I would not find any resistance. But Evil is against Good, and I have to defeat evil in every man to put good into them… and they are not all willing… »

« It is true. They are not willing! Master: what words do You use to convert and convince those who are sinful? Words of severe reproach, like the ones that fill the history of Israel against guilty people, and the Precursor is the last to use them, or words of mercy? »

« I use love and mercy. Believe Me, Lazarus, a loving glance has more power on those who have fallen, than a curse. »

« And if love is mocked at? »

« One must insist again. Insist to the very utmost. Lazarus, do you know those lands where quicksands swallow unwary people? »

« Yes, I do. I have read about them, because in my situation I read a lot, both out of enthusiasm and to pass the long sleepless hours at night. I know there are some in Syria and in Egypt, as well as some near the Chaldeans. And I know that they are like suckers. They suck what they catch. A Roman says they are the mouths of Hell, where pagan monsters live. Is that true? »

« No, it is not true. They are only special formations of the earth. Olympus has nothing to do with them. People will stop believing in Olympus, and they will still exist, and the progress of mankind will only be able to give a more truthful explanation of the fact, but will not eliminate it. Now I say to you: since you read about them, you may also have read how a person who has fallen into them can be saved. »

« Yes, by means of a rope thrown to the person, or by means of a pole or even a branch. Sometimes a small thing is sufficient to give a sinking man the minimum support to hold on to, and in addition, the necessary calm, without struggling, to await rescue. »

« Well. A sinner, a man possessed, is one who has been swallowed by a deceitful soil, the surface of which is covered with flowers, whereas underneath it is quicksand. Do you think that if a man knew what it means to give Satan the possession of even an atom of himself, he would do it? But he does not know… and after… Either the astonishment and the poison of Evil paralyse him, or drive him mad and to avoid the remorse of being lost he struggles, he clings to other sands, he stirs up huge waves with his rash movements, and thus hastens his own end. Love is the rope, the wire, the branch mentioned by you. We must insist, insist… until it is caught. A word… forgiveness… a forgiveness greater than the fault… just to stop the sinking and await God's assistance. Lazarus, do you know the power of forgiveness? It brings God to assist the rescuer… Do you read much? »

« Yes, I do. But I do not know whether I do the right thing. My disease and… and other things have deprived me of many of the delights of men… and now, I have but the passion for flowers and books… For plants and also for horses… I know that I am criticised for it. But how can I go to my estate in this condition (and he uncovers two huge legs all bandaged up) on foot or riding a mule? I must use a cart, and a fast one. That is why I bought some horses, of which I am now very fond, I admit. But if You tell me that that is wrong… I will have them sold. »

« No, Lazarus. These are not corrupting things. What upsets the soul and drives away from God is cause of corruption. »

« Now, Master. What I would like to know is this. I read a lot. I have but this comfort. I like to learn… I think that after all it is better to know than to do wrong, it is better to read than to do other things. But I do not read only our pages. I like to learn about the world of other peoples and I am attracted by Rome and Athens. Now, I am aware of the great evil that befell Israel when she became corrupted by the Assyrians and the Egyptians and of the great harm done to us by Hellenistic governments. I do not know whether a man can do himself the same harm that Judas did himself and us, his children. What is Your opinion on the matter? I am anxious to be taught by You, as You are not a rabbi, but the wise and divine Word. »

Jesus stares at him for a few seconds, His glance is penetrating and distant at the same time. He seems to pierce Lazarus' opaque body and scrutinise his heart and penetrating even further, He appears to see… I wonder what… At last He speaks: « Are you upset by what you read? Does it detach you from God and His Law? »

« No, Master. On the contrary, it urges me to make comparisons between our

true God and pagan falseness. I make comparisons and I meditate on the glories of Israel, her just people, the Patriarchs, the Prophets, and the questionable figures of other peoples' histories. I compare our philosophy, if we can call so the Wisdom that speaks in our sacred texts, with the poor Greek and Roman philosophies which contain sparks of fire, but not the blaze that bums and shines in the books of our Wise Men. And after, with greater veneration, I bow down with my soul to adore our God Who speaks in Israel through deeds, people and our books. »

« Well, then, continue to read… It will help you to understand the pagan world… Continue. You may continue. There is no ferment of evil or of spiritual gangrene in you. You, therefore, may read without any fear. The love you have for your God makes sterile the profane germ, that reading might spread in you. In all man's actions there is the possibility of good and of evil. It depends on how they are accomplished. Love is not a sin, if one loves in a holy way. Work is not a sin, if one works when it is the right time. To earn is not a sin, if one is satisfied with what is honest. To educate oneself is not a sin, providing the education does not kill the idea of God in us. Whereas it is a sin to serve also at the altar, if one does it for one's own benefit. Are you convinced, Lazarus? »

« Yes, Master. I asked other people the same question and they scorned me… But You give me light and peace. Oh! If everybody heard You! Come, Master. Amongst the jasmins there is a cool breeze and silence. It is sweet to rest under their cool shade awaiting the evening. »

They go out and it all finishes.

85. Jesus Goes Back to Jerusalem, and Listens to Judas Iscariot in the Temple and then Goes to Gethsemane.

22nd January 1945.

Jesus is with Simon in Jerusalem. They make their way through a crowd of vendors and little donkeys that look like a procession in the street, and while doing so Jesus says: « Let us go up to the Temple before going to Gethsemane. We will pray the Father in His House. »

« Only that, Master? »

« Only that. I cannot stay. Tomorrow at dawn there is the meeting at the Fish Gate, and if the crowd should insist, how could I be free to go there? I want to see the other shepherds. I will send them, as true shepherds, throughout Palestine, that they may gather the sheep together and the Owner of the sheep may be known, at least by name, so that when I pronounce that name, they may know that I am the Owner of the flock and they may come to Me to be caressed. »

« It is sweet to have a Master like You! The sheep will love You. »

« Yes, the sheep will… but not the billy-goats… After seeing Jonah, we shall go to Nazareth and then to Capernaum. Simon Peter and the others are suffering because of such a long absence… We will go to make them happy and to make ourselves happy. Also the summer season induces us to do that. Night is made to rest and those who prefer the knowledge of the Truth to a rest are too few. Man… Oh! Man! He forgets too easily that he has a soul and he thinks of and worries only about his body. The sun during the day is scorching. It prevents us from travelling and teaching in the squares and in the streets. It is so exhausting that it makes the souls as drowsy as the bodies. So… let us go and teach My disciples. Let us go to sweet Galilee, rich in green fields and cool waters. Have you ever been there? »

« I passed through once, in winter, during one of my painful peregrinations from one doctor to another. I liked it… »

« Oh! It is beautiful. Always. In winter and even more in the other seasons. Now, in summer, its nights are so angelical… Yes, they really seem made for the flights of angels, so pure they are. The lake… The lake surrounded by mountains, more or less close to it, seems to be made just to speak of God to souls seeking God. It is a piece of the sky which has fallen into the green vegetation, and the vault of Heaven does not forsake it, but is mirrored in it with its stars, which are thus multiplied… to be presented to the Creator strewn on a sapphire plate. The olive-trees reach down almost to its shores and are full of nightingales. And they also sing their praise to the Creator Who lets them live in such a sweet and placid place.

And My Nazareth! All spread out to be kissed by the sun, all white and green, charming, between the two giants of the Great and Small Hermon, and the pedestal of mountains supporting the Tabor: a pedestal with sweet green slopes,

which raise their lord, often covered with snow, up towards the sun. The Tabor is so beautiful when the sun shines on its top, which then becomes pinkish alabaster, whereas on the other side, Mount Carmel is the hue of lapislazuli in certain hours of great heat, when all the veins of marbles or of waters, of forests and meadows, appear in their various hues; and it is like a gentle amethyst at daybreak. In the evening, instead, it is violet-sky beryl and is a solid block of sardonyx when the moon shows it all black in her milky-silver light. And farther down, to the south, is the fertile flowery plain of Esdraelon.

And then… then, oh! Simon! There is a Flower there! There is a Flower that lives solitary, fragrant with purity and love for Her God and Her Son! There is My Mother. You will meet Her, Simon, and then you will be able to tell Me whether there is a creature like Her, also in human grace, on the earth. She is beautiful, but everything is surpassed by what emanates internally from Her. If a brute should divest Her of all Her clothes, should disfigure Her and send Her roving, She would still appear as a Queen in a royal dress, because Her holiness would cover Her as a mantle and confer splendour on Her. The world can give Me all possible evil, but I will forgive the world everything, because to come into the world and redeem it, I had Her, the humble and great Queen of the world, Whom the world does not know, but through Whom it has received Good and will receive still more throughout centuries.

Here we are at the Temple. Let us keep the Judaic form of worship. But I solemnly tell you that the true House of God, the Holy Ark, is Her Heart, the veil of which is Her most pure flesh and its embroidery work are all Her virtues.»

They have gone in and are walking on the first floor. They go through a porch, towards a second floor.

« Master, look, there is Judas in that crowd of people. And there are also some Pharisees and members of the Sanhedrin. I am going to hear what he is saying. May I go? »

« Go. I will wait for you at the Great Porch. »

Simon walks away fast and he stands where he can hear without being seen.

Judas is speaking with firm belief: « … and there are people here whom you all know and respect, who can tell you who I was. Well, I tell you that He has changed me. I am the first redeemed. Many amongst you venerate the Baptist. He venerates him, too, and calls him “the saint equal to Elijah because of his mission, but even greater than Elijah”. Now, if the Baptist is such, He Whom the Baptist calls “the Lamb of God” and by his own holiness swears that he saw Him crowned with the fire of the Spirit of God while a voice from Heaven proclaimed Him “Beloved Son of God to be listened to”, can but be the Messiah. And He is. I swear to it. I am neither a coarse nor a silly man. I have seen His deeds and heard His words. And I tell you: it is He: the Messiah. Miracles serve Him as a slave serves his master. Diseases and misfortunes disappear like dead things and are replaced by joy and good health. And hearts change even more than bodies. You can tell by me. Have you sick people or pains to be relieved? If you have, come to the Fish Gate, tomorrow morning at dawn. He will be there and will make you happy. In the meantime, here, in His name I give this help to the poor. »

And Judas hands out some coins to two cripples and three blind men and then forces an old woman to accept the last ones. He then dismisses the crowd and remains with Joseph of Arimathaea, Nicodemus and three other people whom I do not know.

« Ah! Now I feel well! » exclaims Judas. « I have nothing left. I am as He wants me to be. »

« To tell you the truth, I don't recognize you any longer. I thought it was a joke. But I see that you are in earnest » exclaims Joseph.

« I am in earnest. Oh! I am the first not to recognize myself. I am still a filthy beast as compared to Him. But I have already changed a lot. »

« And will you no longer belong to the Temple? » asks one of the unknown men.

« Oh! no. I belong to Christ. Whoever approaches Him, can but love Him, unless one is really wicked. And one wishes nothing else but Him. »

« Will He not come here any more? »

« Of course He will. But not now. »

« I would like to hear Him. »

« He has already 'spoken here, Nicodemus. »

« I know. But I was with Gamaliel… I saw Him, but I did not stop. »

« What did Gamaliel say, Nicodemus? »

« He said: “Some new prophet”. Nothing else. »

« And did You not say to him what I told you, Joseph? You are his friend… »

« I told him. But he replied: “We already have the Baptist and according to the doctrine of the Scribes there must be at least one hundred years between this one and that one, to prepare the people for the coming of the King. I say that it will take less”, he added, “because the time is now complete”. And he concluded: “But I cannot admit that the Messiah should reveal Himself thus… One day I thought that the Messianic manifestation was about to begin, because His first ray was really a heavenly flash. But after… there was a great silence and I think I was mistaken”. »

« Try and speak to him again. If Gamaliel were with us and you with him… »

« I would not advise that » objects one of the three unknown men. « The Sanhedrin is powerful and Annas rules over it cunningly and greedily. If your Messiah wants to live, I advise Him to live in obscurity. Unless He imposes Himself with strength. But then there is Rome… »

« If the Sanhedrin heard Him, they would convert to Christ. »

« Ah! Ah! Ah! » laugh the three strangers and say: « Judas, we believed you had changed, but we thought that you were still intelligent. If what you say about Him is true, how can you believe that the Sanhedrin would follow Him? Come, come, Joseph. It is better for all of us. May God give you protection, Judas. You need it. » And they go away. Judas remains alone with Nicodemus. Simon disappears and goes to the Master. « Master, I accuse myself of a sin of slander both in my words and with my heart. That man puzzles me. I thought he was almost an enemy of Yours, but I heard him speak of You in a way, that few amongst us do, particularly here where hatred might suppress first the disciple and then the Master. And I saw him give money to the poor, and try to persuade the members of the Sanhedrin… »

« See, Simon? I am glad that you saw him just then. You will tell the others when they accuse him. Let us bless the Lord for the joy you are giving Me, because of your honesty in saying: “I have sinned”, and on account of the work of the disciple, whom you considered wicked, which he is not. »

They pray for a long time, then they go out.

« Did he not see you? »

« No, I am sure. »

« Do not say anything to him. He is a very weak soul. Praise would be like food given to a convalescent from a high temperature due to stomach trouble. It would make him worse, because he would boast of being noticed. And where pride enters… »

« I will be quiet. Where are we going? »

« To see John. At this hot hour of the day, he will be at the Olivegrove. »

They walk fast, moving when possible to shady spots in the streets which are burning in the scorching sun. They cross the dusty suburb and through the wall gate they go out into the dazzling country, they reach the olive-grove and finally the house.

In the kitchen, which is cool and dark because of the curtain at the door, there is John. He is dozing and Jesus calls him: « John! »

« You, Master? I was expecting You this evening. »

« I have come earlier. How did you manage, John? »

« Like a lamb which had lost its shepherd. I spoke of You to everybody, because to speak of You was like being with You, somehow. I spoke to relatives, acquaintances, to strangers. Also to Annas… And to a cripple, with whom I made friends, by giving him three coins. They were given to me and I gave them to him. I spoke also to a poor woman, who was crying on her doorstep, with a group of women. I asked her: “Why are you crying?” She replied: “The doctor said to me: 'Your daughter is ill with tuberculosis. Resign yourself. At the first storms in October she will die'. I have but her: she is beautiful and good, she is fifteen years old. She was to get married in spring, but instead of her wedding chest, I have to prepare her tomb!” I said to her: “I know a Doctor Who can cure her for you, if you have faith!” “No one can cure her now. She has been visited by three doctors. She is already spitting blood”. “Mine” I said, “is not a doctor like yours. He does not cure with medicines. But with His own power. He is the

Messiah!" A little old woman then said: "Oh! Believe, Eliza! I know a blind man who can now see because of Him!" And the mother then passed from distrust to hope and she is waiting for You… Did I do the right thing? That's all I have done. »

« You have done well. This evening we shall go to your friends. Have you seen Judas again? »

« No, Master. He sent me some food and money which I gave to the poor. And he sent word that I should use it, because it was his own money. »

« It is true. John, tomorrow we are going towards Galilee… »

« I am glad, Master. I am thinking of Simon Peter. Goodness knows how he is longing to see You! Shall we pass also by Nazareth? »

« Yes, and we shall stop there waiting for Peter, Andrew and your brother James. »

« Oh! Are we staying in Galilee? »

« We will stay for some time. »

John is happy and it all ends on his happiness.

86. Jesus Speaks to the Soldier Alexander at the Fish Gate.

24th January 1945.

It is dawn once again. And once again there are long lines of donkeys crowding at the Gate which is still closed. Jesus is with Simon and John. Some traders recognise Him and press round Him. Also a guard runs towards Him when the Gate is opened and sees Him. And he greets Him: « Hail, Galilean. Tell these restless people to be less rebellious. They complain of us. But they do nothing but curse us and disobey. And they say it is a form of cult for them. What religion have they got if it is based on disobedience? »

« Bear with them, My soldier. They are like those who have a guest in their house who is not wanted, but is stronger than they are. And they can only take vengeance with their tongues and by being spiteful. »

« Yes. But we must do our duty. And so we have to punish them. And thus we become more and more the unwanted guest. »

« You are right. You must do your duty. But do it always with humanity. You should always say: "If I were in their position, what would I do?" You will then see that you feel pity for the subjects. »

« I like to hear You speak. You are free from contempt and haughtiness. The other Palestinians spit at us, and loathe us… unless they can skin us properly for a woman or some purchase. Then the gold of Rome is no longer loathsome. »

« Men are men, soldier. »

« Yes and man is a bigger liar than a monkey. It is not pleasant, however, to be among those who are like snakes lying in wait… We also have homes, mothers, wives and children and our lives are dear to us. »

« There you are: if everybody remembered that, there would be no more hatred. You asked: "What religion have they?" I will answer you: a holy religion which prescribes as first commandment love for God and for our neighbour. A religion that teaches obedience to the laws. Also of enemy countries.

Because listen, My brothers in Israel, nothing happens unless God permits it. Also dominations: a misfortune without equal for a people. But if that people should examine itself in all fairness, almost always they should say that they brought on such a misfortune by their way of living contrary to God. Remember the Prophets. How many times have they spoken about that! How often have they shown with past, present and future events that a ruler is a punishment, the lash of chastisement on the back of an ungrateful son. And how many times have they taught how to avoid it: by going back to the Lord. Neither rebellion nor war cure wounds or tears, neither do they undo chains. To live as just people does all that. Then God intervenes. And what can arms and armies do against the splendour of the angelical cohorts fighting for good people? Have we been struck? Let us deserve to be no longer so, by living as children of God. Do not double your chains by committing new sins. Do not allow the Gentiles to think that you are without any religion or more pagan than they are because of your way of living. You are the people who received the Law from God Himself. Respect it. Get the rulers to bow down before your chains saying: "They are subjects but they are greater than we are, of a greatness that is not based on

numbers, money, arms, power, but on the fact that they come from God. Here shines the divine paternity of a perfect, holy, powerful God. Here is the sign of a real Divinity. It shines through its children". And may they meditate on that and come to the truth of the true God, abandoning their errors. Everyone, even the poorest, the most ignorant amongst the people of God can be a teacher to a Gentile by his way of living and can preach God to the heathens by the deeds of a holy life. Go. Peace be with you. »

« Judas is late and also the shepherds » points out Simon.

« Are You expecting someone, Galilean? » asks the soldier who has listened carefully.

« Some friends. »

« Come into the cool of the passageway. The sun is hot from the very early hours. Are You going to town? »

« No, I am going back to Galilee. »

« On foot? »

« I am poor: on foot. »

« Are You married? »

« I have My Mother. »

« Also I. Come… if You do not loathe us as the others do. »

« Only sin disgusts Me. »

The soldier looks at Him, surprised and thoughtful. « We will never have to interfere with You. Our swords will never be lifted against You. You are good. But the others!… »

Jesus is in the half light of the passageway. John is towards the town. Simon is sitting on a mass of stone which serves as a bench.

« What is Your name? »

« Jesus. »

« Ah! You are the one who works miracles also on deceased people?! I thought You were only a magician… We have some, too. A good magician, however. Because there are some… But ours cannot cure sick people. How do You do it? »

Jesus smiles and is silent.

« Do You use magic words? Have You ointments of dead people's marrows, dried snakes reduced to powder, magic stones taken from the Python's caves? »

« None of that. I have only My power. »

« Then You really are a saint. We have the haruspices and the vestals… and some of them work wonders and they say that they are the most holy ones. But do You believe it? They are worse than the rest. »

« Well, then, why do you venerate them? »

« Because… because it is the religion of Rome. And if a citizen does not respect the religion of his country, how can he respect Caesar, his fatherland, and so on, many things? »

Jesus stares at the soldier. « Truly you are well advanced on the way of Justice. Proceed, o soldier, and you will get to know what your soul feels it has in itself, without being able to give a name to it. »

« Soul? What is it? »

« When you die, where will you go? »

« Who knows?… I don't know. If I die as a hero, on the funeral pyre of heroes… if I am a poor old man, a mere nothing, perhaps I will rot in my hole or on the side of a road. »

« That is as far as your body is concerned. But where will your soul go? »

« I don't know whether all men have a soul or only those destined by Jupiter to the Elysian Fields after a wonderful life, unless he takes them up to Olympus as it happened to Romulus. »

« Every man has a soul and it is the thing that distinguishes men from animals. Would you like to be a horse? Or a bird? A fish? Flesh, that-dying, is only rot? »

« Oh! no. I am a man and I prefer to be such. »

« Well, what makes you a man is your soul. Without it you would be nothing more than a speaking animal. »

« And where is it? What is it like? »

« It has no body. But it exists. It is in you. It comes from Him Who created the world and goes back to Him after the death of the body. »

« From the God of Israel, according to You. »

« From the only, one, eternal, supreme God, Lord and Creator of the universe. »

« And also a poor soldier like me, has a soul and it goes back to God? »

« Yes. Also a poor soldier, and his soul will have God as a Friend, if it was always good, or God as a Punisher, if it was bad. »

« Master, there is Judas with the shepherds and some women. If I am right, there is the girl we spoke of yesterday » says John.

« I am going, soldier. Be good. »

« Will I not see You again? I would like to know… »

« I will stay in Galilee until September. Come, if you can. At Capernaum or Nazareth anyone will tell you where I am. At Capernaum ask for Simon Peter. At Nazareth for Mary of Joseph. She is My Mother. Come. I will speak to you of the true God. »

« Simon Peter… Mary of Joseph. I'll come, if I can. And if You come back, remember Alexander. I belong to the Jerusalem Century. »

Judas and the shepherds are already in the passageway.

« Peace to you all » says Jesus.

And He is about to say more, when a slender smiling girl makes her way through the group and throws herself at His feet: « Your blessing on me again, Master and Saviour and my kiss again to You! » And she kisses His hands.

« Go. Be happy and good. A good daughter, then a good wife, and then a good mother. Teach your future children My Name and My doctrine. Peace to you and to your mother. Peace and blessings to all those who are friends of God. Peace also to you, Alexander. »

Jesus goes away.

« We are late. But some women besieged us » explains Judas. « They were at Gethsemane and wanted to see You. We had gone there without knowing of them, to join You and come here together. But You had already gone away and the women instead were there. We wanted to leave them… But they were more insistent than flies. They wanted to know so many things… Have You cured the girl? »

« Yes. »

« And have You spoken to the Roman? »

« Yes. He has an honest heart. And he is seeking the Truth… »

Judas sighs.

« Why are you sighing, Judas? » asks Jesus.

« I am sighing because I wish our people would seek the Truth. Instead they evade it, or sneer at it, or remain indifferent. I feel discouraged. I feel as if I do not want to come back here again, but do nothing else but listen to You. In any case, as a disciple, I am good for nothing. »

« And do you think that I am very successful? Do not be discouraged, Judas. It is the struggle of the apostolate. There are more defeats than victories. Defeats here. Up there they are always victories. The Father sees your good will and even if you are not successful He blesses you just the same. »

« Oh! You are good! » Judas kisses His hand. « Will I ever become good? »

« Yes, if you want to. »

« I think I have been good these past days… I suffered to be so… because I have many desires… but I always thought of You. »

« Persist, then. You give Me so much joy. And what news have you got for Me? » He asks the shepherds.

« Elias sends You his greetings, and also some food. And he asks You not to forget him. »

« Oh! I have My friends in My heart! Let us go as far as that little village,

surrounded by green fields. Then we will proceed in the evening. I am happy to be with you, I am glad that I am going to My Mother and that I have spoken of the Truth to an honest man. Yes, I am happy. If you knew what it is for Me to do My mission and see souls coming to it, that is to the Father, oh! you would follow Me more and more with your souls!… »

I see nothing else.

87. Jesus and Isaac near Doco. Departure towards Esdraelon.

25th January 1945.

« And I tell You, Master, that humble people are better. The ones I addressed either laughed at me or ignored me. Oh! The little ones at Juttah! » It is Isaac speaking to Jesus. They are all in a group sitting on the grass on the river bank. Isaac seems to be giving a report on his work. Judas intervenes and, an exceptional case, he calls the shepherd by his name: « Isaac, I am of your opinion. We waste our time and lose our faith dealing with them. I am giving it up. »

« I will not. But it makes me suffer. I will give up only if the Master tells me. For years I have been accustomed to suffering out of loyalty to the truth. I could not tell lies to get into the good graces of the mighty ones. And do you know how many times they came to make fun of me, in the room where I was ill, promising help – oh! they were certainly false promises – if I would say that I had lied, and that You, Jesus, were not the New-Born Savior?! But I could not lie. If I had lied I would have denied my own joy, I would have killed my only hope, I would have rejected You, my Lord! Reject You! In my dark misery, in my dreary illness there was always a sky strewn with stars above me: the face of my mother, the only joy of my orphan life, the face of a bride, who was never mine and whom I continued to love even after her death. These were the two minor stars. And the two major stars, like two most pure moons: Joseph and Mary smiling at the New-Born Baby and at us poor shepherds, and Your bright, innocent, kind, holy, holy, holy face, in the centre of the sky of my heart. I could not reject that sky of mine! I did not want to deprive myself of its light, as there is no other so pure. I would have rather rejected my own life, or I would have lived in torture, rather than reject You, My blessed remembrance, my New-Born Jesus! »

Jesus lays His hand on Isaac's shoulder and smiles.

Judas speaks again: « So you insist? »

« I do. Today, tomorrow, and the day after again. Someone will come. »

« How long will the work last? »

« I don't know. But believe me. It is enough not to look either ahead or back. And do things day by day. And in the evening, if we have worked with profit, we say: “Thank You, my God”, if without any profit, just say: “I hope in Your help for tomorrow.” »

« You are wise. »

« I don't even know what it means. But I do in my mission what I did during my sickness. Thirty years' infirmity is no trifling matter! »

« Ehi! I believe that. I was not yet born and you were already an invalid. »

« I was ill. But I never counted those years. I never said: “Now it is the month of Nisan again, but I am not blossoming again with the roses. Now it is Tishri and I still languish here.” I went on, speaking of Him, both to myself and to good people. I realized that the years were passing, because the little ones of bygone days came to bring me their wedding confections or the cakes for the birth of their little ones. Now, if I look back, now that from old I have become young, what do I see of my past? Nothing. It is past. »

« Nothing here. But in Heaven it is “everything” for you, Isaac, and that “everything” is waiting for you » says Jesus. And then speaking to everyone: « You must do so. I do so Myself. We must go on. Without getting tired. Tiredness is one of the roots of human pride. And so is haste. Why is man annoyed by defeats, why is he upset by delays? Because pride says: “Why say '‘no’ to me? So much delay for me? This is lack of respect for the apostle of God.” No, My friends. Look at the whole universe and think of Him Who made it. Meditate on the progress of man, and consider his origin. Think of this hour which is now being completed and count how many centuries have preceded it. The universe is the work of a calm creation. The Father did not do things in a disorderly way. But He made the universe in successive phases. Man is the work of patient progress, the present man, and he will more and more progress in

knowledge and in power. And such knowledge and power will be holy or not holy, according to his will. But man did not become skilled all at once. The First Parents, expelled from the Garden, had to learn everything, slowly, progressively. They had to learn the most simple things: that a grain of corn is more tasty if ground into flour, then kneaded and then baked. And they had to learn how to grind it and bake it. They had to learn how to light a fire. How to make a garment by observing the fleece of animals. How to make a den by watching beasts. How to built a pallet, by watching nests. They learned how to cure themselves with herbs and water, by observing animals, that do so by instinct. They learned to travel across deserts and seas, studying the stars, breaking in horses, learning how to balance boats on water, by watching the shell of a nut floating on the water of a stream. And how many failures before success! But man succeeded. And he will go farther. But he will not be happier on account of his progress, because he will become more skilled in evil than in good. But he will make progress. Is Redemption not a patient work? It was decided centuries and centuries ago, it is happening now after being prepared for centuries. Everything is patience. Why be impatient, then? Could God not have made everything in a flash? Was it not possible for man, gifted with reason, created by the hands of God, to know everything in a flash? Could I not have come at the beginning of centuries? Everything was possible. But nothing must be violence. Nothing. Violence is always against order; and God, and what comes from God is order. Do not attempt to be superior to God. »

« But, then, when will You be known? »

« By whom, Judas? »

« By the world! »

« Never! »

« Never? But are You not the Savior? »

« I am. But the world does not want to be saved. Only one in a thousand will be willing to know Me, and only one in ten thousand will really follow Me. And I will say even more. I will not be known even by My most intimate friends. »

« But if they are Your intimate friends, they will know You. »

« Yes, Judas. They will know Me as Jesus, as Jesus the Israelite. But they will not know Me as He Who I am. I solemnly tell you that I will not be known by all My intimates. To know means to love with loyalty and virtue… and there will be who does not know Me. » Jesus takes the attitude of resigned discouragement which is customary to Him when He announces His future betrayal: He opens His hands and holds them out, turned outwards, His sorrowful face looking at neither man nor Heaven, but only at His future destiny of a betrayed person.

« Do not say that » implores John.

« We follow You, to know You more and more » says Simon, and the shepherds join their voices to his.

« We follow You, as we would follow a bride and You are dearer to us than she could be; we are more jealous of You than of a woman. Oh! no. We know You already so much that we cannot ignore You any longer. He (and Judas points at Isaac) says that to deny Your remembrance of a New-Born Baby would have been more distressing than losing his life. And You were but a new-born baby. We know You as Man and Master. We listen to You and see Your works. Your contact, Your breath, Your kiss: they are our continuous consecration and our continuous purification. Only a satan could deny You after being Your close companion. »

« It is true, Judas. But there will be one. »

« Woe to him! I will be his executioner. »

« No. Leave justice to the Father. Be his redeemer. The redeemer of this soul that is inclined towards Satan. But let us say goodbye to Isaac. It is evening. I bless you, My faithful servant. You now know that Lazarus of Bethany is our friend and is willing to help My friends. I am going. You are staying here. Prepare the parched land of Judaea for Me. I will come later. In case of need you know where to find Me. My peace be with you » and Jesus blesses and kisses His disciple.

88. Jesus with the Shepherd Jonah in the Plain of Esdraelon.

26th January 1945.

Jesus is walking along a little path which runs between parched fields, covered with stubble and full of crickets. Levi and John are walking beside Him. Behind in a group are Joseph, Judas and Simon. It is night. But there is no relief from the heat. The soil seems to be still burning after the great heat of the day. Dew is of no avail in so much heat. I think it evaporates even before reaching the ground, such is the burst of heat rising from the furrows and the cracks in the soil.

They are silent, exhausted and hot. But I see Jesus smile. It is a clear night although the setting moon is hardly visible in the far east.

« Do You think he will be there? » Jesus asks Levi.

« He will certainly be there. This is the time when the crops are stored away, but they have not yet started picking the fruit. Farmers are therefore busy watching their vineyards and orchards against robbers and they do not go away, particularly when their masters are as stingy as Jonah's. Samaria is not far and when those renegades get a chance… oh! they are happy to cause damage to us Israelites. Do they not know that the servants get beaten for it? Of course they do. But they hate us, that's all. »

« Do not cherish resentment, Levi » says Jesus.

« No. But You will see how Jonah was wounded five years ago because of them. Since then he lives watching at night. Because the scourge is a cruel punishment...»

« Is there still a long way to go? »

« No, Master. See where this dreariness ends and there is a dark area? The orchards of Doras, the cruel Pharisee, are there. If You will allow me, I will go on in front of You, to let Jonah hear me. »

« Yes, go. »

« Are all the Pharisees like that, my Lord? » asks John. « Oh! I would not like to be in their service! I prefer my boat. »

« Is your boat your dearest thing? » asks Jesus half serious.

« No, You are! It was the boat when I did not know that Love was on the earth » answers John promptly.

Jesus smiles at his impetuosity. « You did not know that love was on the earth? And how were you born then, if your father did not love your mother? » asks Jesus, jokingly.

« That love is beautiful, but it does not attract me. You are my love, You are the love on the earth for poor John. »

Jesus embraces him and says: « I was anxious to hear you say so. Love is greedy for love and man gives and will always give tiny drops to its thirst, like these which are falling from the sky and are so small that they vanish mid-air, in the great summer heat. Also man's drops of love will vanish mid-air, killed by the heat of too many things. Hearts will still squeeze them out… but interests, love, business, greed, so many human things will burn them. And what will rise to Jesus? Oh! too little! The remains, the few surviving human pulsations, men's throbs interested in asking, asking, and asking, in urgent need. To love Me out of pure love will be the characteristic of few people… of people like John… Look at an ear of corn grown after the end of the season. It is perhaps a seed that fell at harvest time. But it was able to spring up, to resist sunshine and dry weather, to grow up, to form an ear… Feel it: it is already formed. In these stripped fields it is the only living thing. Before long the ripe grains will fall on the ground, breaking the smooth husk that holds them close to the stem, and they will become charity food for the little birds, or yielding one hundred per cent, they will grow again and before winter brings the plough back to the earth, they will be ripe once again and will satisfy the hunger of many birds already starving in the dreariest season… See, My John, what one brave seed can do? And the few people that will love Me out of pure love, will be like that. One only will satisfy the hunger of many. One only will make beautiful the area which before was ugly. One only will give life where there was death and all the hungry ones will come to that one. They will eat a grain of its active love and then, selfish and absent-minded, they will fly away. But also without their knowing it, that grain will Put vital germs in their blood, in their souls… and they will come back. And today, tomorrow and the day after, as Isaac said, the knowledge of the Love will increase in their hearts. The stripped stem will no longer be a living thing: a parched straw. But how much good from its sacrifice! And how much reward for its sacrifice! »

Jesus, Who had stopped for a moment before a thin ear of corn, grown at the edge of the path, in a little ditch, which in rainy weather was perhaps a little stream, has moved on, while John listens to Him all the time in his usual attitude of an ardent admirer, who takes in not only the words but also the movements of the person loved.

The others, who are speaking among themselves, are not aware of the tender conversation. They have now reached the orchard and they stop, forming one group. The heat is such that they are all perspiring, although they are not wearing mantles. They wait silently.

From the dark thicket, which is faintly lit up by moonlight, Levi, visible in his light clothes, appears, followed by a person of darker dress. « Master, Jonah is here. »

« May My peace come to you! » greets Jesus, before Jonah reaches Him.

But Jonah does not reply. He runs and throws himself weeping at His feet and kisses them. When he is fit to speak he says: « How long have I waited for You! How long! How depressing it was to feel that my life was passing away, that death was approaching, and I had to say: "I have not seen Him!" And yet, no, not all hopes were destroyed. Not even when I was about to die. I would say: "She said so: 'You will serve Him again' and She could not have said something that was not true. She is the Mother of the Immanuel. No one, therefore, possesses God more than She does, and who has God knows what is of God." »

« Get up. She sends you Her greetings. You have been near Her and You are still near Her. She lives at Nazareth. »

« You! She! At Nazareth? Oh! I wish I had known. At night, in the cold winter months, when the fields rest and evil people cannot cause damage to farmers, I would have come, I would have run there, to kiss Your feet and I would have come back with my treasure of certainty of faith. Why did You not show Yourself, Lord? »

« Because is was not the time. The time has now come. We must learn to wait. You said: "In the winter months when the fields rest". And yet they have been sown, have they not? Well, I was like a grain that had been sown. And you saw Me when I was being sown. Then I disappeared. Buried in necessary silence. That I might grow and reach harvest time and shine in the eyes of the world and of those who had seen Me a New-Born Baby. That time has come. The New-Born is now ready to be the Bread of the world. And I am looking first for My faithful ones, and I say to them: "Come. I will satisfy your hunger." »

The man is listening to Him, smiling happily, and he keeps saying to himself: « Oh! You are really here! You are really here! »

« You were about to die? When? »

« When I was thrashed to death, because they had stripped two vineyards. Look how many wounds! » He lowers his tunic and shows his shoulders all marked by irregular scars. « He beat me with an iron rod. He counted the bunches of grapes that had been picked, he could see where the stalks had been torn off, and he gave me a blow for every bunch. And then he left me there, half dead. Mary helped me, she is the young wife of a friend of mine, and she has always been fond of me. Her father was the land agent before me and when I came here I became very fond of the little girl, because her name was Mary. She took care of me and, I recovered after two months, for the sores had become infected because of the heat, and had given me a high temperature. I said to the God of Israel: "It does not matter. Let me see Your Messiah again, and this misfortune is of no importance to me. Accept it as a sacrifice. I can never offer You a sacrifice. I am the servant of a cruel man and You know. He does not even allow me to come to Your altar at Passover. Accept me as a victim. But give me Him!" »

« And the Most High has satisfied you. Jonah, do you wish to serve Me, as your friends are already doing? »

« Oh! How shall I do that? »

« As they do. Levi knows and he will tell you how simple it is to serve Me. I only want your good will. »

« I have given You that since the time You cried in the manger. It made me overcome everything. Both dejection and hatred. The fact is… we cannot speak very much here… The master once kicked me because I was insisting that You existed. But when he was away, and with those I could trust, oh! I did tell the wonder of that night! »

« And now tell the wonder of your meeting. I have found almost everyone, and everyone is faithful. Is that not a wonder? Only because you contemplated Me with faith and love you have become just in the eyes of God and men. »

« Oh! Now I will have courage! And how much courage! Now that I know that You are alive I can say: “He is there. Go to Him!…” But where, my Lord? »

« All over Israel. Up to September I will be in Galilee. I will Often be at Nazareth or Capernaum, and I can be traced from there. After… I will be everywhere. I have come to gather the sheep of Israel. »

« Oh! My Lord! You will find many billy-goats. Beware of the great ones in Israel! »

« They will not do Me any harm, if it is not the time. Say to the dead, the sleepers, the living: “The Messiah is amongst us.”»

« To the dead, Lord? »

« To those whose souls are dead. The others, the just who died in the Lord, are already rejoicing for their imminent liberation from Limbo. Say to the dead: “I am the Life.” Say to the sleepers: “I am the Sun that rises awaking from sleep.” Say to the living: “I am the Truth they are seeking.” »

« And You cure also sick people? Levi told me about Isaac. Is the miracle only for him, because he is Your shepherd, or is it for everybody? »

« For good people, a miracle is a just reward. For those who are not so good, it urges them toward true goodness. It is also for bad people, to shake them and make them understand that I am and that God is with Me. A miracle is a gift. Gifts are for good people. But He Who is Mercy and sees the human burden, which can be lightened only by powerful events, has resort also to this means, that He may say: “I have done everything for you, but all in vain. Tell Me, therefore, what else I must do.” »

« Lord, do You mind entering my house? If You give me assurance that no robber will come into the estate, I would like to give You hospitality, and invite also the few people who know You because I spoke to them of You. Our master has bent and broken us like ignoble stems. We have but the hope of an eternal reward. But if You will show Yourself to downcast hearts, they will feel new strength. »

« I will come. Do not be afraid for your trees and vineyards. Can you believe that the angels will watch them faithfully? »

« Oh! My Lord. I saw Your heavenly servants. I do believe. And I will come with You and feel safe. Blessed these trees and vineyards which have the breeze and songs of angelical wings and voices! Blessed is the soil which is sanctified by Your feet! Come, Lord Jesus! Listen, trees and vines. Listen, soil. Now I will say to Him the Name that I confided to you for my own peace. Jesus is here. Listen, and may the sap exult through branches and vineshoots. The Messiah is with us. »

It all ends with these joyful words.

89. Return to Nazareth after Leaving Jonah.

27th January 1945.

The light is so faint it seems to be blinking. At the door of a very poor hut – it would be an overstatement to call it a house – there is Jesus with His disciples, Jonah and other poor peasants like him. It is departure time.

« Will I not see You again, my Lord? » asks Jonah. « You have brought light to our hearts. Your kindness has turned these days into a feast that will last all our lives. But You have seen how we are treated. A mule is taken more care of than we are. And trees receive more human attention. They are money. We are only millstones that earn money. And we are used until we die of excessive toil. But Your words have been as many loving caresses. Our bread seemed more plentiful and it tasted better because You shared it with us, this bread which he does not even give to his dogs. Come back to share it with us, my Lord. Only because it is You, I dare say that. It would be an insult to offer anyone else shelter and food which even a beggar would disdain. But You… »

« But I find in them a heavenly perfume and flavour, because in them there is faith and love. I will come, Jonah. I will come back. You stay in your place, tied like an animal to the shafts. May your place be Jacob's ladder. And in fact angels go and come from Heaven down to you, carefully gathering all your merits and taking them up to God. But I will come to you. To relieve your spirit. Be faithful to Me, all of you. Oh! I would like to give you also human peace. But I cannot. I must say to you: go on suffering. And that is very sad for One Who loves… »

« Lord, if You love us, we no longer suffer. Before we had no one to love us…

Oh! If I could, at least I, see Your Mother! »

« Do not worry. I will bring Her to you. When the weather is milder, I will come with Her. Do not risk incurring cruel punishments on account of your anxiety to see Her. You must wait for Her as you wait for the rising of a star, of the evening star. She will appear to you all of a sudden, exactly as the evening star, which is not there one moment, and a moment later it shines in the sky. And you must consider that even now She is lavishing Her gifts of love on you. Goodbye, everybody. May My peace protect you from the harshness of him who torments you. Goodbye, Jonah. Do not cry. You have waited for so many years with patient faith. I now promise you a very short wait. Do not weep. I will not leave you alone. Your kindness wiped My tears when I was a NewBorn Baby. Is Mine not sufficient to wipe yours? »

« Yes… but You are going away… and I have to remain here… »

« Jonah, My friend, do not make Me go away depressed because I cannot comfort you .. »

« I am not crying, my Lord… But how will I be able to live without seeing You, now that I know that You are alive? »

Jesus caresses the forlorn old man once again and then goes away. But standing on the edge of the miserable threshing-floor, Jesus stretches His arms out and blesses the country. He then departs.

« What have You done, Master? » asks Simon who has noticed the unusual gesture. .

« I put a seal on everything. That no demon may damage things and thus cause trouble to those wretched people. I could do no more… »

« Master, let us walk on a little faster. I would like to tell You something which I do not want the others to hear. » They move farther away from the group and Simon begins to speak: « I wanted to tell You that Lazarus has instructions to use my money to assist all those who apply to him in Jesus' name. Could we not free Jonah? That man is worn out and his only joy is to be with You. Let us give him that. What is his work worth here? If instead he were free, he would be Your disciple in this beautiful yet desolate plain, The richest people in Israel own fertile estates here and they exploit them with cruel usury, exacting a hundredfold profit from their workers. I have known that for years. You will not be able to stop here long, because the sect of the Pharisees rules over the country and I do not think it will ever be friendly to You. These oppressed and hopeless workers are the most unhappy people in Israel. Your heard it Yourself, not even at Passover have they peace, neither can they pray, whilst their severe masters, with solemn gestures and affected exhibitions, take up prominent positions in front of all the people. At least they will have the joy of knowing that You exist, and of listening to Your words, which will be repeated to them by one who will not alter one single letter. If You are agreeable, Master, please say so, and Lazarus will do the necessary. »

« Simon, I knew why you gave all your property away. The thoughts of men are known to Me. And I loved you also because of that. By making Jonah happy, you make Jesus happy. Oh! How it torments Me to see good people suffer! My situation of a poor man despised by the world afflicts Me only because of that. If Judas heard Me, he would say: “But are You not the Word of God? Give the order, and these stones will become gold and bread for the poor people.” He would repeat Satan's snare. I am anxious to satisfy people's hunger. But not the way Judas would like. You are not yet sufficiently mature to grasp the depth of what I want to say. But I will tell you: if God saw to everything He would rob His friends. He would deprive them of the chance of being merciful and fulfilling the commandment of love. My friends must possess this mark of God, in common with Him: the holy mercy consisting in deeds and words. And the unhappiness of other people gives My friends the opportunity to practice it. Have you understood what I mean? »

« Your thought is a deep one. I will ponder Your words. And I humble myself, as I see how dull-minded I am and how great God is Who wants us to be gifted with all His most sweet attributes, so that He may call us His children. God is revealed to me in His manifold perfections by every ray of light with which You illuminate my heart. Day by day, like one proceeding in an unknown place, the knowledge of the immense Thing which is the Perfection Which wants to call us His “children” is progressing in me and I seem to be climbing like an eagle or to be diving like a fish into two endless depths, such as sky and sea, and I climb higher and higher and dive deeper and deeper, but I never touch the end. But what is, therefore, God? »

« God is the unattainable Perfection, God is the perfect Beauty, God is the infinite Power, God is the incomprehensible Essence, God is the unsurpassable Bounty, God is the indestructible Mercy, God is the immeasurable Wisdom,

God is the Love that became God. He is the Love! He is the Love! You say that the more you know God in His perfection, the higher you seem to climb and the deeper to dive into two endless depths of shadeless blue… But when you understand what is the Love that became God, you will no longer climb or dive into the blue, but into a blazing vortex and you will be drawn towards a beatitude which will be death and life for you. You will possess God, with a perfect possession, when, by your will, you succeed in understanding and deserving Him. You will then be fixed in His perfection. »

« O Lord… » Simon is overwhelmed.

There is silence. They reach the road. Jesus stops, waiting for the others. When they are all together again, Levi kneels down: « I should be leaving, Master. But Your servant asks You a favor. Take me to Your Mother. This man is an orphan like me. Do not deny me what You give him, that I may see the face of a mother… »

« Come. What is asked in My Mother's name, I grant in My Mother's name. »

… Jesus is by Himself. He is walking fast among the thick olive trees laden with small fruits which are already well shaped. The sun, although almost setting, is blazing down in the grey-green dome of the precious peaceful trees, but it does not penetrate the tangle of branches beyond providing for a few tiny bright eyelets of light. The main road, on the other hand, embedded in two banks, is a dusty blazing dazzling ribbon.

Jesus proceeds smiling. He reaches a cliff… and smiles even more happily. There is Nazareth… its panorama seems to be flickering, such is the heat of the blazing sun. Jesus goes down even faster. He reaches the road now, without minding the sun. He is walking so fast that He seems to be flying: He has protected His head with His mantle, which blows at His sides and behind Him. The road is deserted and silent as far as the nearest houses. Now and again the voices of a child or a woman can be heard from the inside of a house or a kitchen garden, the trees of which extend their branches over the road. Jesus avails Himself of such shady spots to avoid the merciless sunshine. He turns into a half shaded road. There are some women gathered round a cool well. Almost every one of them salutes Him welcoming Him in their shrill voices.

« Peace to you all… But please be silent. I want to give My Mother a surprise. »

« Her sister-in-law has just gone away with a pitcher of cool water. But she is coming back. They are left without any water. The spring is either dry or the water is absorbed by the parched land before reaching Your garden. We don't know. That's what Mary of Alphaeus was saying. There she is… she is coming. »

The mother of Judas and James is coming carrying an amphora on her head and another one in her hand. She does not see Jesus at once; she is shouting: « I'll be quicker this way. Mary is very sad, because Her flowers are dying of thirst. They are the ones planted by Joseph and Jesus and it breaks Her heart to see them withering. »

« But now that She sees Me… » says Jesus appearing from behind the group of women.

« Oh! My Jesus! Blessed You are! I'll go and tell… »

« No. I will go. Give Me the amphoras. »

« The door is half shut. Mary is in the garden. Oh! How happy She will be! She was speaking of You also this morning. But why come in this heat! You are all perspiration! Are You alone? »

« No. With friends. But I came ahead of them. To see My Mother first. And Judas? »

« He is at Capernaum. He often goes there. » Mary does not say anything else. But she smiles while drying Jesus' wet face with her veil.

The pitchers are ready. Jesus takes two, He ties one at each end of His belt which He throws across His shoulder and takes the third one in His hand.

He walks away, turns round a comer, reaches the house, pushes the door, enters the little room which seems dark in comparison with the bright sunshine outside. He slowly lifts the curtain protecting the door of the garden and He watches.

Mary is standing near a rose-bush, with Her back to the house and is pitying the parched plant. Jesus lays the pitcher on the floor and the copper tinkles against a stone. « Are you here already, Mary? » says His Mother without turning round. « Come, come, look at this rose! And these poor lilies. They will all die, if we do not assist them. Bring also some small canes to hold up this falling stalk. »

« I will bring You everything, Mother. »

Mary springs round. She remains for a moment with Her eyes wide open, then with a cry She runs with outstretched arms towards Her Son, Who has already opened His arms and is waiting for Her with the most loving smile.

« Oh! My Son! »

« Mother! Dear! »

Their embrace is a long and loving one and Mary is so happy that She does not feel how hot is Jesus. But then She notices it: « Why, Son, did You come at this time of the day? You are purple red and are perspiring like a sodden sponge. Come inside. That I may dry and refresh You. I will bring You a fresh tunic and clean sandals. My Son! My Son! Why go about in this heat! The plants are dying because of the heat and You, My Flower, are going about. »

« It was to come to You as soon as possible, Mother. »

« Oh! My dear! Are You thirsty? You must be. I will now prepare… »

« Yes, I am thirsty for Your kisses, Mother. And for Your caresses. Let Me stay like this, with My head on Your shoulder, as when I was a little boy… Oh! Mother! How I miss You! »

« Tell Me to come, Son, and I will. What did You lack because of My absence? The food You like? Clean clothes? A well made bed? Oh! My Joy, tell Me what You lacked. Your servant, My Lord, will endeavor to provide. »

« Nothing, but You… »

Jesus goes into the house hand in hand with His Mother. He sits on the chest near the wall, embraces Mary Who is in front of Him, resting His head on Her heart and kissing Her now and again. Now He stares at Her: « Let Me look at You, to My heart's content, holy Mother of Mine. »

« Your tunic first. It is not good for You to remain so damp. Come. » Jesus obeys. When He comes back wearing a fresh looking tunic, they resume their sweet conversation.

« I have come with My disciples and friends. But I left them in Melcha's wood. They will come tomorrow at dawn. I… I could not wait any longer. My Mother! … » and He kisses Her hands. « Mary of Alphaeus has gone away to leave us alone. She also understood how anxious I was to be with You. Tomorrow… tomorrow You will attend to My friends and I to the Nazarenes. But this evening You are My Friend and I am Yours. I brought You… Oh! Mother: I found the shepherds of Bethlehem. And I brought You two of them: they are orphans and You are the Mother. Of all men. And more so of orphans. And I brought You also one who needs You to control himself. And another one who is a just man and has suffered so much. And then John… And I brought You the recollections of Elias, Isaac, Tobias, now called Matthew, John and Simeon. Jonah is the most unhappy of them all. I will take You to him… I promised him. I will continue to look for the others. Samuel and Joseph are resting in the peace of God. »

« Were You at Bethlehem? »

« Yes, Mother. I took there the disciples who were with Me. And I brought You these little flowers, that were growing near the stones of the threshold. »

« Oh! » Mary takes the withered stems and kisses them. « And what about Anne? »

« She died in Herod's slaughter. »

« Oh! Poor woman! She was so fond of You! »

« The Bethlehemites suffered a lot. But they have not been fair to the shepherds. But they suffered a lot… »

« But they were good to You then! »

« Yes. And that is why they are to be pitied. Satan is jealous of their past kindness and urges them to evil things. I was also at Hebron. The shepherds, persecuted… »

« Oh! To that extent?! »

« Yes, they were helped by Zacharias, who got them jobs and food, even if their masters were hard people. But they are just souls and they turned their persecutions and wounds into merits of true holiness. I gathered them together. I cured Isaac… and I gave My name to a little boy… At Juttah, where Isaac was languishing and where he came back to life again, there is now an innocent group, called Mary, Joseph and Jesai… »

« Oh! Your Name! »

« And Yours and the name of the Just One. And at Kerioth, the fatherland of a

disciple, a faithful Israelite died resting on My heart. Out of joy, having found Me… And then… Ah! how many things I have to tell You, My perfect Friend, sweet Mother! But first of all, I beg You, I ask You to have so much mercy on those who will be coming tomorrow. Listen: they love Me… but they are not perfect. You, Teacher of virtue… oh! Mother, help Me to make them good… I would like to save them all… » Jesus has slipped at Mary's feet. She now appears in Her Motherly majesty.

« My Son! What do You want Your poor Mother to do better than You do? »

« To sanctify them… Your virtue sanctifies. I brought them here deliberately, Mother… one day I will say to You: “Come”, because it will then be urgent to sanctify souls, that I may find them willing to be redeemed. And I will not be able by Myself… Your silence will be as eloquent as My words. Your purity will assist My power. Your presence will keep Satan away… and Your Son, Mother, will feel stronger knowing that You are near Him. You will come, will you not, My sweet Mother? »

« Jesus! Dear Son! I have a feeling that You are not happy… What is the matter, Creature of My heart? Was the world hostile to You? No? It is a relief to believe it… but… Oh! Yes. I will come. Wherever You wish, as and when You wish. Even now, in this blazing sunshine, or by night, in cold or wet weather. You want Me? Here I am. »

« No. Not now. But one day… How sweet is our home. And Your caresses! Let Me sleep thus, with My head on Your knees. I am so tired! I am still Your little Son… » And Jesus really falls asleep, tired and exhausted, sitting on the mat, His head on the lap of His Mother, Who happily caresses His hair.

90. The Next Day in the House in Nazareth.

28th January 1945.

I see Mary moving about the house, barefooted and active, at daybreak. In Her pale blue dress, She is like a butterfly lightly and noiselessly touching walls and other things. She goes to the front door and opens it carefully without making any sound, She leaves it half open, after having a look at the still deserted road. She tidies up, opens doors and windows, goes into the workshop, where She now keeps Her looms, since it was abandoned by the Carpenter, and bustles about also in there. She carefully covers one of the looms, where weaving has just begun and smiles at one of Her thoughts, while looking at it.

She goes out into the garden. The doves gather on Her shoulders. And with short flights, from one shoulder to the other, to have the best place, quarrelsome and jealous of Her love, they accompany Her to a closet where foodstuffs are stored. She takes some grain for them and says: « Here, stay here today. Don't make any noise. He is so tired! » She then takes some flour and goes into an anteroom near the stone oven and starts making the bread. She kneads it and smiles. Oh! How Mother smiles to-day. She is like the young Mother of the Nativity, so much joy has made Her young again. From the dough She takes a lump and puts it aside, covering it, and then resumes Her work, getting heated, while Her hair looks lighter in color as it becomes slightly powdered with flour.

Mary of Alphaeus comes in quietly. « Are You working already? »

« Yes, I am baking bread, and look: the honey cakes He likes so much. »

« You make the cakes. The dough is quite bulky. I'll work it for You. »

Mary of Alphaeus, a more robust country woman, works at the bread with enthusiasm, while Mary mixes butter and honey to the cakes. She makes many round shaped ones and places them on a metal plate.

« I do not know how to inform Judas… James does not dare… and the others… » Mary of Alphaeus sighs.

« Simon Peter is coming to-day. He always comes with the fish on the second day after the Sabbath. We will send him to Judas. »

« If he is willing to go… »

« Oh! Simon never says no to Me. »

« May peace be on this day of yours » says Jesus appearing.

The two women start hearing His voice.

« Are You already up? Why? I wanted You to sleep… »

« I slept like a child in its cradle, Mother. I am afraid You have not slept… »

« I watched You sleeping… I always did so when You were a baby. You always smiled in Your sleep and that smile of Yours remained all day long in My heart like a pearl… But last night, Son, You were not smiling. You kept sighing as one who is afflicted… » Mary, sore at heart, looks at Him.

« I was tired, Mother. The world is not like this house, where everything is honesty and love. You… You know Who I am and can thus understand what it is for Me to be in touch with the world. It is like walking along a foul muddy road. Even if a man is careful, he will get splashed with mud and the stench will penetrate him, even if he endeavors not to breathe… and if he is a man who loves cleanliness and pure air, You can imagine how troublesome it is… »

« Yes, Son, I understand. But it grieves Me that You should suffer… »

« Now I am with You and I do not suffer. There is only the memory… But it serves to increase the joy of being with You. » And Jesus bends down to kiss His Mother.

He caresses also the other Mary, who has just come in all flushed, after lighting the oven fire.

« We will have to inform Judas. » It is the worry of Mary of Alphaeus.

« It is not necessary. Judas will be here, to-day. »

« How do You know? »

Jesus smiles and is silent.

« Son, every week, this day, Simon Peter comes. He comes to bring the fish caught early in the night. And he arrives here shortly after daybreak. He will be happy today. Simon is good. He always helps us, while he is here. Does he not, Mary? »

« Simon Peter is honest and good » says Jesus. « But also the other Simon whom You will see shortly, is a kind-hearted man. I am going to meet them. They must be about to arrive. »

And Jesus goes out whilst the women, after putting the bread into the oven, go into the house, where Mary puts on Her sandals and then comes back wearing a snow-white linen dress.

Some time goes by and while waiting, Mary of Alphaeus says: « You did not have time to finish that work. »

« It will soon be finished. And My Jesus will have the relief of shade without having His head burdened. »

The door is pushed from outside. « Mother: here are My friends. Come in. »

The disciples and shepherds go in all together. Jesus is holding by their shoulders the two shepherds and He leads them towards His Mother: « Here are two sons looking for a mother. Be their joy, Woman. »

« You are welcome… You?… Levi… You? I do not know, but according to your age, as He told Me, you must be Joseph. That name is sweet and sacred in this house. Come, come. It is with joy that I say to you: My house welcomes you and a Mother embraces you, in remembrance of the love you in your father had for My Child. »

The shepherds seem spellbound, they are so enraptured.

« Yes, I am Mary. You saw the happy Mother. I am still the same. Also now I am happy seeing My Son among faithful hearts. »

« And this is Simon, Mother. »

« You deserved the grace because you are good. I know. And may the grace of God be always with you. »

Simon, who is more experienced in the customs of the world, bows down to the ground, his arms crossed over his chest, and says: « I salute You, true Mother of Grace and now that I have met both the Light and You, Who are more gentle than the moon, I will not ask the Eternal Father for anything else. »

« And this is Judas of Kerioth. »

« I have a mother but my love for her fades away, compared to the veneration I feel for You. »

« No, not for Me. For Him. I am, only because He is. I want nothing for Myself. I only ask for Him. I know how you honored My Son in your town. But I say to you: let your heart be the place where He receives the highest honor from you. Then I will bless you with a motherly heart. »

« My heart is under the heel of your Son. A happy oppression. Only death will undo my loyalty. »

« And this is our John, Mother. »

« I have not been worried ever since I knew you were with My Jesus. I know you and My mind is at peace when I know that you are with My Son. I bless you, My peace. » She kisses him. Peter's harsh voice is heard from outside: « Here is poor Simon bringing his greetings and… » He has come in and is dumbfounded.

He then throws on to the floor the round basket which was hanging from his shoulder and he throws himself on his knees saying: « Ah! Eternal Lord! But… No, You should not have done that to me, Master! You were here… and did not let poor Simon know! May God bless You, Master! How happy I am! I could not bear to be without You any longer! » And he caresses Jesus' hand without listening to Him Who keeps repeating: « Get up, Simon. Will you get up? »

« Yes, I will get up. But… Hey, you, boy! (the boy is John) At least you could have come to tell me! Now run quick. Go to Capernaum and tell the others… and Judas' household first of all. Your son is about to arrive, woman. Be quick. Just imagine that you are a hare chased by dogs. » John leaves laughing.

Peter has got up at last. He is still holding Jesus' thin hand in his short thickset ones, marked by swollen veins, and he kisses it without letting it go, although he appears to be anxious to hand over the fish, which is in the basket on the floor. « Eh! no. I don't want You to go away again without me. Never again, never again such a long time without seeing You! I will follow You as a shadow follows a body and the rope follows the anchor. Where have You been, Master? I kept wondering: "Oh! Where will He be? What will He be doing? And will that boy, John, be able to look after Him? Will he make sure that Jesus does not get too tired? That He is not left without food?" Eh! I know You… You have lost weight! Yes, You have. He did not take proper care of You! I will tell him that… But where have You been, Master? You are not telling me anything! »

« I am waiting for you to give Me a chance to say one word! »

« It's true. But… Ah! To see You is like having a new wine. It goes to your head just with its smell. Oh! My Jesus. » Peter is almost in tears out of Joy.

« I also missed you. I missed you all, although I was with dear friends. Here, Peter. These two men have loved Me since I was a New-Born Baby. Even more! They have suffered because of Me. Here is a son who lost his father and mother on account of Me. But now he has so many brothers in you all, has he not? »

« Of course, Master. If by chance, the Devil should love You, I would love him because he loves You. I see that you are poor, too. So we are equal. Come here that I may kiss you. I am a fisherman but my heart is more tender than a dove's. And it is sincere. Don't pay attention if I am rough. I am hard outside. Inside I am all butter and honey. But with good people… because with evil ones… »

« And this is the new disciple. »

« I think I have already met him… »

« Yes, he is Judas of Kerioth, and Your Jesus was made welcome in that town because of him. I ask you to love each other, even if you are from different regions. You are all brothers in the Lord. »

« And I will treat him as such, if he will be such. Eh! Yes… (Peter stares at Judas, a frank warning glance), yes, I may as well say so, so you will understand me at once and properly. I will tell you: I do not think much of Judaeans in general, and of the citizens of Jerusalem in particular. But I am honest. And upon my honesty I can assure you that I will put aside all the ideas I have of you, and that I want to see in you only a brother disciple. It is up to you now not to make me change my mind and my decision. »

« Have you such preconceived ideas, Simon, also with regard to me? » asks the Zealot smiling.

« Oh! I had not seen you. With regard to you? Oh! no. Honesty is painted on your face. Goodness comes from your heart, like sweet smelling oil from a porous vase. And you are an elderly man, which is not always a merit. Some times, the older one gets, the more false and worse one becomes. But you are one of those who behave like vintage wines. The older they get, the better and purer they become. »

« You have judged correctly, Peter » says Jesus. « Now come. While the women are working for us, let us stop under the cool bower. How lovely it is to be with friends! We will then go all together through Galilee and farther. Well, not all. Now that Levi is satisfied, he will go back to Elias to tell him that Mary sends him Her greetings. Is that all right, Mother? »

« That I bless him, as well as Isaac and the others. My Son has promised to take Me along with Him… and I will come to you, the first friends of My Child. »

« Master, I would like Levi to take to Lazarus the letter You know about. »

« Have it ready, Simon. Today is a full feast day. Levi will go away tomorrow evening. In time to be there before the Sabbath. Come, My friends… »

They go into the green kitchen garden and it all ends.

91. Jesus' Lesson to His Disciples in the Olive-Grove.

29th January 1945.

I see Jesus coming out of His house and going out of Nazareth with Peter, Andrew, John, James, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Judas Thaddeus, Simon and Judas Iscariot and the shepherd Joseph. They stop in the neighborhood, in a thicket of olive-trees.

He says: « Come round Me. During these months of presence and absence I have weighed you up and studied you. I have known you and I have known the world with the experience of a man. Now I have decided to send you into the world. But before I must teach You, to make you capable of facing the world with the kindness and wisdom, the calm and perseverance, the conscience and science necessary for your mission. This period of excessive heat, which makes any long journey through Palestine impossible, will be used by Me for your education and formation as disciples. Like a musician, I have heard what is dissonant in you and I will now tune you to the celestial harmony you must convey to the world in My name. I am keeping this son (and He points at Joseph) because I will delegate to him the task of referring My words to his companions, so that also there an efficient group may be formed, that will announce Me not by simply stating that I exist, but by explaining the most essential features of My doctrine.

First of all I tell you that it is absolutely necessary for you to love one another and be united. Who are you? Men of every social condition, of different age, from everywhere. I preferred to choose those who are not indoctrinated, because I will more easily instill into them My doctrine, and also because – as you are destined to evangelize those who are in complete ignorance of the true God – I want them not to disregard their previous ignorance of God, when they remember it, and to teach them with charity, remembering with how much charity I taught them.

You may object: "We are not heathens, even if we are not intellectually cultured." No, you are not. However, not only you but also those among you who represent the learned and rich people, are involved in a religion, which has only the name of religion, as its nature has been perverted by too many factors. I tell you that there are many who boast of being children of the Law. But eight out of ten of them are but idolaters who have confused the true, holy, eternal Law of the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, in the haze of a thousand petty human religions. Therefore, looking at one another, both you humble fishermen without culture, and you merchants or sons of merchants, and you officials or sons of officials, and you wealthy people or sons of wealthy people, you must say: "We are all equal. We have all the same faults and we all need the same teaching. Since we are brothers in our personal or national faults, from now on we must become brothers in the knowledge of the Truth and in our efforts in practising it."

Exactly: brothers. I want you to call and to consider one another as such. You are like one family. When does a family thrive and when does the world admire it? When its members are united and of the same mind. If one son becomes the enemy of another, if one brother harms another, is it possible for the prosperity of that family to last long? No. In vain the father of the family strives to work, to smooth down difficulties, to impose himself on the world. His efforts are not successful, because the wealth of the family falls to pieces, their difficulties increase, the world laughs at their perpetual quarrels by which hearts and possessions – which united were powerful against the world – are broken into a small knot of tiny opposite interests, and the enemies of the family take more and more advantage of them to hasten their ruin. You must never be like that. Be united. Love one another. You must love one another to help one another.

Look. Also what surrounds us teaches us this great strength. Look at this army of ants running all to the same place. Let us follow them. We will discover the reason of their sensible rushing to one spot… Here it is. This little sister of theirs, with her tiny organs which are invisible to us, has discovered a great treasure under this large wild chicory leaf. It is a bread crumb which perhaps was dropped from the hands of a peasant who had come here to attend to his olive-trees, or from the hands of a wayfarer who rested here in the shade eating

his food, or of a child who was playing happily on the grass full of flowers. How could she trail to the hole by herself this treasure which is a thousand times her size? So she called a sister and said to her: “Look. Go quickly and tell our sisters that there is food here for the whole tribe and for many days. Go before a bird discovers this treasure and calls his mates and they devour it”. And the little ant ran, panting because of the rough ground, up and down pebbles and stalks, until she reached the anthill and she said: “Come. One of us is calling you. She found enough for us all. But she can't bring it here by herself. Come”. And all the ants ran, also the ones who already tired because of a hard day's work, were resting along the tunnels of the nest; also the ones who were laying in stores in the store cells. One, ten, a hundred, a thousand… Look… They grasp it with their jaws, they lift it supporting it with their bodies and they trail it pushing their tiny feet on the ground. This one has fallen… that one there is almost crippled because the edge of the crumb, turning over, is squeezing her against a stone; and this one, so small, obviously one of the youngest in the tribe, is stopping exhausted… but having caught her breath, she is starting again.

Oh! How united they are! Look: now the bread crumb has been completely embraced by them and it is moving, very slowly, but it is moving. Let us follow it… A little more, little sisters, still a little more, and your efforts will be rewarded… They are exhausted. But they do not give up. They rest and start again… Now they are reaching the ant nest. And now? Now they work to break the big crumb into little bits. Look how they work! Some cut bits off, some carry them away… It's all finished. Now it is all safely stored and they happily disappear into the crevices, down along the tunnels. They are ants. Nothing but ants. And yet they are strong because they are united. Meditate on that. Have you anything to ask Me? »

« I would like to ask You: but are we not going back to Judaea again? » asks Judas Iscariot.

« Who said so? »

« You did, Master. You said that You want to prepare Joseph so that he may teach the others in Judaea! Have You felt so hurt, that You do not want to go there again? »

« What have they done to You in Judaea? » asks Thomas anxiously and Peter, at the same time, vehemently: « Ah! I was right then in saying that You had come back much thinner. What did the “perfect ones” in Israel do to You? »

« Nothing, My friends. Nothing more than what I will find even here. If I went round the whole world, I would find friends and enemies everywhere. But, Judas, I asked you to be quiet… »

« That's true, but… No, I cannot be quiet when I see that You prefer Galilee to my fatherland. You are unfair. You were honored also there… »

« Judas! Judas… Oh! Judas. Your reproach is unfair. And you accuse yourself, giving vent to wrath and jealousy. I had done My best to make known only the good I had received in your Judaea and without lying I was able to mention such good with joy, so that you people of Judaea might be loved. I did so with joy. Because for the Word of God there is no distinction of regions, there are no antagonisms, enmities, differences. I love all men. All of them… How can you say that I prefer Galilee when I worked the first miracles and the first demonstrations on the holy ground of the Temple and of the Holy City, so dear to every Israelite? How can you say that I am partial, if of My eleven disciples, or rather ten, because My cousin is one of the family, not just a friend, four are Judaeans? And if I take into account also the shepherds, who are all from Judaea, you can see how many friends I have in Judaea. How can you say that I do not love you, if, knowing all things, I arranged My journey so as to give My name to a new-born in Israel and receive the soul of a dying just man of Israel? How can you say I do not love you Judaeans, if I wanted two Judaeans and only one Galilean to be present at the revelation of My birth and of My preparation to My mission? You accuse Me of injustice. But examine yourself, Judas, and consider whether you are not the unjust one. »

Jesus has spoken with majesty and kindness. But even if He had not said anything else, the three ways in which He pronounced « Judas » at the beginning of His speech, would have been sufficient to give him a good lesson. The first « Judas » was pronounced by the majestic God Who demands respect, the second by the Master Who teaches in a fatherly manner, the third was the prayer of a friend grieved at the behavior of a friend. Judas lowers his head mortified, but still bad-tempered, and ugly looking because of low sentiments coming to light.

Peter cannot keep silent. « At least beg His forgiveness, boy. If I had been in Jesus' place, you would not have got off just with words! You are more than unfair! You are lacking in respect, my fine gentleman! Is that how they educate you in the Temple? Or is it you that is not educable? Because, if it is, then… »

« That is enough, Peter. I said what was to be said. This will be a starting point

for tomorrow's teaching. And now I will repeat to everybody what I told these disciples in Judaea: do not tell My Mother that Her Son was ill-treated by the Judaeans. She is already quite sad because She has realized that I am suffering. Respect My Mother. She lives in seclusion and silence. She is active only in virtue and prayer for Me, for you, for everybody. Let the gloomy lights of the world and harsh quarrels be far away from Her retreat, which is protected by discretion and purity. Do not put even the shadow of hatred where everything is love. Please respect Her. She is braver than Judith, as you will see. But do not compel Her, before Her time, to taste the dregs, which are the sentiments of the wicked people of the world. That is, the sentiments of those who have not even a rough idea of God and God's Law. I spoke to you of them at the beginning: they are the idolaters who consider themselves the wise men of God and they thus add idolatry to pride. Let us go. »

And Jesus goes back to Nazareth.

92. Jesus' Lesson to His Disciples near His Home.

30th January 1945.

Jesus is once again teaching His disciples, whom he has taken under the shade of a huge walnut-tree, situated above Mary's garden, part of which is shaded by the protruding branches of the tree. It is a stormy day and a storm is impending, that is probably the reason why Jesus did not go too far from His house. Mary comes and goes from the garden to the house, and each time She looks up and smiles at Her Jesus, sitting on the grass near the treetrunk, surrounded by His disciples.

Jesus says: « I told you yesterday that today's lesson would be on what was caused yesterday by a careless word. And here is the lesson.

You must consider as certain, and it should be your rule when acting, that nothing of what is hidden will remain such forever. It is either God Who takes care to make known the work of one of His children by means of His miracles, or by means of the words of just people who acknowledge the merits of a brother. Or it is Satan who, through the mouth of a careless person, I will not say more, reveals what good people preferred to say nothing about, so as not to Provoke uncharitable situations; or Satan distorts the truth in order to create confusion in the minds of people. Therefore the moment always comes when hidden things are made known.

You must always bear that in your minds. And may it restrain you from doing evil, without, however, encouraging you to refrain from doing good. How often one acts out of goodness, true goodness, but human goodness! And as such acting is human, that is, its intention is not perfect, one wishes it to be known to men and one is worried and gets enraged seeing that it remains unknown, and strives to make it known. No, My friends. Do not do that. Do good and give it to the eternal Lord. He knows how to make it known also to men, if it is for your own good. If instead that should impede your just actions, owing to a burst of proud satisfaction, then the Father will keep it secret, and will give you glory in Heaven in the presence of all the celestial Cohort.

And never judge a deed by its appearance. Never accuse anyone, because the actions of men may at times seem bad and yet conceal other reasons. A father, for instance, may say to his lazy glutton son: “Go away” which may seem hard and contrary to his paternal duties. But it is not always so. His “Go away” is seasoned with bitter tears shed more by the father than by the son, and it is accompanied by words and by the wish that the words may be true: “You will come back when you are sorry for your indolence”. And it is also an act of justice with regard to the other sons, because it prevents a glutton from squandering in vice what belongs also to the others. It is bad, instead, if that word is pronounced by a father, who is at fault himself, against God and his own children, because in his selfishness he considers himself above God and deems he has rights also on the soul of his son. No. The spirit belongs to God and not even God violates the freedom of the soul, which is thus free to give itself or not. All actions seem identical to the world. And yet how much one differs from another! One is justice, the other a faulty arbitrary act. Therefore never judge anybody.

Peter yesterday asked Judas: “Who was your teacher?” Let him never ask that again. Let no one accuse the other of what one sees in anybody. Teachers have the same words for all the pupils. How is it, then, that ten become just and ten wicked? It is because each adds of his own what he has in his heart, and that turns the scale towards good or towards bad. How can the teacher then be accused of teaching wrongly, if the good he inculcated is negatived by the

excessive evil reigning in a heart? The first factor of success depends upon you. The teacher works at your ego. But if you are not susceptible to improvement, what can the teacher do? What am I? I solemnly tell you that there will be no teacher more patient, wise and perfect than I am. And yet, also of some of My disciples it will be said: "Who was his teacher?"

When judging do not allow yourselves to be overwhelmed by personal reasons. Yesterday Judas, who loves his region more than it is fair, thought I was unfair to it. Man is often subject to such imponderable elements as love for his fatherland, or attachment to an idea, and like a kingfisher that has lost its bearings, he deviates from his destination. God is the destination. It is necessary to see everything in God, to see properly, without putting oneself or anything else above God. And if one makes a mistake… Peter, and you all, do not be intolerant! Have you really never made the mistake that hurts you so much when made by someone else? Are you sure? And supposing you never made it, what are you to do? Thank God and nothing else. And watch carefully. And unceasingly, so that tomorrow you will not fall into what has been avoided so far. See? The sky today is dark because of an impending hailstorm. And looking at the sky we said: "Do not let us go too far from home". Well, if we can judge things, which however dangerous, are nothing as compared to the danger of losing God's friendship by sinning, why can we not discern where there may be a danger for our souls?

Look, there is My Mother over there. Can you conceive an inclination to evil in Her? Well, since love urges Her to follow Me, She will leave Her home when My love so wishes. But this morning, after asking Me once again – because She, My Teacher, used to say to Me: "Son, let Your Mother be among Your disciples. I want to learn Your doctrine"; She, Who possessed that doctrine in Her womb and even before in Her soul, as a gift of God to the future Mother of His Incarnate Word – She said: "But… decide whether I can come without losing My union with God, and without My heart being corrupted by what there is in the world and which You say penetrates with its stench, because My heart has always been, is and wants to be only of God. I search My heart, and as far as I know, I think I can do it, because… (and at this point unknowingly, She gave Herself the highest praise)… because I find no difference between the spotless peace I enjoyed as a flower in the Temple and the peace I have now within Me, now that I have been a housewife for over thirty years. But I am an unworthy servant who does not know the things of the spirit well and is even less capable of judging them. You are the Word, the Wisdom, the Light. And You may be the light of Your poor Mother Who is agreeable not to see You any longer, rather than not be grateful to the Lord". And I had to say to Her, while My heart trembled with admiration: "Mother, I tell You: It is not You that will be corrupted by the world. But it is the world that will be purified by You."

My Mother, as you have just heard, has been able to see the dangers of living in the world, dangers also for Her. And You, men, should you not see them? Oh! Satan is really lying in wait. And only those on the alert will win. And the others? You are asking about the others? For the others it will be as it was written.»

« What was written, Master? »

« "And Cain set on Abel and killed him. And the Lord said to Cain: 'Where is your brother? What have you done with him? The voice of his blood is crying to Me. Now you shall be accursed on the earth that has tasted human blood at the hands of a brother who has opened the veins of his brother and that horrid thirst of the earth for human blood will never cease. And the earth, poisoned by that blood, will be more sterile than a woman withered by age. And you shall be a fugitive seeking peace and bread. And you shall not find them. On account of your remorse, you shall see blood on every flower and blade of grass, on all waters and food. The sky will seem blood to you and the sea blood and from the sky, from the earth and the sea three voices will reach you: the voice of God, of the Innocent, of the Demon. And you will kill yourself not to hear them.'" »

« Genesis does not say that » remarks Peter.

« No. Genesis does not. But I do. And I am not mistaken. And I say so for the new Cains of the new Abels. For those who not watching over themselves and the Enemy, will become one thing with him. »

« But none of us will be such, is that right, Master? »

« John, when the Veil of the Temple will be torn, a great truth will be written brightly all over Zion. »

« Which, my Lord? »

« That the children of darkness have in vain been in touch with the Light. Remember that, John. »

« Will I be a son of darkness, Master? »

« No, not you. But remember that, to explain the Crime to the world. »

« Which crime, Lord? Cain's? »

« No: that is the first chord of Satan's hymn. I am referring to the perfect Crime. The inconceivable crime. The one, to understand which, it is necessary to look at it through the sun of divine Love and through Satan's mind. Because only the perfect Love and the perfect hatred, only the infinite Good and the infinite Evil can explain such Offer and such Sin. Do you hear that? Satan seems to be listening and shouting out of the desire to commit it. Let us go before the cloud bursts with lightning and hail stones. »

And they run down the cliff jumping into Mary's garden while the storm begins to rage.

93. The Lesson to the Disciples in the Presence of the Most Holy Virgin in the Garden in Nazareth.

31st January 1945.

Jesus goes into the kitchen garden, which looks as if it has been washed by the storm of the previous evening. And He sees His Mother bending over some little plants. He goes up to Her and greets Her. How sweet is their kiss! Jesus embraces Her shoulders with His left arm and draws Her to Himself kissing Her forehead, just under Her hair line and He then bows down to be kissed by His Mother on the cheek. But what completes the sweetness of the gesture is the glance that accompanies it. Jesus' look is full of love, although majestic and protective; Mary's is all veneration and love. When they kiss each other like that, Jesus seems to be the older of the two, and Mary is like a young daughter receiving the morning kiss from her father or from a much older brother.

« Were Your flowers damaged by yesterday evening's hailstones and by last night's wind? » asks Jesus.

« No harm, Master. Only the branches were badly ruffled » answers Peter in a somewhat hoarse voice, before Mary can speak.

Jesus looks up and sees Simon Peter, with only his short tunic on, busy straightening some fig-tree branches which were bent upwards. « Are you working already? »

« Eh! We fishermen sleep like the fish: at any time, anywhere, but only as long as they let us rest. And one gets used to it. This morning I heard the door squeak at dawn and I said: “Simon, She is already up. Be quick! Go and help Her with your strong hands.” I thought She might be worrying about Her flowers in such a windy night. And I was not wrong. Eh! I know what women are like!… My wife also tosses about in her bed, like a fish in the net, when there is a storm and she worries about her plants… Dear woman! Sometimes I say to her: “I bet you do not toss so much when your Simon is thrown about like a straw on the lake!” But it is not fair, because she is a good wife. It seems impossible that her mother is… Well, be quiet, Peter. That's got nothing to do with it. It is not right to grumble and imprudently to tell people what out of kindness we should not mention. See, Master, Your word has entered also my stubborn head! »

Jesus replies laughing: « You are saying everything yourself. I can but approve and admire your wisdom as a farmer. »

« He has already tied all the shoots which had become loose, he has supported the pear-tree which is too heavily laden, and he placed those ropes under that pomegranate-tree, which is growing all on one side » says Mary.

« Yes! It looks like an old Pharisee. It leans to the side that suits it. And I straightened it up as if it were a sail and I said to it: “Don't you know that you must keep to a happy medium? Come here, you blockhead, or you will crash down because of your excessive weight.” Now I am working at this fig-tree. But out of selfishness. I am thinking of everybody's appetite: fresh figs and new bread! Ah! Not even Antipas has such a good meal! But I must be careful, because the branches of a fig-tree are as tender as a young girl's heart, when she says her first words of love, and I am heavy, and the best figs are at the top. They have already been dried by the early sun. They must be delicious. Eh! Boy. Don't stand there looking at me. Wake up! Give me that basket. »

John, who has just come out of the workshop, obeys and climbs up the big fig-tree. When the two fishermen come down, also Simon Zealot, Joseph and Judas Iscariot have come out from the workshop. I do not see the others.

Mary brings some new bread: small round brown loaves, which Peters cuts with his pocket knife and then places the split figs onto them, and offers them first to Jesus, then to Mary and the others. They eat with relish in the cooled kitchen

garden, which is so beautiful in the bright morning sunshine, also because of the recent rain which has cleaned the air.

Peter says: « This is Friday… Master, tomorrow is the Sabbath… »

« We all know that » remarks the Iscariot.

« Of course. But the Master knows what I mean… »

« Yes, I know. This evening we will go to the lake, where you left your boat and we will sail to Capernaum. Tomorrow I will speak there. »

Peter is overjoyed.

Thomas, Andrew, James, Philip, Bartholomew and Judas Thaddeus, who must have slept elsewhere, come in all together. They greet one another.

Jesus says: « Let us stay here all together. There will be also a new disciple. Mother, come. » They sit down, some on stones, some on stools, forming a circle round Jesus, Who has sat on the stone bench against the wall with His Mother beside Him and at His feet John, who preferred to sit on the ground in order to be near.

Jesus begins speaking slowly and solemnly as usual.

« To what shall I compare the apostolic formation? To the nature surrounding us. See. The earth in winter seems dead. But inside it the seeds are active and the lymphs feed on moisture which they store in the underground branches – I could call the roots thus so that they may have plenty for the upper branches when it is time to blossom. You also can be compared to the winter earth: barren, naked, ugly looking. But the Sower has passed on you and has spread the seed. The Tiller has come near you and has broken up the soil round your trunks, which are as hard and rough as the soil in which they are planted, so that the roots may receive nourishment from the clouds and from the air and the trunks may be strengthened for the future fruit. And you have received the seed and the tillage because you are willing to bear fruit in the work of God. I will also compare your apostolic formation to the storm which struck and bent and seemed a purposeless violence. But see how much good it has done. The air today is purer, fresher, without dust or sultriness. The sun is the same sun as yesterday's. But it is not so scorching as yesterday when it seemed like a high temperature, because its rays reach us through purified and fresh strata of air. The herbs and plants are relieved as well as men, because cleanliness and serenity cheer up all things. Also contrasts help to attain a more precise knowledge and clarification. Otherwise they would be nothing but wickedness. And what are contrasts if not the storms that stir up different types of clouds? And do such clouds not pile up slowly in the hearts of men in useless bad moods, petty jealousies and vain pride? Then the wind of Grace blows and gathers them together that they may discharge their ill humours and the sky may clear up again.

And your apostolic moulding is like the work that Peter was doing this morning for the delight of My Mother: which is to straighten, tie, support or undo, according to the varying situations and necessities, to make you "strong workers" at the service of God. It is necessary to correct wrong ideas, to tie and subdue the rebelling flesh, to support weaknesses, to cut off evil inclinations if necessary, and to free from slavery and timidity. You must be free and strong. Like eagles, that leave their native mountain tops and fly higher and higher. The service of God is the flight. Affections are the mountain tops. One among you is sad today because his father's life is on the decline. And he is declining with his heart closed to the Truth and to his son who is following the Truth. More than closed: hostile. The father has not yet said the unfair: "Go away", of which I spoke to you yesterday, thus declaring himself to be above God. But his closed heart and sealed lips are not yet capable of saying at least: "Follow the voice that is calling you." Neither the son nor I Who am speaking to you, would expect to hear those lips say: "Come and let the Master come with you. And may God be blessed because He chose a servant in my family, creating thus with the Word of the Lord, – a kinship which is more sublime than blood." But at least I, for his own sake, and the son for more complicated reasons, would not like to hear hostile words from him.

But this son must not cry. He must know that I bear no grudge or ill-feeling towards his father. I feel only pity for him. I have come and stopped here, although I knew it would be useless, so that one day the son may not say to Me: "Oh! Why did You not come?" I have come that he may be fully convinced that everything is quite useless, when a heart is hardened by hatred. I have also come to comfort a good woman who is suffering because of this family division, as if her heart were torn to pieces. But both the son and the good mother must be convinced that I do not return hatred for hatred. I respect the honesty of the old believer who is faithful to what has been so far his religion, although his faith has gone off the right path.

There are many like him in Israel… That is why I say to you: I will be more accepted by the heathens than by the children of Abraham. Mankind has depraved the idea of the Savior and has lowered His supernatural royalty to the poor idea of a human sovereignty. I must break the hard bark of Hebraism, penetrate it, and cut it till I reach the bottom and then place the fruitful new Law exactly where the heart of Hebraism is. Oh! Israel, brought up around the vital stone of the Law of Sinai, has become like a monstrous fruit, the pulp of which is formed by layers of harder and harder fibres, protected outside by a shell firm against every penetration and also against the ejection of the germ, so much so that the Eternal Father deems the moment has come to create the new plant of the faith in the one and trine God. To allow the will of God to be fulfilled and Hebraism to become Christianity, I must notch, pierce, penetrate and make My way to the very stone, then warm it with My love, so that it will awake and swell, sprout and grow more and more and thus become the mighty plant of Christianity, the perfect, eternal, divine religion. And I solemnly tell you that it will be possible to penetrate Hebraism only in the proportion of one part to a hundred.

I therefore do not deem reprobate this Israelite who does not want Me and is not willing to give Me his son. That is why I say to the son: do not cry on account of the flesh and blood that suffer being rejected by the flesh and blood that generated them. That is why I say: do not even cry on account of the soul. Your suffering operates more than anything else in favor of your soul and his, in favor of your father who does not understand and does not see. And I also say to you: do not feel remorse for being more of God than of your father.

And I say to you all: God is more than father, mother, brothers. I have come to join people not according to the world, to flesh and blood; but according to the spirit and to Heaven. I therefore must separate flesh and blood to take with Me the souls which, even when on this world, are fit for Heaven, to take the servants of Heaven. So I have come to call the “strong ones”, and make them even stronger, because My army of meek people is made of “strong” people. Meek towards their brothers, strong against their own ego and the selfishness of family blood.

Do not cry, My cousin. I can assure you that your pain is operating before God in favor of your father and brothers more than any word, not only yours, but also Mine. Believe Me, words cannot enter where preconceived ideas form a barrier. But Grace enters. And a sacrifice draws graces.

I solemnly tell you that when I call someone as a disciple, there is no obedience greater than this one. And we must obey without even stopping to reckon how and how much others will react to our going towards God. One must not even stop to bury one's father. And you will receive a reward for your heroism, a reward not only for yourselves, but also for those from whom you are torn away, broken-hearted, and whose words often strike you more painfully than a slap in the face, because they accuse you of being ungrateful children and in their selfishness they curse you as rebels. No, not rebels. Saints. The first enemies of those who are called, are their relatives. But we must learn to distinguish between love and love and to love in a supernatural way. That is to love more the Master of the supernatural than the servants of the Master. We must love our relatives in God. But not more than God. »

Jesus is silent, He gets up and goes near His cousin who, with lowered head, can hardly hold back his tears. Jesus caresses him. « Judas… I left My Mother to follow My mission. This should remove all doubts about the honesty of your behavior. If it had not been a good deed, would I have done it to My Mother, Who, above all, has no one but Me? »

Judas presses Jesus' hand to his face and nods his head. But he cannot say anything.

« Let us go, the two of us by ourselves, as when we were boys and Alphaeus thought I was the most sensible boy in Nazareth. Let us go and take these beautiful bunches of golden grapes to the old man, so that he may not think that I am neglecting him or that I am hostile to him. Also your mother and James will be pleased. I will tell him that I will be in Capernaum tomorrow and that his son will be entirely devoted to him. You know, old people are like children: they are jealous. And they always suspect they are being neglected. We must pity them… »

Jesus has gone, leaving in the garden the disciples dumbfounded at the revelation of pain and incompatibility between a father and a son because of Jesus. Mary has gone with Jesus as far the door and now She comes back sighing in distress.

It all ends.

94. Cure of the Beauty of Korazim. Sermon in the Synagogue at Capernaum.

1st February 1945.

Jesus comes out of the house of Peter's mother-in-law together with His disciples, except Judas Thaddeus. A boy is the first to see Him and he informs also those who do not want to know. Jesus, Who is on the shore of the lake, sitting in Peter's boat, is immediately surrounded by people who welcome Him and ask Him endless questions, which Jesus answers with His unsurpassed patience, smiling gently as if all the chattering were a celestial harmony.

Also the archsynagogue comes. Jesus gets up to greet him. Their reciprocal salutation is full of oriental respect. « Master, may I expect You to come and teach the people? »

« Of course, if you and the people wish so. »

« We have been wishing it for so long. They can tell You. » The people in fact shout their confirmation.

« Well then, I will be with you this evening. Now you may go. I have to go to see a person who wants Me. » The people go away reluctantly, while Jesus, Peter and Andrew go on to the lake in the boat. The other disciples remain on the shore.

The boat sails for a short distance and then the two fishermen steer it into a small bay, between two low hills, which look as if originally they were one hill only, the central part of which had collapsed either because of water erosion or because of an earthquake, thus forming a very small fiord. However, since it is not a Norwegian fiord, there are no fir-trees, but only ruffled olive-trees which, no one knows how, have grown on the steep slopes, among slipped rocks and huge protruding splinters. Blown by the winds of the lake, which obviously must be very strong here, the branches of the trees are all interwoven, and form a kind of roof, under which a freakish little torrent foams: it is very noisy because of its many cascades and full of foam because it falls every yard or so, but in actual fact it is only a little rivulet among the streams.

Andrew jumps into the water to beach the boat as far up as possible and tie it to a tree-trunk, while Peter takes in the sail and fastens a board as a bridge for Jesus. « But » he says, « I would advise You to take off Your sandals and Your tunic, as we do. That mad thing there (and he points at the little torrent) causes the water of the lake to rise and the board is not safe with all this rolling. »

Jesus obeys without question. On the shore they put on their sandals again and Jesus puts on also His tunic. The two disciples are wearing only their short dark undertunics.

« Where is she? » asks Jesus.

« She must be hiding in the wood, after hearing voices. You know… with all she's got to wear… »

« Call her. »

Peter shouts out loud: « I am the disciple of the Rabbi of Capernaum. The Rabbi is here. Come out. »

There is no sign of life.

« She does not feel safe » explains Andrew. « One day someone called her and said: “Come, there is some food for you” and then threw stones at her. We saw her then for the first time, because I did not remember her when she was the Beauty of Korazim. »

« And what did you do then? »

« We threw her a loaf of bread and some fish and a rag, a piece of an old sail cloth with which we used to dry ourselves, because she was nude. We then ran away not to be contaminated. »

« And what made you come back? »

« Master… You were away and we were thinking what should we do to get people to know You. We thought of all the sick people, the blind, the crippled, the mute… and also of her. We said: "Let us try." You know… many… oh! it was certainly our fault, said we were mad and would not listen to us. Others instead believed us. I spoke to her myself. I came here by boat, all by myself, for several moonlight nights. I used to call her and say to her: "On the stone, at the foot of the olive-tree, there is some bread and fish. Don't be afraid, come" and I would then go away. She must have waited until she saw me disappear before she came, because I never saw her. The sixth time I saw her standing on the shore, exactly where You are now. She was waiting for me… How horrible she was! I did not run away because I thought of You…

She said to me: "Who are you? Why have mercy on me?"

I replied: "Because I am the disciple of Mercy."

"Who is He?"

"He is Jesus of Galilee."

"And does He teach you to have mercy on us?"

"On everybody."

"But do you know who I am?"

"You are the Beauty of Korazim, now a leper."

"And is there mercy also for me?"

"He says that His mercy is for everybody, and we, to be like Him, must have mercy on everybody." At this point, Master, the leper blasphemed without realising what she was saying. She said: "He must have been a big sinner Himself."

I said to her: "No. He is the Messiah, the Holy Man of God." I wanted to say to her: "Be you accursed for your tongue", but I did not say anything else, because I thought: "In her distress she cannot think of divine mercy." She then started crying and said: "Oh! If He is a Holy Man He cannot have mercy on the Beauty. He might pity the leper… but not the Beauty. And I was hoping… "

I asked her: "What were you hoping for, woman?"

"To be cured… to go back into the world… amongst men… to die begging, but amongst people… not like a beast in the den of wild beasts which are horrified at the sight of me."

I said to her: "Will you swear to me that if you go back to the world, you will be honest?"

She replied: "Yes. God has justly punished me for my sins. I now repent. My soul is expiating its sins, but it abhors sin forever."

I thought I could then promise her salvation in Your name.

She said to me: "Come back, come back again… Speak to me of Him that my soul may know Him before my eyes see Him… And I came and spoke to her of You as best as I could… »

« And I have come to grant salvation to the first convert of My Andrew. » (It is Andrew who has been speaking all the time, while Peter has gone up the torrent, jumping from stone to stone, calling the leper).

She at last shows her horrid face among the branches of an olive-tree. She sees and shouts.

« Come down, then » exclaims Peter. « I am not going to stone you! Over there, can you see Him? There is the Rabbi Jesus. »

The woman tumbles down the slope, I say so, because she runs down so fast, and she reaches Jesus' feet before Peter is back near the Master. «Mercy, Lord!»

« Can you believe that I am able to grant you it? »

« Yes, because You are a saint and I repent. I am Sin, but You are Mercy. Your disciple was the first to have mercy on me, and he brought me bread and faith. Cleanse me, Lord, my soul before my body, because I am impure three times, and if You want to give me one purity, only one, I beg You to give me the purity of my sinful soul. Before hearing Your words, that he repeated to me, I used to say: "To be cured and to go back amongst people." Now that I know, I say: "To be forgiven, that I may have eternal life."»

« And I grant you forgiveness. But nothing else… »

« May You be blessed! I shall live in my den with the peace of God… free… oh! free from remorse and free from fear! No longer afraid of God, now that

You have absolved me! »

« Go into the lake and wash yourself. Stay in until I call you. »

The woman, reduced to a miserable skeleton, all corroded, her white coarse hair all ruffled, gets up from the ground and goes into the lake clothed in her meagre rags, that cover so little of her.

« Why did You send her to wash herself? It is true that the foul smell is ineffective, but… I do not understand.» says Peter.

« Woman, come out of the water and come here. Take that cloth on that branch.» (it is the piece of cloth used by Jesus to dry Himself after wading from the boat to the shore.)

The woman comes out obediently, completely naked, as she left her rags in the water to take the dry piece of cloth. The first to shout is Peter, who is looking at her, whilst Andrew, more bashful, is turning his back on her. But he turns round when his brother shouts and he shouts, too. The woman, who is staring at Jesus so intently that she is aware of nothing else, when she hears the shouts and sees the hands pointed at her, looks at herself… And she sees that her leprosy has been left in the lake with her rags. She does not run as one might expect her to. She throws herself down, crouching on the shore, ashamed of her nakedness, excited to such an extent that she is only fit to weep with a long feeble lament, which is more heart-rending that any cry.

Jesus moves towards her… He reaches her… He throws the cloth on her, caresses her head very lightly, says to her: « Goodbye. Be good. You deserved the grace because of the sincerity of your repentance. Grow in the faith of Christ. And fulfill the purification law. »

The woman is weeping all the time… Only when she hears the noise of the board that Peter is drawing into the boat, she looks up, stretches out her hands and shouts: «Thanks, my Lord. Thanks, Blessed Lord. Oh! Blessed, blessed!…»

Jesus waves her goodbye before the boat disappears round the rocky promontory of the little fiord.

… Jesus with His disciples goes into the synagogue at Capernaum after crossing the square and the street leading to it. The news of the recent miracle has already spread, because many people whisper and make comments.

Just on the threshold of the synagogue door I see Matthew, the future apostle. He is standing there, half inside half outside and I do not know whether he is shy or is annoyed at all the meaningful glances cast at him and at some rather unpleasant raillery of which he is the object. Two richly dressed Pharisees gather their wide mantles affectedly, as if they were afraid of being infected by the plague, if they touched Matthew's tunic even slightly.

When Jesus is going in, He stares at him and stops for a moment. But Matthew lowers his head: that is all. As soon as they are inside, Peter whispers to Jesus: « Do You know who that curly-headed man is, the one who is more scented than a woman? He is Matthew, our tax collector… What has he come here for? It's the first time. Perhaps he did not find his mates and above all his women, with whom he spends the Sabbaths, squandering in orgies the doubled and trebled taxes he squeezes out of us, to have plenty for the revenue and his vices.»

Jesus looks at Peter so severely, that Peter becomes as red as a poppy, lowers his head and stops, so that he ends up at the rear in the apostolic group.

Jesus has reached His place. After some songs and prayers said with the people, He turns round to speak. The archsynagogue asks Him whether He wants a roll of the Bible, but Jesus answers: « It is not necessary. I already have a subject.»

And He begins: « The great king of Israel, David of Bethlehem, after committing his sin, cried with a penitent heart, shouting to God his repentance and asking God's forgiveness. David's soul had been darkened by the fog of sensuality which prevented him from seeing the Face of God and understanding His word.

His Face, I said. In the heart of man there is a spot which remembers the Face of God: the most noble spot, which is our “Sancta Sanctorum”, from which holy inspirations and decisions originate, the point that is scented like an altar, shines like a fire, and sings like a chorus of Seraphim. But when sin rages in us, that area grows so dark, that light, perfume and singing fade out and only the stench of thick smoke and the taste of ashes are left. But when light comes back, because a servant of God brings it to the dimmed man, he then sees his own ugliness, his inferior condition and struck with horror he exclaims like king David: “Have mercy on me, Lord, in your goodness, in Your great tenderness wipe away my faults” and he does not say: “I cannot be forgiven, I will therefore go on sinning.” But he says: “I am humiliated and contrite, but, I beg You, You know that I was born guilty, but wash me and purify me, that I may

become as white as the snow on mountain tops." He also says: "My holocaust will not consist of rams and bulls, but of the true contrition of my heart. Because I know that this is what You want from us and You do not scorn it."

That is what David said after his sin, after the servant of God, Nathan, made him repent. That is what sinners must say, even more so, now that the Lord has sent not a servant, but the Redeemer Himself, His Word, Who, as a just ruler not only of men, but also of celestial and infernal beings, has risen amongst His people, like the light at dawn, which at sunrise shines in a cloudless sky.

You have already read how a man, a prey to Mammon, is weaker than a person dying of tuberculosis, even if before he was the "strong" one. You know how Samson was worthless after yielding himself up to sensuality. I want you to understand the lesson of Samson, the son of Manoah, destined to beat the Philistines, the oppressors of Israel. The first condition to be such was that from his conception he was to be kept virgin from everything that stirs up base sensations, and contaminates the intestines with impure foodstuffs: that is wine, cider and fat meats, which kindle the loins with an impure fire. The second condition: to be the deliverer he was to be sacred to the Lord from his childhood and was to remain such by uninterrupted nazirite. He is sacred who remains holy not only externally but also internally. Then God is with him.

But the flesh is flesh and Satan is Temptation. And Temptation, to fight God in the hearts of men and in His holy decrees, uses as a weapon the flesh that excites men: woman. The strength of the "strong" man then quivers and he becomes a weakling that spoils the gift of God. Now listen: Samson was tied with seven fresh bowstrings, with seven new ropes, he was fixed to the ground with seven plaits of his hair. And he had always won. But one must not tempt God, not even in His goodness. It is not lawful. He forgives, He always forgives. But He exacts the firm will to abandon sin, that He may continue to forgive. Who says: "Lord, forgive" but does not shun what induces him to continual sin, is foolish!

Samson, three times the winner, did not avoid Delilah, sensuality, sin, and bored to death, says the Book, and having lost heart, says the Book, he revealed his secret: "My strength is in my seven plaits." Is there anyone amongst you, who, tired of the great tiredness of sin, is losing heart, because nothing is so depressing as a bad conscience, and is about to surrender to the Enemy? No, whoever you are, do not do it. Samson revealed to temptation the secret to defeat his seven virtues: the seven symbolical plaits, his virtues, that is his faithfulness to nazirite; tired as he was he fell asleep in the lap of the woman and was defeated. He was blind, a slave, powerless, because he had not been faithful to his vow. Neither did he become again the "strong man", the "deliverer", until he found his strength again in the grief of repentance. Repentance, patience, perseverance, heroism and then, o sinners, I promise you will be your own deliverers. I solemnly tell you that no baptism, no rite is of any avail, if there is no repentance and will to forgo sin. And I tell you that no one is so big a sinner that he cannot revive with his tears the virtues which sin had torn from his heart.

Today a woman, a guilty woman of Israel, punished by God for her sins, received mercy on account of her repentance. I said: mercy. Those who had no mercy on her and treated the punished woman pitilessly, shall receive less mercy. Had they no guilty leprosy in their hearts? Let everybody examine himself… and have mercy to receive mercy. I hold My hand out on behalf of this repentant woman, who is coming back to the living after a segregation of death. Simon of Jonas, not I, will collect the offerings for the repented woman, who from the threshold of life is coming back to true Life. And do not grumble, you older people. Do not grumble. I was not here when she was the Beauty. But you were. I will say no more. »

« Are You accusing us of being her lovers? » asks one of the two resentful old men.

« Let everyone have his heart and his actions before him. I do not accuse. I am speaking in the name of Justice. Let us go. » And Jesus goes out with His disciples.

Judas Iscariot is detained by two people who appear to know him. I hear them say: « Are you with Him, too? Is He really a holy man? »

Judas has one of his disconcerting outbursts: « I hope you will at least be able to understand His holiness. »

« But He cured on the Sabbath. »

« No, He forgave on a Sabbath. And which day is more suitable than the Sabbath for forgiveness? Are you not giving me anything for the redeemed woman? »

« We do not give our money to prostitutes. It is offered to the holy Temple. »

Judas laughs disrespectfully and leaves them in the lurch. He joins the Master, Who is entering the house of Peter who is saying to Him: « Here, just outside the synagogue, little James gave me two purses today, instead of one, on behalf of the unknown man. Who is he, Master? You know… Tell me. »

Jesus smiles: « I will tell you when you learn not to speak ill of anyone. »

And it all ends.

95. James of Alphaeus Is Received among the Disciples. Jesus Preaches near Matthew's Customs Bench.

2nd February 1945.

It is market morning at Capernaum. The square is full of traders selling all kinds of goods.

Jesus, coming from the lake, arrives in the square and sees His cousins Judas and James coming towards Him. He quickens His pace in their direction and after embracing them affectionately, He asks them solicitously: « How is your father? What has happened? »

« Nothing new, as far as his life is concerned » answers Judas.

« Why did you come then? I told you to stay. »

Judas lowers his head and is silent. But James bursts out: « It is my fault if he did not obey You. Yes, it's my fault. But I could not put up with the situation any longer. They are all against me. Why? Is there any harm in loving You? Are we wrong in being fond of You? So far I was held back by the scruple of doing the wrong thing. But now that I know, now that You said that not even a father is above God, I could not bear the situation any longer. Oh! I have tried to show respect, to make him understand my reasons, to clarify the situation. I said: “Why are you against me? If He is the Prophet, the Messiah, why do you want the world to say: 'His own family was against Him? The world followed Him, His family did not?' Because, if He is as insane as you say, should we of the family not be close to Him to prevent His insanity from harming Him and us?” O Jesus, that's what I said arguing in a human way, as they did. But You know that Judas and I do not believe that You are insane. You know that we consider You the Holy Man of God. You know that we have always looked at You as our Major Star. But they would not understand us. They would not listen to us any more. And I came away. Between Jesus and the family, I chose You. Here I am, if You want me. If You do not want me, I'll be the most unhappy of all men, because I will not have anything: neither Your friendship nor the love of the family. »

« Have we got to this stage? O James, My poor James, I wish I had not seen you suffer so, because I love you! But if Jesus-Man is crying with you, Jesus-Word is jubilant on account of you. Come. I am sure that the joy of bringing God to men will increase your happiness every hour of the day until it reaches its full rapture in the last hour of the earth and in the eternal hour of Heaven. »

Jesus turns round and calls His disciples, who had discreetly stopped a few yards away. « Come here, My friends. My cousin James is now one of My friends and thus a friend of yours. How I longed for this hour, for this day because he was a perfect friend in My childhood and a good brother in My youth! »

The disciples welcome the newcomer and Judas, whom they had not seen for several days.

« We looked for you at home… but you were on the lake. »

« Yes, I was on the lake for two days with Peter and the others. Peter had a good haul. Is that right? »

« Yes, but what annoys me is that now I will have to give many didrachmas to that thief over there… » and he points at Matthew, the exciseman, whose bench is besieged by people paying for the stall ground, I think, or for foodstuffs.

« It will all be proportioned, I suppose. The better the haul, the more you pay and the more you earn. »

« No, Master. The more I catch, the more I earn. But if the weight of my draught of fish is doubled, that man there does not make me pay twice as much. He charges me four times as much… The profiteer! »

« Peter! Well, let us go just there. I want to speak. There is always a lot of people near the customs bench. »

« No wonder! » grumbles Peter. « Lots of people and imprecations. »

« Well, I will go and grant blessings. Perhaps some honest feeling will enter the exciseman's heart. »

« You need not worry about that. Your words will never go through his crocodile skin. »

« We shall see. »

« What are You going to say to him? »

« Nothing directly. But I will speak in such a way that My words will be addressed also to him. »

« Say that a thief is both who assails people in the road and who fleeces poor people who work for their daily bread and not for women and orgies. »

« Peter, do you want to speak in My place? »

« No, Master: I would not be able to speak properly. »

« And with your acrimony you would harm yourself and him. »

They have reached the customs bench. Peter is about to pay. Jesus stops him and says: « Give Me the money. I will pay today. » Peter looks at Him amazed and then gives Him a leather purse containing some money.

Jesus waits for His turn and when He is before the exciseman He says: « I am paying for eight baskets of fish belonging to Simon of Jonas. The baskets are over there, where the servants are standing. You can check, if you wish. But honest people should be able to trust each other's word. And I think that you will believe that I am honest. How much do I pay? »

Matthew, who was sat at his bench, when Jesus says: « And I think that you will believe that I am honest », stands up. He is a small and rather elderly man, about Peter's age, but his face has the weary look of the pleasure-lover and he is obviously bewildered. At first he lowers his head, then he raises it and looks at Jesus. And Jesus stares at him gravely, dominating him from His imposing height.

« How much? » Jesus asks again, after a few seconds.

« There is no taxation for the disciple of the Master » replies Matthew. And in a lower voice he adds: « Pray for my soul. »

« I carry it within Me, because I am gathering sinners. But… why do you not look after it? » And Jesus turns His back on him at once and goes back to Peter, who is struck with wonder. Also the others are dumbfounded. They whisper and wink meaningfully…

Jesus leans against a tree, about ten yards from Matthew and begins speaking.

« The world may be compared to a large family, the members of which are in different trades, all of which are necessary. There are farmers, shepherds, vine-dressers, carpenters, fishermen, bricklayers, joiners and blacksmiths, and then clerks, soldiers, officers responsible for special missions, doctors, priests. There is everything. The world could not consist of only one class of people. They are all necessary, all holy, if they do what they should do with honesty and justice. How can they achieve that if Satan tempts them on all sides? By turning their thoughts to God, Who sees everything, also the most concealed deeds, and to His Law, that says: “Love your neighbour as you love yourself, do not do to other people what you do not want done to yourself, do not steal in any way.”

Tell Me, you who are listening to Me: when a man dies, does he take his purses of money with him? And even if he were so silly as to have them buried with him in his tomb, could he make use of them in the other world? No. Money becomes a piece of metal corroded on the rot of a decomposed corpse. But his soul would be naked elsewhere and even poorer than blessed Job, it would be deprived of the smallest coin, even if he had left heaps of talents here and in his tomb. Nay, listen, listen! I solemnly tell you that it is difficult to gain Heaven with riches, on the contrary Heaven is generally lost because of riches, also if they are obtained honestly or by inheritance, because only few rich people know how to make use of their wealth honestly.

What is necessary then to gain Paradise and rest on the Father's bosom? It is necessary not to be greedy for wealth. That is, not to be eager by wanting wealth at all costs, even by going against honesty and love. Not to be eager to such an extent as to love the wealth one possesses more than Heaven and one's neighbour, refusing to assist a needy neighbour. Not to be greedy for what wealth can offer, that is: women, pleasures, a bountiful table, magnificent

garments, which are an insult to those who are cold and hungry. There is a currency that can change the unjust money of the world into a currency having legal tender in the Kingdom of Heaven. And that is the holy wisdom in turning into eternal riches, the human riches which are often unjust or the cause of injustice. That is, you must earn honestly, give back what you obtained unfairly, make use of your riches with parsimony and detachment, learning how to become detached from them, because sooner or later they will leave us, whereas good deeds will never leave us. You must consider that!

We would all like to be called “just” and to be considered as such and to be rewarded by God for being just. But how can God reward who is just only by name but in fact is not so? How can He say: “I forgive you”, when repentance is expressed only by word of mouth and is not supported by a real change of the spirit? There is no real repentance as long as the lust for the thing for which we sinned will last. But when a man humbles himself, when he severs all links with evil passions, such as women or gold and says: “For Your sake, o Lord, I will have no more of this”, he is really repentant. And God receives him saying: “Come, you are as dear to Me as an innocent child, and a hero.” »

Jesus has finished. He goes away without even turning towards Matthew, who had come near the ring of listeners after the very first words.

When they are near Peter's house, his wife runs to meet her husband and says something to him. Peter beckons Jesus to go near him. « The mother of James and Judas is here. She wants to speak to You but does not want to be seen. What shall we do? »

« Thus. I will go into the house as if I wanted to rest and you will all go and give alms to the poor. Take also the money that was not wanted for the taxation. Go.» Jesus waves them all farewell, while Peter harangues them persuading them to go with him.

« Where is the mother, woman? » Jesus asks Peter's wife.

« On the terrace, Master. It is still in the shade and is cool. You may go up. And there is more privacy than in the house. »

Jesus climbs up the tiny staircase.

In a corner, under the thick vine pergola, there is Mary of Alphaeus, sitting on a little bench against the parapet, dressed completely in black, with her veil pulled over her face. She is weeping, silently.

Jesus calls her: « Mary! My dear aunt! »

She lifts her poor sorrowful face and stretches out her hands: « Jesus! How sad at heart I am! »

Jesus is near her. He makes her remain sat. He remains standing with His mantle on, one hand on His aunt's shoulder, while the other is clasped within hers. « What is the matter with you? Why are you crying so much? »

« Oh! Jesus! I came away from home saying: “I am going to Cana to get some eggs and wine for the invalid.” Your Mother is with Alphaeus and is nursing him and You know how capable She is, and I am not worried. But actually I came here. I have been running for two nights to get here quicker. I am exhausted… But the exertion is nothing… It's the pain in my heart that hurts so much!… My Alphaeus… my Alphaeus… my children… Why is there so much difference between those who are of the same blood and why is such difference as hard as millstones to crush a mother's heart? Are Judas and James with You? Are they? Then You know… Oh! Jesus! Why does my Alphaeus not understand? Why is he dying? Why does he want to die like that? And Simon and Joseph? Why are they against You and not with You? »

« Do not cry, Mary. I bear them no grudge. I already told Judas. I understand and I am sorry for them. If that is the reason why you are crying, please cry no more. »

« Yes, that's why, because they offend You. That's one reason and then… then… I do not want my husband to die being hostile to You. God will not forgive him… and I, oh! I will not have him… not even in future life… » Mary is really distressed. She is crying her heart out and her tears fall on Jesus' left hand, which she is still holding in her own and now and again kisses it and lifts her poor face tortured by pain.

« No » says Jesus. « No. Do not say that. I forgive. And if I forgive… »

« Oh! Come, Jesus. Come and save his soul and his body. Come… People are saying also, to accuse You, they are already saying that You have taken away two sons from a dying man, that's what they are saying in Nazareth, see? They also say: “He works miracles everywhere, but He is not capable of working them in His own home” and they contend with me when to defend You I say:

"What can He do if you have practically driven Him away with your reproaches and if you do not believe?"»

« You said the right words: if you do not believe. What can I do where there is no faith? »

« Oh! You can do everything. I believe for them all. Please come. Work a miracle… for Your poor aunt…»

« I cannot. » Jesus is most sad in saying so. Standing up and clasping the head of the crying woman to His chest, he seems to be confessing His inability to nature itself and to be calling nature as a witness to His pain at not being able because of an eternal decree.

The woman is crying more loudly.

« Listen, Mary. Be good. I swear that if I could, if it were the right thing to do, I would do it. Oh! I would snatch this grace from the Father, for you, for My Mother, for Judas and James, and also for Alphaeus, Joseph and Simon. But I cannot. You are now so broken-hearted that you cannot understand the justice of My inability. I will tell you, although you will not understand. When it was the hour of My father's death, I did not bring him back to life again, and you know how just he was and how much My Mother loved him. I did not bring him back to life again. It is not just that a family should be exempt from the inevitable misfortunes of life only because one of its members is a holy person. If that was the case, I should remain on the earth forever, and yet I will soon die, and Mary, My holy Mother, will not be able to snatch Me from death. I cannot. This is what I can do and I will do. » Jesus has sat down and is holding His relative's head against His shoulder. « This is what I will do. I promise peace for your Alphaeus on account of your pain and I give you assurance that you will not be separated from him and I give you My word that our family will be united again in Heaven forever, and as long as I live and even afterwards, I will grant you so much peace and so much strength that you will become My apostle for so many poor women, whom it will be easier for you, a woman, to contact. You will be My beloved friend in this time of evangelization. Alphaeus' death – do not cry – will free you from your duties of a wife and will raise You to the more sublime status of a mystical female priesthood, so necessary near the altar of the Great Victim and amongst so many heathens, who will yield more willingly to the holy heroism of female disciples than of male ones. Oh! your name, dear aunt, will be like a bright star in the Christian sky… Do not cry any more. Go in peace. Be strong, resigned and holy. My Mother… became a widow before you… and will console you as She can console. Come. I do not want you to go away in this heat. Peter will take you in his boat as far as the Jordan and then to Nazareth on a donkey. Be good. »

« Bless me, Jesus. Give me strength. »

« Yes, I bless you and kiss you, My good aunt. » And He kisses her tenderly, pressing her for a long while to His heart until He sees that she has calmed down.

96. Jesus Preaches to the Crowd at Bethsaida.

3rd February 1945.

Jesus is at Bethsaida. He is speaking standing on the boat which has taken Him there and is now almost beached, tied to a pole of a little rough pier. Many people, sitting in a semicircle on the sand, are listening to Him. Jesus has just started His speech.

« … and I see here also you people of Capernaum love Me, because you have followed Me, neglecting your business and comforts to hear the words that teach you the truth. I am aware that your behavior causes you to be insulted and may also do you social harm, worse than any financial loss, which may be the consequence of your neglecting your business. I know that Simon, Eli, Uriah and Joachim are against Me. Now they are against Me, in future they will be My enemies. And as I do not wish to deceive anyone, neither do I wish to deceive you, My faithful friends, I tell you that the mighty ones in Capernaum will make use of all means to harm Me, to make Me suffer, to defeat Me by isolating Me… They will throw out innuendos as threats and insults as slander. The common enemy will make use of everything to snatch souls from Christ and take possession of them. I tell you: who perseveres will be saved; but I also tell you that he who loves his life and welfare more than eternal salvation, is free to go away, to leave Me and take care of his petty life and temporary welfare. I will not hold anybody back.

Man is free. I have come to make him more free. Free from sin, and that

concerns the spirit. And free from the chains of a distorted oppressive religion, which with torrents of words, clauses and precepts suffocates the true word of God, a word which is clear, short, light, easy, holy and perfect. I have come to sieve consciences. I gather My corn on the threshing-floor, and I thresh it with the doctrine of sacrifice, and I sift it with the sieve of its own will. The light useless chaff, sorghum, vetch, darnel will be blown away and will fall heavy and harmful, and will be eaten by birds, and only the pure, selected, solid good corn will enter My granary. The corn: the saints.

Satan has challenged the Eternal Father for centuries. Elated with his first victory over man, Satan said to God: "Your creatures will be mine forever. Nothing, not even punishment, not even the Law You want to give them, will enable them to earn Heaven, and that Abode of Yours, from which You expelled me, me, the only intelligent being in Your creation, will remain empty, useless and sad, like all useless things". And the Eternal Father replied to the Cursed One: "You will be able to do that as long as your poison is the only thing to rule over man. But I will send My Word and His word will counteract your poison, it will restore hearts to health, curing them of the madness with which you made them wicked, and they will come back to Me. Like lost sheep that find the shepherd, they will come back to My Fold and Heaven will be filled with souls. I made it for them. And you will be grinding your horrible teeth, out of powerless fury, down there in your horrid kingdom, a cursed prisoner, and the stone of God will be turned over on you and sealed by the angels and darkness and hatred will be with you and with your followers, while Mine will enjoy light and love, songs and beatitude and infinite, eternal, sublime freedom". And Mammon with a burst of sneering laughter swore: "And upon my Gehenna I swear that I will come when it is time. I will always be present wherever Your evangelized people are and we shall see whether I or You is the winner."

Satan, of course, lays snares for you, to sift you. And I also circumvent you to sift you. The contestants are two: I and he. You are in the middle. The duel of Love and Hatred, of Wisdom and Ignorance, of Good and Evil is over you and around you. I am sufficient to ward off any wicked blow against you. I come between the satanic weapon and you and I am willing to be wounded in your stead, because I love you. But you must ward off your internal blows, with your will, running towards Me, following My way which is Truth and Life. Who is not desirous of Heaven will not possess Heaven. Who is not suitable to become a disciple of Christ, will be like light chaff, that will be blown away by the wind of the world. Who is Christ's enemy is pernicious seed that will grow in the satanic kingdom.

I know why you people of Capernaum have come here. My conscience is so clear of the sin I am accused of, on account of which non-existent sin people speak ill of Me behind My back, suggesting that to listen to me and to follow Me is to become associated with the sinner, that I am not afraid to make the reason known to the people of Bethsaida. Among you, citizens of Bethsaida, there are some elderly people, who for various reasons have not forgotten the Beauty of Korazim. There are men who sinned with her, there are women who cried because of her. They cried – I had not yet come to say: "Love those who hurt you!" – they cried and they rejoiced when they heard that she was bitten by putrefaction which transuded outside from her impure intestines, on to her magnificent body, and which is the symbol of that more serious leprosy that had corroded her soul of an adulteress, a homicide and a prostitute. An adulteress seventy times seven, with anyone who was a "man" and had money. A homicide seven times seven of her illegitimate conceptions; a prostitute for pleasure not for need.

Oh! I understand you, wives, whose husbands were unfaithful! I understand your rejoicing when you were told: "The flesh of the Beauty is more fetid and putrid than a carrion lying in the ditch of a main road, a prey to crows and worms." But I say to you: you must forgive. God took your vengeance and then God forgave. You must forgive, too. I forgave her also on your behalf, because I know that you are good, o women of Bethsaida, who greet Me shouting: "Blessed the Lamb of God! Blessed Who is coming in the name of the Lord!" If I am the Lamb and you know Me as such, if I, Lamb, come amongst you, you must all become meek sheep, also those whom the pain of an unfaithful husband, a pain of a long time ago, provides with the instinct of a beast that defends its den. If you were tigers and hyenas, I, the Lamb, could not stay with you.

He Who has come in the most holy name of God to gather just people and sinners and lead them to Heaven, went also to the repentant woman and said to her: "Be cleansed. Go and expiate". I did that on a Sabbath. And that is what I am accused of. A formal accusation. The second accusation is that I approached a prostitute. A woman who had been a prostitute. But now was a soul bewailing her sins. Well, I say: I did it and I will do it. Bring Me the Book, pry into it, study it, examine it thoroughly. Find, if you can, one passage that forbids a doctor to cure a sick person, or a Levite to take care of the altar, or a priest to listen to a believer, only because it is the Sabbath. And if you find it and show it

to Me, I will beat My chest and say: “Lord, I have sinned before You and before men. I am not worthy of forgiveness. But if You have mercy on Your servant, I will bless You as long as I live.” Because that soul was diseased. And sick people need a doctor. It was a desecrated altar and a Levite was required to clean it. It was a believer going to cry in the true Temple of the true God, and it needed a priest to introduce it. I solemnly tell you that I am the Doctor, the Levite, the Priest. I solemnly tell you that if I do not My duty, and I lose only one of the souls anxious to be saved, God the Father will ask Me to account for it and will punish Me for losing it.

That is My sin, according to the mighty ones in Capernaum. I could have waited till the following day to do it. Yes. But why delay twenty four hours to grant a contrite heart the peace of God? in that heart there was true humility, pure sincerity, perfect repentance. I saw into her heart. Leprosy was still on her body. But her heart had already been cured by the balm of years of repentance, of tears and expiation. Only My reconsecration was needed to draw that heart near God, without contaminating the pure air around God with its nearness. And I did it. She came out of the lake cleansed also in her flesh. But even more cleansed in her heart. How many of those who entered the water of the Jordan to obey the Precursor's exhortation have not come out as cleansed as she was! Because their baptism was not the voluntary, sincere, heartfelt action of a soul eager to be ready for My coming. It was only a formality to appear perfectly holy in the eyes of the world. It was therefore hypocrisy and pride. Two sins that increased the mass of faults already existing in their hearts. John's baptism is but a symbol. It means: “Get rid of your pride by humiliating yourselves and admitting that you are sinners; get rid of your lust by washing yourselves of its mud.” Your souls are to be baptized by your will to be clean and ready for God's banquet. No sin is so grave that it cannot be removed first by repentance, then by Grace and finally by the Savior. There is no sinner so bad that he may not lift his humbled face and smile at the hope of redemption. It is sufficient for him to forgo sin completely, to be heroic in resisting temptations, to be sincere in his desire to be born to a new life.

I will now tell you something which is true, and yet may seem blasphemy to My enemies. But you are My friends. I am speaking with particular regard to you, My disciples already chosen, and to you all who are listening to Me. The angels, pure and perfect spirits, living and rejoicing in the light of the Most Holy Trinity, although perfect, are inferior to you men, who are far from Heaven, and they admit their inferiority. Their inferiority consists in their impossibility to sacrifice themselves and suffer to cooperate in the redemption of man. What do you think of that? God does not take an angel and say to him: “Be the redeemer of mankind!” But He takes His own Son. And although the Son's sacrifice is of incalculable value and His power is infinite, the Father, knowing that there is still something missing from the amount of merits to be opposed to the amount of sins that mankind accumulates hourly, does not take other angels to fill the measure and does not say to them: “Suffer to imitate Christ”, but He says that to you, men. Such is His fatherly goodness that He makes no difference between the Son of His love and the children of His power. He says to you: “Suffer, sacrifice yourselves, be like My Lamb. Be co-redeemers… !” Oh! I can see cohorts of angels who stop rotating for an instant in their adoring ecstasy round the Trine Fulcrum, and kneel down, looking towards the earth and say: “Blessed are you who can suffer with Christ for your and our Eternal God!” Many will not yet understand such greatness. It is too superior to men. But when the Victim will be sacrificed, when the eternal Corn will rise from the dead never to die again, after being reaped, threshed, husked and buried in the bowels of the earth, then the super-spiritual Enlighter will come and will enlighten the spirits, even the most backward ones, but still faithful to Christ Redeemer, and then you will understand that I have not blasphemed, but I have announced the highest dignity of man to you: to be co-redeemers, even if before you were sinners.

In the meantime get ready for such dignity with pure hearts and intentions. The purer you are the more you will understand. Because impurity, whichever it may be, is always smoke that dims and makes heavy both your sight and your intellect. Be pure. Begin with your bodies and then pass on to your souls. Start from your five senses and then go on to the seven passions.

Start from your eye, the king of senses, that makes way to the most painful and complicated appetites. The eye sees the body of a woman and it lusts after a woman. The eye sees the wealth of rich people, and it lusts after gold. The eye sees the power of rulers and it lusts after power. Let your eyes be peaceful, honest, sober, pure and your desires will be peaceful, honest, sober and pure. The purer your eye is, the purer your heart will be. Keep a watch on your eye, a greedy discoverer of tempting apples. Be chaste in your looks if you want to be chaste in your bodies. If you possess the chastity of the flesh, you will possess the chastity of riches and power. You will possess all chastities and be the friend of God.

Do not be afraid of being mocked at because of your chastity. Be afraid only of

being God's enemies. One day I heard someone say: “You will be scoffed at as a liar or a eunuch if you show no lust for women.” I solemnly tell you that God instituted marriage to make you His imitators in procreating and His assistants in filling Heaven with people. But there is a higher condition, before which the angels bow down, as they see its sublimity which, however, they cannot imitate. A condition, which is perfect when it lasts from birth to death, but from which are not precluded those who are no longer virgins, who forgo their fecundity, whether male or female, and give up their sensual virility, to become prolific and virile only in the spirit. It is the condition of a eunuch without any physical imperfection or voluntary or violent mutilation. The condition that does not prohibit a person from going near the altar, on the contrary, in future centuries, the altar will be served and surrounded by such persons. It is the highest eunuch condition: where amputation is brought about by the will of belonging only to God, of preserving one's body and heart chaste for Him, that they may forever be refulgent with the purity so dear to the Lamb. I have spoken for the people and for those chosen among the people. Now, before entering Philip's house to share his bread and salt, I bless you all: the good people as a reward, the sinners to encourage them to come to Him Who came to forgive. May peace be with you all. »

Jesus comes off the boat and walks through the crowd pressing around Him. At a corner of a house there is Matthew who has listened to the Master, from that spot, not daring to go nearer. Jesus stops when He arrives there and as if He were blessing everybody, He blesses once again, looks at Matthew and then goes away, surrounded by His disciples and followed by the crowd and disappears into a house. It all ends.

97. The Call of Matthew.

4th February 1945.

This morning I was thinking again of what you said yesterday when I read the vision to you. You were simply astonished. And I told Jesus Who was near me.

He replied to me: « That is why I give them. You cannot imagine how joyfully I brighten up for My true friends. I thus give Myself to My Romualdo, for his joy, love and help, and because I see him. I had no secrets for John. I have none for the Johns. Tell old John that I give him so much peace and a good catch of fish. No catch for you. I give you only the womanly work of interlacing nets with the thread that I give you. Work, go on working… And do not be upset if you have no time for anything else. Everything is in this work. And do not take it amiss if I do not come and say to you: “Peace to you.” One greets when one arrives or departs. But when people are always together, they do not greet one another. To stay permanently is peace. My permanence is. And I am not your guest. You are actually in My arms and I never let you down for a moment. I have so much to tell you about My mortal days! However, well, I will make you happy today and I say to you: “May My peace be with You.” »

Almost immediately afterwards I see the following.

We are once again in the market square in Capernaum. But it is warmer to-day. The market is already over and in the square there are only a few idlers chatting and some children playing.

Jesus, in the middle of His group, is coming from the lake towards the square, caressing the children who come to meet Him and taking an interest in their little snippets of news. A little girl shows a large bleeding scratch on her forehead and accuses her little brother of doing it.

« Why did you hurt your sister? You should not do that. »

« I didn't do it on purpose. I wanted to pick those figs and I took a stick. But it was too heavy and it fell on her… I wanted to pick them also for her… »

« Is that true, Johanna? »

« Yes, it is. »

« Well, then, you can see that your brother did not want to hurt you. On the contrary he wanted to make you happy. So make peace at once and give each other a kiss. Good little brothers and sisters, and all good children, must never bear a grudge. Come on… »

The two weeping children kiss each other. They are both crying: one because of the suffering of the scratch, the other because he is sorry that he caused the pain.

Jesus smiles at the kisses sprinkled with big tears. « Well. Now that I see you are being good, I will pick the figs for you. And without a stick. » No wonder! Tall as He is and with such long arms, He can do it without any trouble. He

picks and hands them out.

A woman rushes to the spot. « Take them, take them, Master. I'll bring You some bread at once. »

« No, not for Me. They are for Johanna and Toby. They wanted them. »

« And you have troubled the Master? Oh! How troublesome they are! Forgive them, my Lord. »

« Woman, there was peace to be made… and I got them to make it with the very object of their war: with figs. Children are never a nuisance. They like sweet figs and I… I like their sweet innocent souls. They take so much bitterness away from Me… »

« Master… it's the gentry who don't love You. But we, poor people, we do. And they are very few, whereas we are so many… »

« I know, woman. Thanks for your encouragement. Peace be with you. Goodbye, Johanna! Goodbye, Toby! Be good. Do not harm each other and bear no ill-will. All right? »

« Yes, Jesus » answer the children.

Jesus walks away and He says smiling: « Now that with the help of figs we have cleared the sky of all clouds, we are going to… Where do you think we are going? »

The apostles do not know. Some mention one place, some another. But Jesus shakes His head every time and laughs.

Peter says: « I am giving up. Unless You tell us… I am in a bad mood today. You did not see him. But when we were coming off the boat, there was Eli, the Pharisee. And he was green with envy… more than ever! And the way he looked at us! »

« Let him look. »

« Eh! That's all we can do. But I can assure You, Master, that two figs won't be enough to make peace with him! »

« What did I say to Toby's mother? “I made peace with the very object of their war.” And I will try to make peace by paying My respects to the eminent people in Capernaum, since they feel that I offended them. So someone else will be happy. »

« Who? »

Jesus does not answer the question and He goes on: « Probably I will not be successful, because they are not willing to make peace. But listen: if in all contests the wiser of the two would give in, and instead of persisting in wanting to be right, he came to an agreement, even sharing equally what, I would also admit, might belong to him by full right, the situation would be a better and a more holy one. People are not always harmful on purpose. Sometimes one does harm without wishing to. You must always consider that and forgive. Eli and the others are convinced that they are serving God with justice by acting as they do. With patience and perseverance, and with humility and good grace, I will endeavor to persuade them that new times have come and that God, now, wants to be served according to My teaching. Good grace is the shrewdness of an apostle, perseverance is his weapon, his example and prayers for those to be converted are his success. »

They arrive in the square. Jesus goes straight to the taxation counter where Matthew is making up his accounts and checking the coins, which he divides into various denominations and puts into bags of different colors, and then into a metal coffer, which two servants are waiting to take elsewhere. As soon as the shadow of Jesus' tall figure appears on the bench, Matthew looks up to see who is the late taxpayer. In the meantime Peter, pulling Jesus by His sleeve, says: « There is no payment to be made, Master. What are You doing? »

But Jesus does not listen to him. He stares at Matthew who has risen to his feet immediately in a reverent attitude. A further piercing glance. But it is not the glance of a severe judge, as the last time. It is a glance of a call and love. It enraptures him and fills him with love. Matthew blushes. He does not know what to do or what to say…

« Matthew, son of Alphaeus, your hour is striking. Come. Follow Me! » orders Jesus majestically.

« I? Master, Lord! But do You know who I am? I am saying that for Your sake, not for mine… »

« Come, follow Me, Matthew, son of Alphaeus » He repeats more kindly.

« Oh! How can I have found grace before God? I… I… »

« Matthew, son of Alphaeus, I have seen into your heart. Come, follow Me. » This third invitation is a caress.

« Oh! At once, my Lord! » and Matthew, weeping, comes out from behind the counter, without bothering to pick up the coins spread over it or to close the coffer. Nothing. « Where are we going, my Lord? » he asks when he is near Jesus. « Where are You taking me? »

« To your house. Will you give hospitality to the Son of man? »

« Oh!… but… but what will those who hate You say? »

« I listen to what is said in Heaven and they are saying there: “Glory be to God for a sinner, who is being saved!” and the Father says: “Mercy will rise forever in Heaven and will hover over the earth, and since I love you with an eternal perfect love, I will have mercy also on you.” Come. And with My coming, as well as your heart, may also your house be sanctified. »

« I have already purified it, because of a certain hope I had in my heart… but I could not reasonably believe it might come true… Oh! I with Your holy friends… » and he looks at the disciples.

« Yes. With My friends. Come. I am joining you together. Be like brothers. »

The disciples are so amazed, that they have not yet been able to utter one word. In a group, they have walked behind Jesus and Matthew in the bright sunshine in the square, where there is not a soul left, and then for a short distance along a street which is burning in the blazing sun. There is not a soul in the streets. There is nothing but sunshine and dust.

They go into a house. A beautiful house with a large front door opening on to the road. There is a cool shady hall, beyond which I can see a large yard cultivated as a garden.

« Come in, my Master! Bring water and drinks. »

The servants immediately bring what was requested.

Matthew goes out to give instructions, while Jesus and His disciples refresh themselves. He then comes back. « Come now, Master. The dining room is cooler… My friends are coming… Oh! I want a big celebration! It's my regeneration… It's my… my true circumcision… You have circumcised my heart with Your love… Master, it will be the last feast… No more feasts now for Matthew, the exciseman. No more worldly feasts… Only an internal rejoicing because I have been redeemed and I am serving You… and I am loved by You… How much have I cried… How much, during the past months… I have been crying for almost three months… I did not know what to do… I wanted to come… But how could I, with my unclean soul, come to You, the Holy One?… »

« You were cleansing it with repentance and charity. Towards Me and your neighbor. Peter? Come here. »

Peter, who is so astonished that he has not yet said one word, comes forward. The two men, both elderly, thickset and stout, are now facing each other, and Jesus, handsome and smiling, is between them.

« Peter, you asked Me many times who was the unknown man of the purse which James used to bring us. Here he is, in front of you. »

« Who? That rob… Oh! forgive me, Matthew! Who could have imagined it was you? And that you were able to tear out a piece of your heart every week and make that rich offering, you who were our despair on account of your usury? »

« I know. I taxed you unfairly. But now, I kneel down before you all and I say to you: do not reject me! He has accepted me. Don't be more severe than He is. »

Peter, who sees Matthew at his feet, suddenly lifts him bodily, roughly but affectionately: « Stand up. You don't have to ask me or the others to forgive you. You must ask Him. We… well, never mind, we are more or less thieves like you… Oh! I have said it! Cursed be my tongue! But that's me: I say what I think, and what's in my heart is also on my lips. Come, let us make a pact of peace and love » and he kisses Matthew on his cheeks.

The others do the same, more or less affectionately. I say so, because Andrew is somewhat reserved, out of shyness, and Judas Iscariot is icy. He seems to be embracing a bundle of snakes, so aloof and brief is his embrace.

Matthew hears a noise and goes out.

« Master » says Judas Iscariot « I do not think that is wise. The Pharisees are already accusing You, and You… An exciseman as one of Your disciples! An exciseman… after a prostitute!… Do you want to ruin Yourself? If so, tell us, that… »

« That we may make ourselves scarce, is that it? » concludes Peter ironically.

« Who spoke to you? »

« I know that you are not speaking to me, I, instead, am speaking to your noble soul, to your most pure and wise soul. I know that you, a member of the Temple, smell the stench of sin in us poor people, who are not of the Temple. I am aware that you, a full Judaean, a blend of Pharisee, Sadducee and Herodian, half a scribe and a dash of an Essene – do you wish any more noble words? – I am aware you do not feel at home with us and you are like a magnificent alose caught in a net full of gudgeons. What can we do? He caught us and we… are staying. If you feel uncomfortable… you had better go away. We shall all have some respite. Also He, Who, see? is irritated with me and with you. With me because I lack patience and also… yes, also charity, but even more with you, because you understand nothing, notwithstanding all your alleged attributes, and you have neither charity, nor humility, nor respect. You have nothing, my boy. Except a lot of hot air… and God grant it is harmless. »

Jesus has allowed Peter to speak while He is standing with folded arms, pressed lips, a stem look and piercing eyes. At the end He says: « Have you finished, Peter? Have you also cleansed your heart of the yeast that was inside it? You have done the right thing. Today is Passover for a son of Abraham. Christ's call is like the blood of the lamb on your souls, and where His call is, there will be no more faults. There will be no fault if he who receives it is faithful to it. My call is redemption and is to be celebrated without any yeast. »

Not a word is spoken to Judas. Peter is quiet and mortified.

« Our host is coming back » says Jesus. « And with some friends. Do not let us show them anything but virtue. Who is not capable of doing so, should go out. Do not be like Pharisees, who oppress people with precepts which they cannot keep themselves. »

Matthew comes back in with some other men and the banquet starts. Jesus is in the centre between Peter and Matthew. They speak of many things and Jesus patiently explains to this and that one what they want to know. There are also complaints about the Pharisees who despise them.

« Well, come to Him Who does not despise you. And behave in such a way that at least good people may not scorn you » answers Jesus.

« You are good. But You are the only one! »

« No. These are like Me and then… there is the Father God Who loves him who repents and wants to become his friend again. If man should lack everything, but the Father should still remain, would man's joy not be full? »

The banquet is at the end when a servant nods to the landlord and says something to him.

« Master: Eli, Simon and Joachim are asking to come in and speak to You. Do You wish to see them? »

« Certainly. »

« But… my friends here are excisemen. »

« And that is what they are coming to see. Let them see. It would be no use hiding it. It would not serve any good purpose, because evil tongues would make the situation worse stating that there were also prostitutes here. Let them come in. »

Three Pharisees come in, they look around with ironical smiles and are about to speak. But Jesus, Who has stood up and goes to meet them with Matthew, precedes them. He lays one hand on Matthew's shoulder and says: « O true children of Israel, I salute you and I give you a great piece of news that will bring great joy to your hearts, the hearts of perfect Israelites, pining for the observance of the Law in every heart, to give glory to God. Here: Matthew, the son of Alphaeus, as from to-day is no longer the sinner, the scandal of Capernaum. A mangy sheep of Israel has been cured. Rejoice! After him, other mangy sheep will be cured and your town, in the holiness of which you are so interested, will be pleasing to God for its holiness. He leaves everything to serve God. Give the kiss of peace to the Israelite led astray, who is returning to Abraham's bosom. »

« Is he returning with excisemen? In a joyful banquet? Oh! It is truly a gracious conversion! Look over there, Eli: that is Josiah, the procurer of women. »

« And that is Simon of Isaac, the adulterer. »

« And that one? That's Azariah, the gambling-house keeper, in whose gambling-house Romans and Judaeans play, quarrel and go with women. »

« Master, do You know who these are? Did You know? »

« I did. »

« Well, then, why did you people of Capernaum, you disciples, why did you allow all this? I am surprised at you, Simon of Jonas! »

« And you, Philip, you are known here, and you, Nathaniel, I am surprised! You, a true Israelite! Why did you allow your Master to eat with excisemen and sinners? »

« Is there no more restraint in Israel? » The three Pharisees are thoroughly scandalized. Jesus says: « Leave My disciples in peace. I wanted it. Only I. »

« Obviously! When one acts as a saint and is not a saint, one soon falls into unpardonable errors! »

« And when disciples are taught not to have respect, they do not have respect even for the Law. I am still smarting under the disrespectful laughter at me, Eli, the Pharisee, from this man, a Judaean of the Temple. One teaches what one knows. »

« You are wrong, Eli. You are all wrong. One teaches what one knows. It is true. And I know the Law and I teach those who do not know it, that is, sinners. I know that you are already masters of your souls. Sinners are not. I am looking for their souls, which I give back to them, so that they may bring them to Me again, as they are: sick, wounded, soiled and I may cure and cleanse them. I have come for that. It is sinners that need the Savior. And I have come to save them. Try and understand Me… and do not hate Me without cause. »

Jesus is gentle, convincing, humble… But the three Pharisees are hisped thistles all covered with aculei… and they go out showing disgust.

« They have gone… We will now be criticised everywhere » whispers Judas Iscariot.

« Let them do as they wish. Make sure that the Father does not criticise you. Do not be upset, Matthew, nor you, his friends. Our conscience says: “Do no harm.” That is enough. »

Jesus sits down and it all ends.

98. Jesus on the Lake of Tiberias. Lesson to His Disciples near the Same Town.

5th February 1945.

Jesus is with His thirteen disciples on the lake of Galilee. There are two boats with seven people in each. Jesus is in Peter's, the first one, with Peter, Andrew, Simon, Joseph and His two cousins. In the other boat there are the two sons of Zebedee with Judas Iscariot, Philip, Thomas, Nathanael and Matthew.

The boats are sailing fast before a cool Boreas, which ripples the water very lightly and the ripplemarks are outlined by a thin veil of foam which resembles fine lace-work on the blue turquoise of the beautiful clear lake. The boats leave behind them two wakes, which meet almost immediately, thus forming a bright sparkling froth, most pleasant to be seen, as they sail in company, Peter's boat being only a few yards ahead of the other one.

From boat to boat, only a few yards apart, the disciples exchange remarks and comments. I thus understand that the Galileans are illustrating and explaining to the Judaeans the various spots of the lake, their trades, the important people who live in the area, the distance from their starting point to the place of arrival, that is from Capernaum to Tiberias. The boats are not being used for fishing, they are only carrying passengers.

Jesus is sitting on the prow and is evidently enjoying the beauties of nature around Him, the quietness, the blue sky and lake, the latter encircled by green shores, where many white villages stand out against the green of the countryside. Almost lying on a bundle of sails, in the very front of the prow, He pays no attention to the conversation of the disciples, and often lowers His head looking at the sapphire mirror of the lake, as if He were studying its depth and were interested in the creatures living in the pellucid water. I wonder what He is thinking about… Peter addresses Him twice to find out whether the sun is annoying Him as it has already risen from the east and is shining full on the

boat, and is already warm, although not hot; and the second time he asks Him if He wants some bread and cheese like the others. But Jesus does not want a tent or any bread. And Peter leaves Him alone.

A few small leisure boats, almost the size of a shallop, but fitted with purple canopies and soft cushions, cut across the course of the fishermen's boats. Shouts, bursts of laughter and the smell of perfumes go by with them.

They are full of beautiful women, many merry Romans, some Palestinians and a few Greeks. This I gather so from the words of a thin slender young man, as brown as an almost ripe olive, smartly dressed in a short red tunic, bordered by a heavy Greek fret and held tight at his waist by a belt, which is the masterpiece of a goldsmith. He says: « Hellas is beautiful! But not even my Olympic fatherland has this blue and these flowers. It is really not surprising that the goddesses left it to come here. Let us spread flowers, roses and our compliments to the goddesses, no longer Greek but Judaean… » And he spreads on the women in his boat the petals of magnificent roses and he throws some into a nearby boat.

A Roman replies to him: « Spread them, spread them, Greek! But Venus is with me. I do not spread roses, I pick them from this beautiful mouth. It is sweeter! » And he bends down to kiss the open smiling lips of Mary of Magdala, who is leaning on cushions with her blond head in the lap of the Roman.

By now the little boats are in front of the two big ones and both because of the inexperience of the rowers and because of a sudden gust of wind, the boats almost collide.

« Be careful, if your lives are dear to you » shouts Peter, who is wild when he veers, shifting the helm, to avert a collision. Insults from the men and shouts of fear from the women go from boat to boat. The Romans insult the Galileans saying: « Get out of the way, you dirty Jewish dogs. »

Peter and the other Galileans do not let the insults pass and Peter in particular, flushing like a cockerel, standing on the edge of the boat, which is pitching heavily, with his hands on his hips, gives tit for tat and does not spare Romans or Greeks or Jews or Jewesses. Nay, he assails the women with such curteous titles that I prefer to omit. The squabble lasts until the tangle of keels and oars is loosed and they all go their own ways.

Jesus has not moved from His place. He has remained sitting, His mind far away, without a glance or a word to the boats or the passengers. Leaning on one elbow, He has continued to look at the far away shore, as if nothing was happening. Also a flower is thrown at Him, I do not know by whom, certainly by a woman, because I can hear a woman laugh when it is being thrown. But He… does not stir. The flower almost hits His face, then falls on to boards and ends up under the feet of the furious Peter. When the little boats are about to move away, I see the Magdalene stand up and follow the indication of one of her partners in vice, that is, she turns her beautiful eyes towards the serene face of Jesus, Whose mind is so far away. How far from this world that face is!…

« Say, Simon! » asks Judas Iscariot. « Since you are a Judaean like me, tell me. That beautiful blonde in the Roman's lap, the one who stood up a few minutes ago, isn't she the sister of Lazarus of Bethany? »

« I don't know » is the sharp reply of Simon the Cananean. « I came back amongst the living only a short while ago, and she is a young woman… »

« You are not going to tell me that you do not know Lazarus of Bethany, I hope! I know very well that you are his friend and that you have been there also with the Master. »

« And if it were so? »

« And since it is so, I say that you must know also the sinner who is Lazarus' sister. Even the dead know her! People have been talking about her for the last ten years. She began to be light-headed as soon as she reached the age of puberty. But for over four years! You must be aware of the scandal, even if you were in the “valley of the dead”. The whole of Jerusalem talked about her. And Lazarus shut himself up at Bethany… He did the right thing, after all. No one would have set foot in his magnificent house in Zion, where she also came and went. I mean: no holy living person. In the country… well!… In any case she is always around, but never at home… She is certainly at Magdala now… With a new lover… Are you not answering me? Can you give me the lie? »

« I am not giving you the lie. I am silent. »

« So it is she! You have recognized her, too! »

« I saw her when she was a child and she was pure then. I have seen her again now… But I recognize her. Although lewd, she is the living image of her mother, a holy woman. »

« Well, then, why were you on the point of denying that she is your friend's sister? »

« We always endeavor to conceal our sores and those of the people we love. Particularly when one is honest. »

Judas gives a forced laugh.

« You are quite right, Simon. And you are honest » remarks Peter.

« And did you recognize her? You certainly go to Magdala to sell your fish, and I wonder how many times you have seen her!… »

« My boy, you must know that when your back is broken after an honest day's work, you are not interested in women. You only love the honest bed of your wife. »

« Eh! Everybody likes beautiful things! At least, if for no other reason than to look at them. »

« Why? To say: "It is no food for my table"? No, certainly not. I have learned many things from the lake and from my job, and this is one of them: a fish of fresh and calm water is not fit for salt water or a vorticose water course. »

« What do you mean? »

« I mean that everybody should keep his place, to avoid dying an evil death. »

« Did the Magdalene make you feel as if you were dying? »

« No, I am tough. But tell me: are you not feeling well, perhaps? »

« Me? Oh! I didn't even look at her!… »

« You liar! I am sure that you were consumed with envy because you were not on this boat, to be closer to her… you would have put up even with me, to be nearer… So much so, that you are honoring me with your conversation, because of her, after so many days of silence. »

« Me? She would not have even seen me! She was always looking at the Master! »

« Ah! Ah! Ah! And he says that he was not looking at her! How could you see where she was looking, if you did not look at her? »

They all laugh at Peter's remark, except Judas, Jesus and Simon Zealot.

Jesus puts an end to the discussion which He feigns He has not heard by asking Peter: « Is that Tiberias? »

« Yes, Master, it is. I will now haul. »

« Wait. Can you stop in that quiet small bay? I would like to speak to you only. »

« I will measure the depth and let You know. » And Peter lowers a long pole into the water and moves slowly towards the shore. « Yes, I can, Master. Shall I go closer to the shore? »

« As far as you can. There is shade and solitude. I like it. »

Peter steers towards the shore. The land is about fifteen yards away, at most. « I would now touch. »

« Stop. And you come as close as possible and listen. »

Jesus leaves His place and sits in the middle of the boat, on a plank placed athwartwise. The other boat is in front of Him, while the disciples in His boat are sitting round Him.

« Listen. You may think that I do not pay attention to your conversation and that consequently I am a lazy teacher who does not look after his pupils. You must know that My soul does not leave you one moment. Have you ever seen a doctor who studies a patient affected by a disease not yet identified and presenting contrasting symptoms? He keeps an eye on him, after visiting him, he watches him both when he sleeps and is awake, in the morning and in the evening, when he speaks and when he is silent, because every symptom may help to identify the hidden disease and suggest a cure. I do the same with you. I hold you by means of invisible but most sensitive threads, which are grafted into Me, and they transmit to Me even the lightest vibrations of your ego. I allow you to believe that you are free, that you may reveal yourselves for what you are, which happens when a schoolboy or a maniac thinks he is not being watched by his overseer.

You are a group of people, but you form a nucleus, that is, one thing only. You are therefore a unit, which is formed as a body and which is to be studied in its individual features, which are more or less good, in order to shape it, amal-

gamate it, round it off, increase it in its polyhedric sides, and make it a perfect unit. That is why I study you. And I study you also when you are sleeping.

What are you? What are you to become? You are the salt of the earth. That is what you must become: the salt of the earth. With salt, meat is preserved from putrefaction and many other victuals as well. But if the salt were not salty, could it be used to salt? I want to salt the world with you, to have it seasoned with a celestial flavour. But how can you salt if you become tasteless?

What causes you to lose a celestial flavour? That which is human. Sea water, that is: the water of the real sea, is so salt that it is not good to drink, is it? And yet, if one takes a cup of sea water and pours it into an amphora of fresh water, then one can drink it, because the sea water is so diluted that it has lost its biting strength. Mankind is like fresh water mixed to your celestial saltness. Again, suppose we could take a little stream of water from the sea and get it to flow into this lake, would you be able to trace that tiny stream? No. It would have been lost in the fresh water. That is what happens to you when you immerse, or rather, you submerge your mission in so much humanity.

You are men. I know. And who am I? I am He Who has all possible strength. And what do I do? I communicate such strength to you after calling you. But what is the use of communicating it to you, if you dissipate it under avalanches of human influences and sentiments?

You are, you must be the light of the world. I chose you: I, the Light of God amongst men, that you may continue to illuminate the world, after I have gone back to the Father. But can you illuminate if you are smoky lamps which have gone out? No. Nay, with your smoke – an ambiguous smoke is worse than a completely extinguished wick – you would darken the dim light that the hearts of men may still have.

Oh! Miserable are those who will apply to the apostles seeking God, and instead of light will receive smoke! It will be scandal and death for them. But the unworthy apostle will be cursed and punished. Your destiny is a great one! And a great tremendous commitment as well! But remember that who has been given more, is obliged to give more. And you have been given the most, both in the way of education and of gifts. You are educated by Me, the Word of God, and you receive from God the gift of being “the disciples”, that is, the continuators of the Son of God.

I would like you to meditate upon your election, to examine yourselves thoroughly, to weigh yourselves… and if anyone feels that he is suitable only to be a believer – I will not even say: if anyone feels he is but an unrepentant sinner; I only say: if anyone feels that he is suitable only to be a believer – but does not feel the strength of an apostle, let him withdraw.

The world is large, beautiful, sufficient, varied enough for those who love it! It offers all the flowers and all the fruit suitable for the stomach and the senses. I offer but one thing: holiness. And on the earth it is the meanest, the poorest, the roughest, the thorniest and the most persecuted thing that exists. In Heaven its meanness is changed into immensity, its poverty into riches, its thorniness into a flowery carpet, its hardness into a smooth pleasant path, its persecution into peace and beatitude. But here it is a hero's labor to be a saint. That is all I can offer.

Are you willing to remain with Me? Do you not feel like staying? Oh! Do not be amazed or sorry. You will hear Me ask you this question many times. And when you hear it, please think that My heart weeps asking it, because it is wounded by your insensibility to your vocation. So examine your own consciences, then judge with honesty and sincerity, and then make up your minds. Make up your minds, so that you may not become reprobates. Say “Master, friends, I realize that I am not made for this life. I kiss you goodbye and I say to you: pray for me.”

Better so than to betray. Better so… What do you say? Betray whom? Whom? Me. My cause, which is the cause of God, because I am one thing with the Father. And yourselves, yes, you would betray yourselves, you would betray your souls, giving them away to Satan. Do you wish to remain Jews? I will not force you to change. But do not betray. Do not betray your souls, Christ and God. I swear that neither I, nor those faithful to Me will criticise you, neither will they have you despised by the faithful crowd. A short while ago one of your brothers said a great word: “We always endeavor to conceal our sores and those of the people we love.” And he who would go away, would be a sore, a cancer, which after growing in our apostolic body, would come off, because of its total gangrene, leaving a painful mark which we would carefully keep hidden.

No, do not cry, you who are the better ones. Do not cry. I bear you no grudge, neither am I intolerant seeing you so slow. You have just been chosen and I cannot expect you to be perfect. I will not even demand it after some years, after

repeating one hundred or two hundred times the same things in vain. Nay, listen: in a few years' time you will be less fervent than now, that you are neophytes. Such is life… such is mankind… You lose impetus after the first leap. But (Jesus springs to His feet) I swear to you that I will win. Purified by natural selection, fortified by a supernatural mixture, you, better ones, will become My heroes. The heroes of Christ. The heroes of Heaven. The power of the Caesars will be like dust as compared to the regality of your priesthood. You, poor fishermen of Galilee, you, unknown Judaeans, you, mere numbers in the mass of present men, will become more famous, more acclaimed, more venerated than Caesar, and than all the Caesars the world ever had or will have. You will be known and blessed in the near future and in the most remote centuries, until the end of the world. I appoint you to such sublime destiny, because you are honestly willing. And I will outline the essential features of the apostolic character, so that you may be fit for your destiny.

Be always vigilant and ready. Your loins should be always girded up, and your lamps always lit, as if you were to leave any moment or to run to meet someone who is arriving. You are in fact, and will be until your death, the indefatigable pilgrims looking for wanderers; and until death puts them out, your lamps are to be held high up and lit to show the way to misguided souls coming towards the fold of Christ.

You are to be faithful to the Master Who appointed you to such service. That servant will be rewarded whom the master always finds vigilant and upon whom death comes in the state of grace. You cannot and must not say: “I am young, I have time for this and for that, and then I will think about my Master, my death, my soul! Young people die like old ones, and strong men like weak ones. And old and young, strong and weak are equally subjected to the assaults of temptation. Be careful, because the soul can die before the body and you may unknowingly carry around a putrid soul. The dying of a soul is so imperceptible! Like the death of a flower. Not a cry, not a convulsion… it inclines its flame like a tired corolla, and goes out. Later, sometimes after a long time, sometimes immediately after, the body realizes it is carrying a verminous corpse within itself, it becomes mad with fear and commits suicide to avoid such union… Oh! it does not avoid it! It falls on to a swarm of snakes in Gehenna with its very verminous soul.

Do not be dishonest like brokers or pettifoggers who side with two opposite customers, do not be as false as politicians, who call this man and that man a “friend”, whereas they are enemies to both of them. Do not act in two different ways. You cannot laugh at God or deceive Him. Behave with men as you do with God, because an insult to man is an insult to God. Let God see you as you wish to be seen by men.

Be humble. You cannot reproach your Master for not being so. I set the example. Do as I do. Be humble, gentle, patient. That is how the world is conquered. Not by violence or force. Be strong and violent against your vices. Extirpate them, at the cost of breaking your hearts. Some days ago I told you to watch over your eyes. But you do not know how to do it. I tell you: it would be better to become blind by pulling out covetous eyes, rather than become lustful.

Be sincere. I am the Truth: both in sublime and human things. I want you to be genuine, too. Why be deceitful with Me, or your brothers, or your neighbor? Why cheat people? Proud as you are, why do you not say: “I do not want people to find out that I am a liar”? And be sincere with God. Do you think you can deceive Him with long manifest prayers? Oh! poor children! God sees into your hearts!

Be chaste in doing good. Also in giving alms. An exciseman knew how to be so before his conversion. And are you not capable? Yes, I am praising you, Matthew, for your chaste weekly offer, which only the Father and I knew was yours and I am quoting you as an example. Also that is a form of chastity, My friends. Do not disclose your goodness as you would not undress a young daughter before a crowd of people. Be virgins in doing good. A good act is virgin when it is free from any connection with thoughts of pride and praise, or from incentives of pride.

Be faithful to your vocation to God. You cannot serve two masters. A nuptial bed cannot hold two brides at the same time. God and Satan cannot share your embraces. Man cannot, neither can God nor Satan, share a treble embrace contrasting with the three embracing one another. Be averse to the lust for gold as well as to the lust for the flesh, to the lust for the flesh as to the lust for power. That is what Satan offers you. Oh! his deceitful riches! Honor, success, power, wealth: obscene markets where your souls are the legal tender. Be satisfied with little. God gives you what is necessary. It is enough. He guarantees that for you as He does for the birds of the air, and you are worth much more than birds. But He wants reliance and moderation from you. If you rely on Him, He will not disappoint you. If you are moderate, His daily gift will be sufficient for you.

Do not be heathens, by being of God only by name. Those are heathens who love gold and power, to appear as demigods, more than they love God. Be holy and you will be like God in eternity. Do not be intolerant. Since you are all sinners, behave to others as you would like others to behave to you: that is, with mercy and forgiveness.

Do not judge. Oh! do not judge! You have only been with Me for a short time, and yet you have seen how many times I, although innocent, have been wrongly judged and accused of non-existent sins. A bad judgement is an insult. And only true saints do not pay back in the offender's coin. Refrain therefore from offending so that you may not be offended. Thus you will not fail in your duties either to charity, or to holy, dear, kind humility, which is Satan's enemy, together with chastity. Forgive, always forgive. Say: “I forgive, Father, that I may be forgiven by You of my numberless sins.”

Improve hourly, with patience, perseverance, heroism. Who told You that it is not painful to become good? Nay, I tell you: it is the greatest labor. But the reward is Heaven and it is therefore worthwhile getting exhausted in such labor.

And love. Oh! What words shall I use to persuade you to love? None is suitable to convert you to love, poor men, instigated by Satan! So I say: “Father, hasten the hour of purification. This land and this flock of Yours are dry and diseased. But there is a dew that can cleanse and soothe them. Open its fountain. Open Me, Father. Here I am burning with the desire to fulfill Your will, which is also Mine and of the Eternal Love. Father, Father, Father! Look at Your Lamb and be Its Sacrificer.” »

Jesus is really inspired. Standing, His arms stretched out in the shape of a cross, His face raised towards the sky. In His linen tunic and with the blue lake behind Him, He seems a praying archangel. The vision ends on this gesture of His.

99. Jesus Looks for Jonathan in the House of Chuza at Tiberias.

6th February 1945.

I see the beautiful new town of Tiberias. Its whole lay-out makes me understand that it is a new and a wealthy town: the town plan is neater than that of any other town in Palestine and shows a civilized and harmonious ensemble not to be found even in Jerusalem. There are beautiful avenues and straight roads, already provided with a sewer system whereby water and rubbish are cleared away. There are also wide squares with large fountains, the bases of which are built with the most beautiful marbles. Many buildings copy the Roman style, with spacious arcades. Through some front doors, already open at this early hour, one can see large halls, marble peristyles decorated with valuable curtains, chairs and tables; in almost every building there is a central yard, paved with marble, with a jet-fountain and marble vases full of blossoming flowers. It is definitely an imitation of the Rome architecture, which has been copied very well and very richly. The loveliest houses are in the streets nearest to the lake. The first three streets, parallel to the lake, are really luxurious. The first one follows the gentle curve of the lake and is absolutely magnificent. The last part is a series of “villas” with the main facades on the back street, and on the lake side they have luxuriant gardens, which stretch so far down as to be lapped by the waves of the lake. Almost every one has a little harbour, in which there are leisure boats with precious canopies and purple seats.

Jesus does not seem to have disembarked from Peter's boat in the harbour of Tiberias, but somewhere else, probably in the suburbs and is now walking along the avenue alongside the lake.

« Have You ever been to Tiberias, Master? » asks Peter.

« No. Never. »

« Eh! Antipas has done things well and in great style to flatter Tiberius! He is

corrupted indeed!… »

« It seems more a holiday resort than a business town. »

« The trading centre is on the other side. It has a lot of trade and is wealthy. »

« And these houses? Do they belong to Palestinians? »

« Some do, some don't. Many belong to Romans, and many… although full of statues and similar trash, belong to Jews. » Peter sighs and mumbles: « … I wish they had taken away only our independence… but they have taken away also our faith… We are becoming more heathen-minded than they are!… »

« Not through their fault, Peter. They have their habits and they do not force us to adopt them. We want to become corrupted ourselves. Because of material interest, of the fashion, servilism… »

« You are right. And the Tetrarch is the first one… »

« Master, here we are » says the shepherd Joseph. « This is the house of Herod's steward. »

They stop at the end of the avenue, where there is a fork and the avenue becomes the second street, so that the "villas" are situated between it and the lake. The house indicated by Joseph is the first one and is really beautiful, with a flower garden all round it. Branches of jasmin and roses and their sweet smell spread out as far as the lake.

« Is this where Jonathan lives? »

« I was told that he lives here. He is the steward's steward. He has been fortunate. Chuza is not a bad man and is just in acknowledging the merits of his steward. He is one of the few honest men at the court. Shall I go and call him? »

« Go. »

Joseph goes to the tall front door and knocks. The door-keeper comes to the door. They exchange a few words. I see that Joseph shows disappointment and the porter puts out his grey head and looks at Jesus; he then asks something and Joseph nods assent. They go on speaking.

Joseph then comes towards Jesus Who has been waiting patiently under the shade of a tree. « Jonathan is not here. He is up on High Lebanon. He has taken Johanna up there, in the fresh and pure air, because she is very ill. The servant said that Jonathan went because Chuza is at court and he cannot come away after the scandal of the escape of the Baptist. She was getting worse and the doctor said that she would die here. But the servant says that You should go in and rest. Jonathan has spoken of the baby Messiah and also here You are known by name and You are expected. »

« Let us go. » The group begins to move.

The porter, after casting a sidelong glance, calls other servants and opens wide the door, so far only half open, and runs towards Jesus, with the utmost respect: « Bless us, Lord, and this sad house. Come in. Oh! Jonathan will be very sorry that he is not here! He was hoping so much to see You. Please come in with Your friends. »

In the hall there are servants and maids of all ages. They all bow down respectfully, greeting Jesus, and they are curious at the same time. A little old woman is weeping in a comer. Jesus goes in and blesses with His usual gesture and His greeting of peace. They offer Him refreshments. Jesus sits on a chair and they all gather round Him. « I can see that I am not unknown to you » remarks Jesus.

« Oh! Jonathan brought us up, telling us about You. Jonathan is good. He says that he is good because the kiss he gave You made him good. But it is also because he is good. »

« I have given and received kisses… but, as you say, it is only in good people that they increase their goodness. Is he absent just now? I came to see him. »

« As I said: he is up in Lebanon. He has friends there… It is the last hope for our young mistress, if it does not help… »

The little woman in the comer cries louder. Jesus looks at her inquisitively.

« She is Esther, the mistress's wet-nurse. She is crying because she cannot resign herself to lose her. »

« Come, mother. Do not cry like that » Jesus encourages her. « Come here near Me. A disease does not necessarily mean death! »

« Oh! it is death! it is death! After she had her only unfortunate childbirth, she is dying! Adulteresses have deliveries secretly and yet they live, and she, so good,

so honest, dear, so dear, she must die! »

« What is the matter with her now? »

« She has a fever that consumes her… She is like a lamp that bums in a very windy place… it gets stronger every day and she gets weaker. Oh! I wanted to go with her. But Jonathan wanted young maids, because she has no strength left and she has to be lifted bodily and I am no longer capable… Not capable of that… but I am capable of loving her. I received her from her mother's womb… I was a servant and I was married, and I had a child one month old and I suckled her, because her mother was very weak and could not… I acted as her mother when she became an orphan and she could hardly say mummy. I have grown old and wrinkled watching at her bedside when she was ill… I dressed her as a bride and led her to her nuptial bed… I smiled at her hopes of becoming a mother… I wept with her over her dead baby… I have gathered all the smiles and all the tears of her life… I have given her all the smiles and all the consolation of my love… and now she is dying and I am not beside her… » One Can but feel sorry for the old woman.

Jesus caresses her, but to no avail. « Listen, mother. Have you faith? »

« In You? Yes, I have. »

« In God, woman. Do you believe that God can do everything? »

« I do, and I believe that You, His Messiah, can do it, too. Oh! They already speak in town of Your power! That man there (and she points to Philip) some time ago was speaking of Your miracles near the synagogue. And Jonathan asked him: “Where is the Messiah?” and he replied: “I do not know.” Jonathan then said to me: “If He were here, I swear it, she would be cured.” But You were not here… and he has gone away with her… and now she will die… »

« No. Have faith. Tell me exactly what you feel in your heart: can you believe that she will not die because of your faith? »

« Because of my faith? Oh! If that is what You want, here it is. Take also my life, my old life… just let me see her cured. »

« I am the Life. I give life and not death. You gave life to her, one day, with the milk of your breast, and it was a poor life that could finish. Now with your faith, you are giving her an endless life. Smile, mother! »

« But she is not here… » The old woman is uncertain between hope and fear. « She is away, and You are here… »

« Have faith. Listen. I am now going to Nazareth for a few days. Also there are some friends of Mine who are ill… I will then go to Lebanon. If Jonathan comes back within six days, send him to Nazareth, to Jesus of Joseph. If he does not come, then I will go. »

« How will you find him? »

« Tobias' archangel will guide Me. Fortify your faith. That is all I ask of you. Do not cry any longer, mother. »

The old woman, instead, cries louder. She is at Jesus' feet, resting her head on His divine knees, kissing and crying on His blessed hand.

Jesus caresses her with His other hand and as the other servants gently reproach her because she is getting exhausted weeping, He says: « Leave her alone. It is a relief for her to shed tears now. It will do her good. Are you all glad that your mistress may be restored to health? »

« Oh! She is so good! When one is like her, one is not a master, but a friend and is loved as such. We love her, believe us. »

« I can see into your hearts. Be always good, too. I am going. I cannot wait. I have a boat. I bless you. »

« Come back, Master. Come back again! »

« I will come back. I will often come back. Goodbye. Peace to this house and to you all. »

Jesus goes out with His disciples, in the company of the servants cheering Him.

« You are better known here than in Nazareth » remarks His cousin James sadly.

« This house has been prepared by a man who had true faith in the Messiah. As far as Nazareth is concerned, I am only a carpenter… Nothing else. »

« And… we have not the strength to preach You for what You are… »

« Have you not? »

« No, my cousin. We are not heroes like Your shepherds… »

« Do you think so, James? » Jesus smiles looking at His cousin who is so much like His putative father, with his brown eyes and hair, and swarthy face, whereas Judas looks paler, as his face is framed by a very dark beard and curly hair, and his eyes are almost a violet blue hue, and are vaguely like Jesus'.

« Well I tell you that you do not know yourself. You and Judas are two strong characters. » His cousins shake their heads.

« You will realize that I am not mistaken. »

« Are we really going to Nazareth? »

« Yes. I want to speak to My Mother and… and do something else. Who wants to come, can come. »

They all want to go. The cousins are the happiest of the lot. « It is because of our father and mother, see? »

« Yes, I understand. We will go to Cana and then to Nazareth. »

« To Cana? Oh! Well, we will go to Susanna's. She will give us eggs and fruit for our father, James. »

« And she will certainly give us some of her good honey. He likes it so much! »

« And it is very nourishing. »

« Poor father! He suffers so much! Like an uprooted tree, he feels his life is fading away… and he would like not to die… » James looks at Jesus. With a silent prayer… Jesus pretends not to see him.

« Joseph also died like that, with severe pains, did he not? »

« Yes, he did » replies Jesus. « But he suffered less because he was resigned. »

« And he had You. »

« Also Alphaeus could have Me… »

The cousins sigh sadly and it all ends.

100. Jesus in the House of His Uncle Alphaeus and then at His Own Home.

7th February 1945. St. Romuald.

Jesus is on the beautiful hills of Galilee with His disciples. To escape the sun which is still high in the sky, although beginning to set, they walk under trees, mainly olive.

« Beyond that edge there is Nazareth » says Jesus. We shall soon be there. I now tell you that at the entrance to the town, we will part. Judas and James will go at once to see their father, as their hearts desire. Peter and John will give alms to the poor people, who will certainly be near the fountain. The others and I will go home for supper and then we will think about resting.

« We will go back to good Alphaeus. We promised him last time. But I will come only to say hello to him. I give my bed to Matthew who is not yet accustomed to hardships and privations » says Philip. « No, not you, you are old. I will not allow that. I have had very comfortable beds so far, but I suffered the pains of hell in them! Believe me: I am enjoying so much peace now, that even if I lie down on stones, I seem to be resting on feathers. Oh! It's your conscience that makes you sleep or not! » replies Matthew.

A charity competition starts among the disciples Thomas, Philip, Bartholomew and Matthew who are obviously the ones who the last time stayed in the house of this Alphaeus (who is certainly not James' father, because James speaking to Andrew says: « There will always be room for you, as the last time, even if his father's health has got worse. »

Thomas wins: « I am the youngest in the group. I am giving my bed. Never mind, Matthew. Little by little you will get used to it. Do you think that I will be put to a lot of trouble? No. I am like a young man in love who says: “I may be lying on a hard bed, but I am near my love.” » Thomas, about thirty eight years old, laughs happily and Matthew yields to him. The first houses of Nazareth are now only a few yards away.

« Jesus… we are going » says Judas.

« Yes, go. »

The two brothers almost run away.

« Eh! A father is a father » whispers Peter. « Even if he is sulky with us, he is always our same blood, and blood is thicker than water. In any case… I like Your cousins. They are very good. »

« Yes, they are very good. And they are humble, so humble that they do not even try to ascertain how humble they are. They always think that they are at fault, because they see good in everybody except themselves. They will go a long way… »

They are now in Nazareth. Some women see Jesus and greet Him, also men and children do likewise. But there is not the excitement for the Messiah as in other places: here it is friends greeting a friend who has come back. And they greet Him more or less effusively. In many I see an ironic curiosity while they watch the heterogenous group of Jesus' disciples, which is certainly not a train of regal dignitaries or stately priests. Hot, dusty, modestly dressed as they are, with the exception of Judas Iscariot, Matthew, Simon and Bartholomew – I have mentioned them in a descending order of smartness – they look more like a crowd of country folk going to a market, than followers of a king. Which king has of His own only His imposing stature and above all His stately countenance.

They walk for a few yards, then Peter and John leave and go to the right, whereas Jesus and the others proceed as far as a little square crowded with children shouting round a tank full of water, from which their mothers are drawing supplies.

A man sees Jesus and he makes a gesture of pleasant surprise. He rushes towards Him and greets Him:

« You are welcome! I was not expecting You so soon! Here: kiss my last grandson. He is little Joseph. He was born during Your absence » and he hands Him the little baby he is holding in his arms.

« Have you named him Joseph? »

« Yes. I cannot forget him who was almost a relative of mine, and even more than a relative, my great friend. Now I have given all the dearest names also to my grandchildren: Anne, my friend when I was a little boy, and Joachim. Then Mary… oh! what a celebration when she was born! I remember when they gave me her to kiss and they said to me: “See? That beautiful rainbow was the bridge on which she came down from Heaven. The angels use that road there” and she really looked like a little angel, she was so beautiful… Now here is Joseph. If I had known that You were coming back so soon, I would have awaited You for his circumcision. »

« I thank you for your love for My grandparents, My father and My Mother. He is a beautiful child. May he be forever as just as the just Joseph. » Jesus tosses the baby who smiles at Him babyishly.

« If You wait for me, I'll come with You. I am waiting for the amphoras to be filled. I don't want my daughter Mary to get tired. Nay, look, this is what I will do. I'll give the amphoras to Your disciples, if they will take them, and I'll speak to you for a little while, all by ourselves. »

« Of course we will take them! We are not Assyrian kings » exclaims Thomas, who is the first to take hold of an amphora.

« Well then, look. Mary of Joseph is not at home. She is at Her brother-in-law's, you know. But the key is in my house. Ask them to give it to you, so that you may enter the house, the workshop, I mean. »

« Yes, go. You may also go into the house, I will come later. »

The apostles go away and Jesus is left with Alphaeus.

« I wanted to tell You… I am a true friend of Yours… And when one is a true friend, and is older, and is from the same place, one may speak. I think that one ought to speak… I… I do not want to give You any advice. You know better than I do. I only want to warn You that… Oh! I do not want to play the spy, neither do I wish to place Your relatives in an unfavorable light. But I believe in You, the Messiah, and… and it hurts me to hear them say that you are not Him, that is the Messiah, that You are unsound, that you are the ruin of the family, and of Your relatives. The town… you know, Alphaeus is held in high esteem and so people listen also to them, and he is now ill and I feel sorry for him… Also sufferings at times cause people to do wrong things. See, I was there that evening when Judas and James defended You and their liberty to follow You… Oh! what a row! I don't know how Your Mother can stand it! And that poor woman Mary of Alphaeus? Women are always the victims in certain family situations. »

« My cousins are now at their father's… »

« At their father's? Oh! I feel sorry for them! The old man is beside himself, it

must be his age and his illness, but he is behaving like a madman. If he were not mad, I would feel even more sorry for him because… he would ruin his soul. »

« Do you think that he will treat his sons badly? »

« I am sure he will. I am sorry for them and for the women… Where are You going? »

« To Alphaeus' house. »

« Don't, Jesus. Don't let them be disrespectful to You! »

« My cousins love Me more than themselves and it is fair that I should reward them with equal love… There are two women there, who are dear to Me. I am going. Do not keep Me back. » And Jesus hurries towards Alphaeus' house, whereas the other man remains pensive in the street.

Jesus is walking fast. There He is, at the entrance to Alphaeus' kitchen garden. He hears the crying of a woman and the unbecoming shouting of a man. Jesus walks faster the few yards that separate the street from the house, across the very green kitchen garden. He is almost on the threshold of the house when His Mother looks out of the door and sees her Son.

« Mother! »

« Jesus! »

Two cries of love.

Jesus is going to enter, but Mary says: « No, Son. » And She stands on the threshold with Her arms stretched out, clasping the door jambs with Her hands: a barrier of body and love, and She repeats:

« No, Son. Do not go in. »

« Let Me in, Mother. Nothing will happen. » Jesus is very calm, although Mary's growing pallor is certainly upsetting Him. He takes Her slender wrist, moves Her hand away from the door jamb and goes in.

There are strewn on the kitchen floor, reduced to a slimy pulp, the eggs, the grapes and the jar of honey brought from Cana. From another room a querulous voice is heard, that of an old man who is cursing, accusing, complaining in one of those senile fits of temper, so unfair, impotent and painful to be seen, and so sorrowful to endure. « … there you are, my house is ruined, we have become the laughing-stock of the whole of Nazareth, and I am here, alone, helpless, struck in my heart, in the respect due to me, in my needs!… That is what is left for you, Alphaeus, for behaving as a true believer! Why? Why? Because of a madman. A madman who has made my foolish sons insane. Ah! Ah! What a pain! » And Mary of Alphaeus' tearful voice implores: « Be good, Alphaeus, be good! Don't you see that you are hurting yourself? Come, let me help you to lie down… You are always good, always just… Why are you behaving thus to yourself? To me? To the poor children?… »

« No! No! Don't touch me! I don't want you! The children are good? Ah! They certainly are! Two ungrateful sons! They brought me honey after filling me with bitterness. They brought me eggs and grapes, after feeding on my heart! Go away, I tell you. Away! I don't want you. I want Mary. She knows how to do things. Where is that weak woman now, who can't get Her Son to obey Her? »

Mary of Alphaeus, chased out, enters the kitchen while Jesus is about to go into Alphaeus' room. She sees Him and collapses on Him, sobbing desperately, while Mary, the Virgin, goes humbly and patiently near the old angry man.

« Do not cry, aunt. I will go in now. »

« No, no! Don't let him insult You! He seems to be mad. He has a stick. No, Jesus, no. He struck also his sons. »

« He will not do anything to Me » and Jesus, resolutely, though kindly, moves His aunt to one side and goes in.

« Peace to you, Alphaeus. »

The old man, who is on the point of lying down with endless complaints and reproaches to Mary, because She is not capable of doing anything (before he had said that only She knew how to do things) suddenly turns round. « You are here? Here to scoff at me? Also that? »

« No. To bring you peace. Why are you so cross? You are making your condition worse. Mother, leave him. I will lift him. I will not hurt you and you will not have to make any effort. Mother, lift the blankets. » And Jesus carefully gets hold of the heavy-breathing, weak, wicked, weeping, miserable little heap of bones and lays him with great care, as if he were a new-born baby, on his bed.

« There you are. As I used to do to My father. Let us lift this pillow. It will raise you up and you will breathe better. Mother, put that little one there, under his back. He will be more comfortable. And now the light like that, that it may not hurt his eyes, while letting in the fresh air. That is it. Now… I saw a decoction on the fire. Bring it to Me, Mother. And make it very sweet. You are all perspiration and you are getting cold. It will do you good. »

Mary goes out obediently.

« But I… but I… Why are You good to me? »

« Because I love you, you know that. »

« Before I loved You, too… but now… »

« Now you no longer love Me. I know. But I love you, and that is enough for Me. After… you will love Me…»

« Well then… Ah, Ah… how painful! then if it is true that You love me, why do You give offense to my grey hair? »

« I do not offend you, Alphaeus, in any way. I honor You. »

« Honor me? I am the laughing-stock of Nazareth. »

« Why do you say so, Alphaeus? In what way have I made you a laughing-stock? »

« With regard to my sons. Why are they rebels? Because of You. Why am I mocked at? Because of You. »

« Tell Me: if Nazareth should praise you because of the destiny of your sons, would you feel the same pain? »

« In that case, I would not! But Nazareth does not praise me. They would praise me if You were a conqueror. But that they should leave me on account of one who is little less than an insane man who roams about the world, drawing upon himself hatred and derision, a poor man amongst the poor! Ah! Who would not laugh? My poor home! What an end for you, poor house of David! And I was to live so long to see this misfortune? To see You, the last shoot of the glorious family, become corrupt with insanity because of excessive servility! Ah! Misfortune has befallen us since the day my faint-hearted brother agreed to be united to that insipid yet overbearing woman who had full control over him. I then said: “Joseph is not cut out for marriage. He will be unhappy!” And he was. He knew what it was like, and he never wanted to have anything to do with marriage. Cursed be the Law of orphan heiresses! Cursed be fate. Cursed be that wedding. »

The « Virgin heiress » has come back with the decoction in time to hear Her brother-in-law's jeremiad. She is even more pale. But Her patient gracefulness is not upset. She goes near Alphaeus and with a gentle smile helps him to drink.

« You are unfair, Alphaeus. But you are so ill, that you are forgiven everything » says Jesus, Who is holding up is head.

« Oh! Yes! Very ill! You say that You are the Messiah! You work miracles. So they say. If at least You cured me, to compensate me for the sons You have taken. Cure me… and I will forgive You. »

« Forgive your sons. Endeavor to understand their souls, and I will give you relief. If you have still a grudge against them, I can do nothing. »

« Forgive them? » The old man has an outburst of rage, which, of course, sharpens his agonies of pain and that makes him enraged again.

« Forgive them? Never! Go away! Away, if that is what You have to tell me! Go away! I want to die without being troubled any further. »

Jesus makes a gesture of resignation. « Goodbye, Alphaeus, I am going away… Must I really go? Uncle… must I really go? »

« If You are not going to satisfy me, yes, go away. And tell those two serpents that their old father is dying with a grudge against them. »

« No. Do not do that. Do not lose your soul. Do not love Me, if you wish so. Do not believe that I am the Messiah. But do not hate. Do not hate, Alphaeus. Scoff at Me. Call Me insane. But do not hate. »

« But why do You love me, if I insult You? »

« Because I am He Whom you do not want to acknowledge. I am the Love. Mother, I am going home. »

« Yes, My Son. I will not be long. »

« I leave My peace with you, Alphaeus. If you want Me, send for Me, at any

time, and I will come. » Jesus goes out, as calm as if nothing had happened. He only looks paler.

« Oh! Jesus, Jesus, forgive him » moans Mary of Alphaeus.

« Of course, Mary. There is not even any need to forgive him. Who suffers, is forgiven everything. Now he is already more calm. Grace works also unknown to one's heart. And then there are your tears, and certainly Judas' and James' sufferings, and their loyalty to their vocations. May peace be in your anguished heart, aunt. » He kisses her and goes out into the kitchen garden to go home.

When He is about to set foot on the road, Peter comes in, and behind him John, panting as if they had been running. « Oh! Master! What's the matter? James said to me: “Run to my house. I wonder how Jesus is being treated!” No, I'm wrong. Alphaeus came in, the man of the fountain, and he said to Judas: “Jesus is in your house” and then James said so. Your cousins are distressed. I don't understand what it is all about. But I see You… and I take heart. »

« It is nothing, Peter. A poor invalid, made intolerant by pain. It is all over now. »

« Oh! I am glad! And why are you here? » Peter asks the Iscariot, who has rushed there too, and his tone is not very kind.

« You are here too, are you not? »

« I was asked to come and I came. »

« I came too. If the Messiah was in danger, and in His own fatherland, I, having already defended Him in Judaea, can defend Him also in Galilee. »

« We are quite capable of that. But there is no need in Galilee. »

« Ha! Ha! Ha! Indeed! His fatherland is ejecting Him like heavy food. Well. I'm glad for you, who were scandalized by a little incident, which took place in Judaea, where He is unknown. Here, instead!… » and Judas ends whistling a tune which is a masterpiece of a satire.

« Listen, boy. I am not in the right mood to put up with you. Stop it, therefore… if… something is dear to you. Master, did they hurt You? »

« No, My dear Peter. I can assure you. Let us walk faster to comfort My cousins. »

They go and enter the large workshop. Judas and James are near the big carpenter's bench. James is standing, Judas is sitting on a stool, his elbow on the bench, his head resting on his hand. Jesus goes towards them, smiling, to reassure them at once that His heart loves them: « Alphaeus is calmer, now. His pains are subsiding and everything is peaceful again. You must be calm, too. »

« Did You see him? And mother? »

« I saw everybody. »

Judas asks: « Also our brothers? »

« No, they were not in. »

« They were there. They did not want to be seen by You. But with us! Oh! If we had committed a crime, we would not have been treated like that. And we flew from Cana for the joy of seeing him again and bringing him what he is fond of! We love him… but he no longer understands us… he no longer believes us. » Judas bends his arm and cries, his head resting on the bench. James is stronger. But his internal torture can be read on his face.

« Do not cry, Judas. And you… do not suffer. »

« Oh! Jesus! We are his children… and he cursed us. But even if that tears our hearts, no, we are not turning back! We belong to You and we will remain Yours, even if they threaten us with death to detach us from You! » exclaims James.

« And you said that you were not capable of heroism? I knew. But you have said it yourself. Really, you will be faithful also against death. And you, too » Jesus caresses them. But they are suffering. The stony vault resounds with Judas' crying.

And it is thus possible for me to become better acquainted with the disciples' souls.

Peter, whose honest face is sorrowful, exclaims: « Yes! It is painful… A sad situation. But, my dear boys (and he shakes them affectionately) not everybody deserves such words… I… I realize that I have been fortunate in my vocation. That good woman, my wife, always says to me: “It is as if I were repudiated, because you are no longer mine. But I say: 'Oh! happy repudiation!'”. You should say that, too. You lose your father but you gain God. »

The shepherd Joseph, an orphan, devoid of experience of family life is amazed that a father can be the cause of so many tears, and says: « I thought I was the most unhappy of all, because I am fatherless. But I see that it is better to moan over his death than to bewail him as an enemy. »

John kisses and caresses his friends.

Andrew sighs and is quiet. He is pining to speak but his shyness gags him.

Thomas, Philip, Matthew and Nathanael are speaking in low voices in a comer, with the respect due to real sorrow.

James of Zebedee is praying, just intelligibly, that God may grant peace.

Simon Zealot, oh! how much I like his gesture! He leaves his corner and comes near the two distressed men, he lays one hand on Judas's head and with his other arm he embraces James' waist and says: « Don't cry, son. Jesus did say to us, to you and to me: “I am uniting you: you who are losing your father because of Me, and you who have a father's heart, without having any children.” And we did not understand how much of a prophesy there was in His words. But He knew. Now: I beg you. I am old and I always dreamt of being called “father”. Accept me as such, and I, as a father, will bless you every morning and evening. Please accept me as such. »

The two brothers nod in assent sobbing more loudly. Mary comes in and hastens towards the two sad men. She caresses Judas' dark head and James' cheeks. She is as pale as a lily. Judas takes Her hand, kisses it and asks: « What is he doing? »

« He is sleeping, son. Your mother sends you her kisses » and She kisses them both.

Peter's harsh voice bursts out: « Listen, come here a moment, I want to tell you something » and I see Peter get hold of an arm of the Iscariot with his strong hand and take him out in the street. And then he comes back in alone.

« Where did you send him? » asks Jesus.

« Where? To get some fresh air, or I would have ended up by giving him some myself, but in a different way… and I did not do it only because of You. Oh! I feel better now. Who laughs in the presence of sorrow is an asp, and I crush snakes. You are here… and I only sent him out in the moonlight. It may well be… but I will become even a scribe, a change that only God can work in me, as I hardly know that I am in this world, but he… he will not become good, not even with the help of God. Simon of Jonas can assure You, and I am not mistaken. No! Don't worry! He could not believe that he was getting away from a sad situation. He is more arid than a flint-stone in the sun in August. Come on, boys! There is a Mother here that not even Heaven has a sweeter one. There is a Master here Who is more loving than Paradise, and there are so many hearts that sincerely love you. Storms do a lot of good: they clear away the dust. Tomorrow you will be fresher than flowers, swifter than birds, to follow our Jesus. »

And it all ends on these simple good words of Peter.

Then Jesus says:

« After this vision you will put the one I gave you in spring 1944, the one in which I asked My Mother Her impression on the apostles. By now their moral characters are sufficiently clear to allow that vision to be put here without scandalising anybody. I did not need anybody's advice. But when we were alone, and the disciples were scattered among friendly families or in nearby villages, when I stopped in Nazareth, how pleasant it was to speak to and ask advice of My kind Friend: My Mother, and have confirmation from Her graceful wise lips of what I had already seen. I have never been anything but “Her Son” with Her. And among those born of woman there was never a mother more “mother” than She, in all the perfections of human and moral motherly virtues, neither was there a son more “son” than I with regard to respect, confidence and love.

And now that you also have had at least a little knowledge of the Twelve, of their virtues, faults, characters, struggles, is there still anyone who believes that it was an easy task for Me to keep them together, elevate and perfect them? And is there still anyone who considers the life of an apostle to be easy, and that to be an apostle or, as very often is the case, to consider oneself such, one is entitled to a smooth life, free from sorrows, contrasts, defeats? Is there still anybody who, only because he serves Me, expects Me to be his servant and to work miracles uninterruptedly in his favor, making his life as beautiful as a flowery carpet, easy and glorious from a human point of view? My way, My work, My service is the cross, sorrow, abnegation, sacrifice. I did that. Let those who say that they are “My” friends do the same. The above is not for the Johns,

but for discontented and difficult doctors. And also for doctors of captious objections I say that I made use of the words: uncle and aunt, which are unusual in Palestinian languages, to clarify and settle a disrespectful question concerning My condition of only-begotten Son of Mary and the Virginity of My Mother prae – and postpartum; She in fact had Me through spiritual divine union, and let Me repeat it once again, She knew no other union, neither did She give birth to any other child: Inviolate Flesh, which even I did not rend, closed on the mystery of a tabernacle-womb, the throne of the Trinity and of the Incarnate Word. »

101. Jesus Questions His Mother about His Disciples.

The evening of 13th February 1944.

About two hours after the above vision, I now see the house of Nazareth. I recognize the room of the farewell, open on to the little kitchen garden, where the plants are all covered with leaves.

Jesus is with Mary. They are sitting beside each other on the stone bench set against the wall. It looks as if they have already had their supper and that Mother and Son are taking delight in a sweet conversation, while the others have already withdrawn, if there are other people, as I do not see anybody. My internal voice informs me that it is one of the first times that Jesus goes back to Nazareth after His Baptism, His fasting in the desert and above all, after the formation of the apostolic college. He tells His Mother of His first days of evangelization, and the first hearts He conquered.

Mary is hanging on the words of Her Jesus. Mary is thinner and paler, as if She had suffered during this period of time. Two dark shadows have formed under Her eyes, as if She had been crying and worrying a great deal. But now She is happy and smiling. She smiles caressing Her Jesus' hand. She is happy to have Him there, talking heart to heart with Him in the silence of the oncoming evening.

It must be summer time, because the fig tree already has its first ripe fruits, which stretch out as far as the house and Jesus, standing up, picks some and gives the best ones to His Mother, peeling them carefully and offering them in the crown of skins pulled down inside out, as if they were white buds streaked in red, amidst a corolla of petals white inside and violet outside. He offers them in the palm of His hand and smiles seeing that His Mother relishes them.

Then He asks Her point blank: « Mother, have You seen the disciples? What do You think of them? »

Mary, Who is about to put a third fig to Her mouth, starts, withholds Her hand, lifts Her head and looks at Jesus.

« What do You think of them now that I have shown them all to You? » urges Jesus.

« I think that they love You and that You will get much out of them. John… Love John, as You know how to love. He is an angel. I do not worry when I think that he is with You. Peter, too… is good. Somewhat harder, because he is older, but sincere and convinced. And his brother, too. They love You as best as they can, just now. Later, they will love You more. Also our cousins, now that they are convinced, will be faithful to You. But the man from Kerioth… I do not like him, Son. His eye is not crystal-clear and his heart even less so. He frightens Me. »

« He is full of respect for You. »

« Too much respect. He is full of respect also for You. But not for you, the Master; for You the future King, from Whom he hopes to receive wealth and glory. He was a nobody, just a little more than the others at Kerioth. He hopes to play an important role at Your side and… Oh! Jesus! I do not want to be uncharitable, but I think, even if I do not want to believe it, that in case You should disappoint him, he will not hesitate to take Your place, or endeavor to do so. He is ambitious, greedy and vicious. He is more suitable to be the courtier of a worldly king, than Your apostle, My Son. He frightens Me! » And the Mother looks at Jesus with two eyes full of dismay in Her pale face.

Jesus sighs. He ponders. He looks at His Mother. He smiles to encourage Her. « Also that is needed, Mother. If it were not he, it would be someone else. My College must represent the world, and in the world they are not all angels, neither are they all of the same character as Peter and Andrew. If I chose everything perfect, how could the poor diseased souls dare hope to become My disciples? I have come to save what is lost, Mother. John is saved as he is. But

how many are not! »

« I am not afraid of Levi. He redeemed himself because he wanted to. He forsook his sin and his customs desk and acquired a new soul to come with You. But Judas of Kerioth did not. On the contrary, pride is becoming more and more the master of his ugly old soul. But You already know that, Son. Why do You ask Me? I can but pray and cry for You. You are the Master. Also of Your poor Mother. »

The vision ends here.

102. Cure of Johanna of Chuza near Cana.

8th February 1945.

The disciples are having their supper in Joseph's large workshop. The big bench serves as a table, on which there is everything that is needed. But I see that the workshop is used also as a dormitory. The other two carpenter's benches have been changed into beds by placing mats on them, and little low beds (mats on hurdles) have been placed along the walls. The apostles are speaking to one another and to the Master.

« So You are really going up to Lebanon? » asks the Iscariot.

« I never promise what I am not going to keep. In this case I promised twice: the shepherds and Johanna of Chuza's nurse. I have waited for five days as I told her, and I have added today for prudence' sake. But now I am going. We shall start as soon as the moon rises. It will be a long way even if we go by boat as far as Bethsaida. But I want My heart to rejoice, greeting also Benjamin and Daniel. You have seen what souls the shepherds have. Oh! It is well worthwhile going to honor them, because not even God lowers Himself by honoring one of His servants, on the contrary He increases His justice. »

« In this heat? Watch what You are doing. I am telling You for Your own sake. »

« Nights are already less sultry. The sun will be in Leo only for a short time now, and the storms are mitigating the heat. And I tell you once again. I am not compelling anyone to come. Everything must be spontaneous in Me and around Me. If you have business to attend to, or if you feel tired, stay here. We will meet later. »

« Well, You said so. I have to attend to some family matters. Vintage time is near and my mother asked me to see certain friends… You know, I am the head of the family, after all. I mean: I am the man in the family. »

Peter grumbles: « It is a good thing that he remembers that a mother always comes first after a father. » Judas, whether he does not hear or he does not want to hear, shows no sign that he has heard the grumbling, which in any case Jesus checks by casting a glance, while James of Zebedee, who is sitting near Peter, gives a tug at his tunic to make him keep quiet.

« You may go, Judas. Nay, you must go. We must never be wanting in obedience to our mothers. »

« Well, I will go at once, if You allow me. I will be at Nain in time to find accommodation. Goodbye, Master. Goodbye, friends. »

« Be the friend of peace and deserve always to have God with you. Goodbye » says Jesus, whereas the others say goodbye all together.

There is not much grief at seeing him depart, on the contrary… Peter, perhaps because he is afraid that he may change his mind, helps him to tie the straps of his bag and to sling it across his back, he takes him to the door of the workshop, which is already open like the other door opening on to the kitchen garden, obviously to ventilate the sultry room after a very hot day. He remains at the door looking at Judas going away, and when he sees that he is really departing, he makes a gesture of joy and of ironical farewell and comes back in rubbing his hands. He says nothing… but has already said everything. Some of the disciples who have been watching, laugh up their sleeves.

But Jesus does not notice them, because He is scanning the face of His cousin James, who has blushed and looks grave, and has stopped eating his olives. He asks him: « What is the matter? »

« You said: “We must not lack obedience to our mother…” What about us, then? »

« Have no scruples. As a general rule that is how one must behave. When one is but a man and a child of the same flesh. But not when one has taken another nature and a different paternity. Such higher paternity is to be followed in its orders and desires. Judas came before you and Matthew… but he is still so far behind. He must form, and he will do so very slowly. You must all be charitable to him, you, too, Peter, be charitable! I understand… but I say to you: be charitable. To tolerate bothersome people is not an easy virtue. Make use of it. »

« Yes, Master… But when I see him so… so… Well, be quiet, Peter, because in any case He understands… I seem to be a sail too taut because of the wind… I creak under the stress, and something always breaks within me… But You know, or rather, You do not know because You are worth nothing as a boatman, so I tell You, if all the sheets of a sail snap because of excessive tension, I can assure You that the sail gives the stupid boatman such a slap, that it stuns him… Now I feel that… I risk having all the sheets broken… and then… It is better, yes, if now and again he goes away. So the sail droops because of lack of wind and I have time to reinforce the sheets. »

Jesus smiles and shakes His head, pitying the just and fiery Peter.

A loud noise of ironshod hooves and the shouting of children is heard in the street. « He is here! He is here! Stop, man. » And before Jesus and the disciples become aware of what is happening, the dark body of a horse steaming with sweat appears before the door, a horseman dismounts, dashes in and prostrates himself at Jesus' feet, kissing them with veneration.

They all look at him quite amazed. « Who are you? What do you want? »

« I am Jonathan. »

Joseph responds with a cry: as, sitting behind the high bench, and, because of the flashing arrival, it had been impossible for him to recognize his friend. The shepherd rushes toward the prostrated man: « You, it is you!… »

« Yes. I am worshipping my beloved Lord! Thirty years of hope, oh! What a long wait! Here: those years have now blossomed like the flower of a solitary agave, all of a sudden, in a blissful ecstasy, even more blissful than the one of long ago! Oh! My Savior! »

Women, children and some men, amongst whom also good Alphaeus of Sarah, still holding a piece of bread and cheese in his hand, gather at the door and even inside the large room.

« Stand up, Jonathan. I was about to come and look for you, Benjamin and Daniel… »

« I know… »

« Stand up, that I may give you the kiss that I gave your friends. » Jesus forces him to stand up and kisses him.

« I know » repeats the robust old man, who is well preserved and well dressed. « I know. She was right. It was not the delirium of a dying person! Oh! Lord God! How a soul hears and perceives You, when You call it! » Jonathan is moved. But he recovers. He does not waste time. Full of adoration and yet active, he comes to the point.

« Jesus, our Savior and Messiah, I have come to beg You to come with me. I have spoken to Esther and she told me… But earlier, Johanna had spoken to You and she told me… oh! do not laugh at a happy man, you who hear me, for I am happy and yet distressed, until I hear You say “I will come.”

You know that I was travelling with my dying mistress. What a journey! It was quite good from Tiberias to Bethsaida. But after we left the boat and took a wagon, although I had fitted it out as well as I could, it was a torture. We travelled slowly, by night, but she suffered. At Caesarea Philippi she was on the point of death, vomiting blood. We stopped… The third morning, seven days ago, she sent for me. She was so pale and exhausted, that she looked as if she were already dead. But when I called her, she opened her mild eyes, like those of a dying gazelle and smiled at me. With her little ice-cold hand she beckoned me to bend down, her voice being so weak, and she said to me: “Jonathan, take me home. But at once.” Her effort in giving the order was so great that, although she is always more gentle than a good little child, her cheeks turned scarlet and for a moment her eyes brightened up. She continued: “I dreamed of my house at Tiberias. There was in it One Whose face was like a star, He was tall, fairhaired, His eyes were as blue as the sky and His voice sweeter than the sound of a harp. He was saying to me: 'I am the Life. Come. Come back. I am waiting for you to give you it'. I want to go.” I said: “My mistress! You cannot! You are not well! When you are better, we will see.” I thought it was the delirium of a dying person. But she was weeping and then… – oh! it is the first time she said so during the six years that she had been my mistress, and she even sat up in her

anger, whereas before she could not move – and then she said to me: “Servant, I want to go. I am your mistress. Obey!” and she then fell back vomiting blood. I thought she was dying… and I said: “Let us make her happy. She will die one way or the other!… I will feel no remorse for displeasing her at the end, after pleasing her all the time.” What a journey! She would not rest except in the morning between the third and the sixth hour. I wore the horses out to come quickly. We arrived at Tiberias today at the ninth hour… And Esther told me… I then understood that it was You Who had called her. Because that was the hour and the day You promised Esther a miracle and You appeared to the soul of my mistress. She wanted to start again immediately after the ninth hour and she sent me on first… Oh! come, my Savior! »

« I will come at once. Faith deserves a reward. Who wants Me, will have Me. Let us go. »

« Wait. I threw a purse of money to a young man, saying: “Three, five, as many donkeys as you like, if you have no horses, and at once, at Jesus' house.” They are about to come. We will be quicker. I hope to meet her near Cana. If at least… »

« What, Jonathan? »

« If at least she is alive… »

« She is alive. But even if she were dead, I am the Life. Here is My Mother. »

The Virgin, Who has obviously been informed by someone, is hastening towards them followed by Mary of Alphaeus. « Son, are You going away? »

« Yes, Mother. I am going with Jonathan. He has come. I knew I would be able to let You see him. That is why I waited an extra day. »

Jonathan at first has bowed down deeply, with his arms crossed over his chest, he now kneels down and lightly lifts the hem of Mary's dress and kisses it saying: « I salute the Mother of my Lord! »

Alphaeus of Sarah says to the curious onlookers: « Oh! What do you say? Should we not be ashamed of being the only faithless ones? »

The noise of many hooves is heard in the street. It is from the little donkeys. I think that all the donkeys in Nazareth are there, and they are so many that they would be sufficient for a squadron. While Jonathan picks the best and negotiates, paying without haggling over the price, and takes two Nazarenes with some more donkeys, lest some might lose a shoe, and that the two men might bring back all the braying herd of donkeys, Mary and the other Mary help to close the haversacks and sacks.

Mary of Alphaeus says to her sons: « I will leave your beds here. And I will caress them… And I will feel as if I were caressing you. Be good, worthy of Jesus, sons… and I… I will be happy… » and in the meantime she is shedding large tears.

Mary instead helps Jesus and caresses Him lovingly, giving Him much advice and many messages for the other two Lebanese shepherds, because Jesus states that He will not be back until He finds them. They depart. It is evening and the first quarter of the moon is rising now. Jesus is in front with Jonathan, all the others are behind. While they are in town they go at a walking pace, because of the people gathering near them. But as soon as they are out, they break into a gallop, while the caravan resounds with hooves and harness bells.

« She is in the wagon with Esther » explains Jonathan. « Oh! My mistress! What a joy to make you happy! To bring Jesus to you! Oh! my Lord! To have You here, beside me! To have You! Your face is really like the star that she saw and Your hair is fair and Your eyes like the sky and Your voice is really the sound of a harp… oh! But Your Mother! Will You bring Her to my mistress, one day? »

« Your mistress will come to Her. They will be friends. »

« Will they? Oh!… Yes, she can. Johanna is married and had a child. But her soul is as pure as a virgin's. She can be near the blessed Mary. »

Jesus turns round because of a hearty laugh from John, which all the others imitate.

« It's me, Master, that makes them laugh. On the boat I am more steady than a cat… but here! I am like a barrel left loose on the deck of a boat caught in a southwest wind » says Peter.

Jesus smiles and encourages him, promising that the trot will soon be over.

« Oh! It's all right. It's all right if the boys laugh. Let us go and make this good woman happy. » Jesus turns round again at another outburst of laughter. Peter exclaims: « No, I will not tell You that one, Master. But why not? Yes, I will tell

You. I was saying “Our prime minister will bite his fingers when he finds out that he was absent when there was the possibility of strutting about with a lady of rank.” And they laugh. But it is so. I am sure that if he had imagined that, he would not have had paternal vineyards to look after. »

Jesus does not reply.

The road is quickly covered by the well-fed little donkeys. Cana is soon left behind them in the clear moonlight.

« If You allow me, I will go ahead. I will stop the wagon. Its jolting makes her suffer so much. »

« Yes, go. »

Jonathan puts his horse to the gallop.

They go a long way in the moonlight. Then they meet the dark shape of a large covered wagon, stopped at the roadside. Jesus spurs His donkey which breaks into a canter. He is now near the wagon and dismounts.

« The Messiah! » announces Jonathan.

The old nurse rushes out of the wagon on to the road, and then throws herself down on to the dust.

« Oh! save her! She is dying. »

« Here I am. » And Jesus climbs into the wagon, where there is a pile of cushions and a slender body on them. There is a little lamp in a comer, and cups and amphoras. A young maid servant is weeping, while wiping the cold perspiration from the dying woman. Jonathan hastens in with one of the wagon lamps.

Jesus bends over the unconscious woman, who is really dying. There is no difference between the whiteness of her linen dress and the palor, which is even faintly bluish, of her emaciated hands and face. Only her thick eyebrows and her very dark long eyelashes give some color to the snow white face. Her cheeks do not even have the ominous bright scarlet of consumptives. Her lips are only a shade of violet pink, half open while breathing is difficult.

Jesus kneels down beside her and watches her. The nurse takes her hand and calls her. But her soul, already on the threshold of death, does not give any response.

The disciples have arrived with the two young men from Nazareth and they gather round the wagon. Jesus lays His hand on the forehead of the dying woman, who for one instant opens her dimmed hazy eyes and then closes them again.

« She no longer hears » moans the nurse. And she cries louder.

Jesus makes a gesture: « Mother, she will hear. Have faith. » He then calls her: « Johanna! Johanna! It is I! I am calling you. I am the Life. Look at Me, Johanna.»

The dying woman opens her large dark eyes with a brighter glance and looks at the face bending over her. She shows joy and smiles. She slowly moves her lips forming a word which, however, has no sound.

« Yes. It is I. You have come and I have come. To save you. Can you have faith in Me? »

The dying woman nods her head. All her vitality and all the words which she is unable to express otherwise are concentrated in her glance.

« Well (Jesus, while still kneeling down and holding His left hand on her forehead, straightens Himself up, exerting His Heavenly power) Well: I want it. Be cured. Rise. » He removes His hand and stands up.

A fraction of a second, then Johanna of Chuza, without any help whatsoever, sits up, gives a cry and throws herself at Jesus' feet, calling in a loud happy voice: « Oh! To love You, my Life. Forever! Yours! Forever Yours! Nurse! Jonathan! I am cured! Oh! Quick! Run and tell Chuza. That he may come to adore the Lord! Oh! bless me again, and again, and again! Oh! My Savior. » She weeps and smiles, kissing Jesus' tunic and hands.

« Yes, I bless you. What else shall I do for you? »

« Nothing, Lord. Beside loving me and allowing me to love You. »

« And would you not like to have a child? »

« Oh! a child!… Do as You please, Lord. I leave everything to You: my past, my present and my future. I owe You everything and I give You everything. Give to Your servant, what You know is better. »

« Eternal life then. Be happy. God loves you. I am going. I bless You, and I bless you all. »

« No, my Lord. Stop in my house, which now is, oh! is really a flowery rose-garden. Allow me to go back in there with You… Oh! How happy I am! »

« I will come. But I have My disciples. »

« My brothers, Lord. Johanna will have for them, as for You, food and drinks and every refreshment. Make me happy! »

« Let us go. Send the donkeys back and follow us on foot. The road is a short one now. We shall go slowly, that you may follow us. Goodbye, Ishmael and Aser. Give My greetings to My Mother, on My behalf, and to My friends. »

The two Nazarenes, dumbfounded, depart with their braying donkeys, whereas the wagon starts its return journey, this time with its load of joy. The disciples follow in group making their comments. And it all ends.

103. Jesus on Lebanon with the Shepherds Benjamin and Daniel.

10th February 1945.

Jesus is walking beside Jonathan along a green shady embankment. The apostles are behind talking among themselves. But Peter parts from them and comes forward and, as frank as usual, he asks Jonathan: « But was the road to Caesarea Philippi not quicker? We have taken this one… but when will we arrive? You went that way with your mistress, didn't you? »

« With an invalid I dared everything. But you must realize that I am a courtier of Antipas, and Philip after that filthy incest, does not approve of Herod's courtiers… You know, I am not afraid for myself. But I do not want to cause trouble to you, and particularly to the Master, and make enemies for you. In Philip's Tetrarchy, the Word is required, as in Antipas'… and if they hate you, how will you manage? On your way back you can come this way, if you prefer to do so. »

« I praise your prudence, Jonathan. But coming back I intend passing through the Phoenician region » says Jesus.

« They are enveloped in the darkness of errors. »

« I will call at the border areas to remind them that there is a Light. »

« Do you think that Philip would revenge himself on a servant for the wrong he received from his brother? »

« Yes, Peter. They are both alike. They are dominated by the lowest instincts and they make no distinction. They seem animals, not men, believe me. »

« And yet he should be fond of us, that is, of Him, a relative of John's. John after all spoke in his name and on his behalf, when he spoke in the name of God. »

« He would not even ask you where you came from or who you are. If you were seen with me, if he recognized me or if I was pointed out to him by an enemy of Antipas' household as the servant of his Procurator, you would be imprisoned at once. If you knew how much mud there is behind purple dresses! Revenge, abuse of power, betrayals, lust, thefts are the nourishment of their souls. Souls? … Well! Let us say so. I think they have no souls any longer. You can see. It ended well. But why was John freed? Because of a feud between two court officials. One, to get rid of the other, who was so favored by Antipas that John was placed in his custody, for a sum of money opened the jail at night… I think he must have dulled his rival's senses with a drugged wine, and the following morning… the poor fellow was beheaded in place of the Baptist who had escaped. Disgusting, I tell you. »

« And your master stays there? He seems to be a good man. »

« He is. But he cannot do otherwise. His father and his grandfather were at the court of Herod the Great, and the son was compelled to be there. He does not approve. But he can only keep his wife away from that vicious court. »

« Could he not say: “You are disgusting” and go away? »

« He could. But, although he is so good, he is not yet capable of such a deed. It would almost certainly mean death. And who is anxious to die because of his soul's honesty, elevated to the highest degree? A saint like the Baptist. But we, poor people! »

Jesus, Who has allowed them to speak among themselves, comes in: « Before long in all known areas of the world the saints happy to die for such fidelity to Grace and for the love of God will be as thick as flowers on a meadow in April. »

« Really? Oh! I would like to greet those saints and say to them: “Pray for poor Simon of Jonas!” » says Peter.

Jesus looks steadfastly at him smiling.

« Why are You looking at me like that? »

« Because you will see them as their assistant and you will see them when they assist you. »

« For what, Lord? »

« To become the Stone consecrated by the Sacrifice, on which My Testimony will be celebrated and built. »

« I do not understand You. »

« You will understand. »

The other disciples, who have come near and have listened, talk among themselves.

Jesus turns round: « I solemnly tell you that you will all be tested by one torture or another. For the time being it is the renunciation of comfort, of affections, of material profit. Afterwards it will be a greater and greater thing, up to the sublime thing that will crown you with an immortal diadem. Be faithful. And you will all be faithful. And that is what you will have. »

« Will the Jews, the Sanhedrin, perhaps kill us because of our love for You? »

« Jerusalem washes the thresholds of its Temple in the blood of its Prophets and its Saints. But also the world is waiting to be washed… There are many temples of dreadful gods. They will in future be temples of the true God, and the leprosy of paganism will be cleansed by the lustral water made with the blood of martyrs. »

« Oh! Most High God! Lord! Master! I am not worthy of so much! I am so weak! Afraid of evil! Oh! Lord!… Either send away Your useless servant or give me strength. I would not like to make You cut a poor figure with my cowardice. » Peter has thrown himself at the feet of the Master and He really implores Him with heartfelt words.

« Stand up, My dear Peter. Do not be afraid. You still have a long way to go… and the time will come when you will wish only to endure your final trial. And then you will have everything, both from Heaven and from yourself. I will be looking at you full of admiration. »

« You say so… and I believe it. But I am such a poor man! »

They resume walking…

… and after a long interruption I begin to see again when they have already-left the plain to climb up a very high wooded mountain. Probably it is not even the same day, because whilst then it was a very torrid morning, now a beautiful dawn causes tiny liquid diamonds to sparkle on all the stems. Endless coniferous forests have been left behind and they dominate from their height and like green cathedrals they receive the untiring pilgrims amongst their columns.

Lebanon is really a wonderful mountain chain. I do not know whether the whole chain is Lebanon or only this mountain. I know that I can see well-wooded mountain ranges rise in a high tangle of ridges and cliffs, of valleys and plateaux, along which torrents like light green-blue silver ribbons flow and then fall into the valleys. All kinds of birds fill the forests of conifers with their warblings and their flights, and the morning air is perfumed with the fragrance of resins. On turning towards the valley, or rather, to the west, one can see the wide, quiet, solemn sea, so pleasant to the view, and the coast, which stretches northwards and southwards, with its towns, its harbours, and the few water-courses, that flow into the sea, and look like shiny commas on the arid land, so scarce is their water which the summer sun dries up, and seem yellowish finger marks on the blue sea.

« These are lovely places » remarks Peter.

« And it is not even very warm » says Simon.

« The sun is no trouble because of the trees » adds Matthew.

« Did they get the Temple cedars here? » asks John.

« Yes, they did. These forests yield the most beautiful wood. Daniel and Benjamin's master owns many of them as well as large herds. They saw the trunks on the spot and then carry them down to the valley along those gullies or by strength of arms. It is hard work when the trunks are to be used totally undressed, as was so in the case of the Temple. But he pays well and many work

for him. And then he is quite good. He is not like cruel Doras. Poor Jonah! » replies Jonathan.

« Why are his servants almost slaves? When I said to Jonah: “Leave him in the lurch and come with us. Simon of Jonas will always have some bread for you”; he replied: “I cannot, unless I redeem myself.” What is the situation? »

« Doras, and he is not the only one in Israel, is used to doing this: when he sees a good servant, he makes him a slave by subtle cunning. He debits him with false amounts of money, which the poor man cannot pay, and when the sum is sufficient he says: “You are my slave by debt.” »

« Oh! What a shame! And he is a Pharisee! »

« Yes, as long as Jonah had some savings, he was able to pay… then… one year it was a hailstorm, the next year the drought. Corn and vineyards yielded little and Doras multiplied the damage by ten, and by ten again… Then Jonah was taken ill through excessive fatigue. And Doras lent him the money for the cure, but he exacted repayment twelve to one, and as Jonah could not pay, he added it to the rest. In short: after a few years there was a debt that made him a slave. And he will not let him go… He will always find other excuses and other debts… » Jonathan is sad thinking of his friend.

« And could your master not… »

« What? Have him treated as a human being? And who would go against the Pharisees? Doras is one of the most powerful ones; I think that he is also a relative of the High Priest… At least so they say. Once, when he was thrashed almost to death, and I was told, I wept so much that Chuza said to me: “I will redeem him to make you happy.” But Doras laughed in his face and would not accept anything. Eh! That rascal… He owns the best fields in Israel… but I can assure You: they are fertilised by the blood and tears of his servants. »

Jesus looks at the Zealot and the Zealot looks at Him. They are both grieved.

« And is Daniel's master good? »

« At least he is human. He exacts, but he does not oppress. And, as the shepherds are honest, he treats them with affection. They are responsible for the pastures. He knows and respects me because I am a servant of Chuza… and I may be useful to him… But why, my Lord, is man so selfish? »

« Because love was strangled in the earthly Paradise. But I have come to loosen the noose and to give life back to love. »

« Here we are in Elisha's estate. The pastures are still far away. But at this time the sheep are almost always in the folds because of the heat. I'll go and see if they are there. » And Jonathan runs away.

He comes back after some time with two robust grey-haired herdsmen, who really dash down the slope to meet Jesus.

« Peace to you. »

« Oh! Oh! Our Baby of Bethlehem! » says one, and the other: « May the peace of God, which has come to us, be blessed. » The two men are prone on the grass. The reverence paid to an altar is not so deep as the present reverence for the Master.

« Stand up. I reciprocate your blessing, and I am happy to do so because it descends joyfully on whoever is worthy of it. »

« Oh! We worthy! »

« Yes, you are, because you have always been faithful. »

« And who would not have been faithful? Who can forget that hour? Who can say: “It is not true what we saw?” Who can forget that You smiled at us for months, when we used to call You in the evening, when we came back with our sheep and you clapped your hands to the sound, of our pipes?… Do you remember, Daniel? Almost always dressed in white in Your Mother's arms, You appeared to us in the sun-rays in Anne's meadow or at the window, and You looked like a flower on Your Mother's Snowwhite dress. »

« And once You came, taking Your first steps, to caress a little lamb, not quite so curly as You! How happy You were! And we did not know what to do with our rustic persons. We would have liked to be angels to be less coarse… »

« Oh! My friends. I saw your hearts, and I still see them now. »

« And You smile at us as You did then! »

« And You came here to see us poor shepherds! »

« To My friends. I am happy now. I have found you all and I will not lose you any more. Can you give hospitality to the Son of man and His friends? »

« Oh! Lord! Do You have to ask us? We are not short of bread and milk. But if we had only one morsel, we would give it to You, to have You here with us. Is that right, Benjamin? »

« We would give You our hearts as food, our longed for Lord! »

« Let us go then. We shall speak of God… »

« And of Your relatives, Lord. Joseph, so good! Mary… Oh! She: the Mother! See, look at this dewy narcissus. It is beautiful and pure and its top is like a diamond star. But She… Oh! this flower is insignificant when compared to the Mother! A smile of Hers was purification, to meet Her was a feast, to listen to Her was to be sanctified. Do you remember Her words, too, Benjamin? »

« Yes, and I can repeat them for you. Because what She told us, during the months we could listen to Her, is written here (and he strikes his chest). It is the page of our wisdom. And we also understand it, because it is a word of love. And love… oh! love is understood by everybody! Come, Lord, come in and bless our happy abode. »

They enter a room near the large fold and it all ends.

104. Jesus in the Sea-Town Receives Letters Concerning Jonah.

11th February 1945.

Jesus is in the beautiful sea-town, which on the map has a natural wide and well-protected gulf, with a capacity for taking many ships, made even safer by a massive harbour wall. It must be used also a great deal for military purposes, because I see Roman triremes with soldiers on board. They are disembarking, though I do not know whether because they are relieving troops or because they are reinforcing the garrison. The harbour, that is the port, vaguely reminds me of Naples, dominated by the Vesuvian mountains.

Jesus is sitting in a humble house near the harbour. It is certainly the house of fishermen, probably friends of Peter and John, because I see that they feel at their ease in the house and with its residents. I do not see the shepherd Joseph. And, of course, I do not see the Iscariot, still absent. Jesus is speaking informally to the members of the family and to other people who have come to listen to Him. But it is not a real sermon. His words are full of advice and comfort, such as only He can give.

Andrew comes in, he seems to have gone out on some errand, because he also has some loaves in his hands. He blushes when drawing near, because it must be a real torture for him to attract people's attention to himself, and rather than speak he whispers: « Master, could You come with me? There… there is some good to be done. But only You can do it. »

Jesus gets up without even asking what is the good.

But Peter asks: « Where are you taking Him? He is so tired. It is supper time. They can wait for Him till tomorrow. »

« No… it must be done at once. It is… »

« Why don't you speak, you frightened gazelle? How can a great big strapping man be like that!… You look like a little fish caught in the net! »

Andrew blushes even more. Jesus defends him by drawing him to Himself. « I like him thus. Leave him alone. Your brother is like wholesome water. It works noiselessly in the depths, it comes out from the earth like a very fine stream, but it cures those who go near it. Let us go, Andrew. »

« I'm coming, too! I want to see where he takes You » insists Peter.

Andrew implores: « No, Master. Only You and I, alone. If there is a crowd it is impossible. It's a matter of love… »

« What's that? Are you playing the paranymph now? »

Andrew does not reply to his brother. He says to Jesus: « A man wants to repudiate his wife and… and I have spoken. But I am not capable. But if You speak… oh! You will succeed, because the man is not a bad person. He is… he is… he will tell You. »

Jesus goes out with Andrew without saying anything further.

Peter is somewhat undecided, he then says: « I will go. At least I want to see

where they go. » And he goes out, although the others tell him not to do so.

Andrew is about to come out from a narrow thronged street. And Peter follows him. He goes round a little square full of old women. And Peter follows him. He threads his way through a large door that opens on to a wide yard surrounded by poor little low houses. I call it a large door because there is an arch. But there is no door. And Peter follows him. Jesus enters one of the little houses with Andrew. Peter lies in wait outside. A woman sees him and asks: « Are you a relative of Aava? And those two? Have you come to take her away? »

« Be quiet, you cackle of a hen! I am not to be seen. »

To keep a woman quiet! It is a difficult task. And since Peter casts withering glances at her, she goes to chat with the other old women. Poor Peter is immediately surrounded by a circle of women, boys and also men, who simply by commanding one another to be silent, make a noise that gives away their presence. Peter is consumed with anger… but to no avail.

Jesus' full, calm, beautiful voice comes from inside the house, together with the broken voice of a woman and the hoarse voice of a man. « If she has always been a good wife, why repudiate her? Have you ever wronged him? »

« No, Master, I swear it! I have loved him like the pupil of my eye » moans the woman.

And the man, sharp and hard: « No. She never wronged me except in being sterile. And I want children. I don't want God's malediction on my name. »

« It is not your wife's fault, if she is such. »

« He lays the blame on me. On me and my relatives, as if we betrayed… »

« Woman, be sincere. Did you know that you were sterile? »

« No. I was and I am like all women. Also the doctor said so. But I am not successful in having children. »

« You can see that she has not betrayed you. She suffers for that, too. Will you answer sincerely, too: if she were a mother, would you repudiate her? »

« No. I swear it. There is no reason. But the rabbi said so, and also the scribe: "A barren woman is the curse of God on a house and it is your right and duty to give her a divorce libel and not to vex your virility by depriving yourself of children." I am doing what the Law states. »

« No. Listen. The Law says: "Do not commit adultery" and you are about to commit it. That is the original commandment and nothing else. And if on account of the hardness of your hearts Moses granted divorce, it was to prevent intrigues and concubinages hateful to God. Then your vice expanded more and more Moses' clause, creating the wicked chains and murderous stones which are the present lot of women, always victims of your arrogance, of your whims, of your deafness and your blindness to affections. I tell you: it is not legal to do what you want to do. Your action is an offence to God. Did Abraham perhaps repudiate Sarah? And Jacob, Rachel? And Elkanah, Anna? And Manoah, his wife? Do you know the Baptizer? You do? Well: was his mother not sterile up to her old age and then gave birth to the holy man of God, as Manoah's wife gave birth to Samson, and Anna of Elkanah to Samuel, and Rachel to Joseph, and Sarah to Isaac? To the husband's continence, to his compassion for his sterile wife, to his fidelity to marriage, God grants a prize, and a prize celebrated through centuries, as He grants consolation to the weeping sterile women, no longer sterile nor depressed, but glorious in the exultation of being mothers. You are not allowed to offend her love. Be just and honest. God will reward you beyond your merit. »

« Master, You are the only one to speak so… I did not know. I asked the doctors and they said to me: "Do it." But not one word to tell me that God rewards a good deed with gifts. We are in their hands… and they close our eyes and our hearts with an iron hand. I am not a bad man, Master. Don't be angry with me. »

« I am not angry. I feel sorry for you more than I do for this weeping woman. Because her pain will end with her life. Yours will begin then, to last forever. Think about it. »

« No, it will not begin. I don't want it to begin. Will You swear to me by the God of Abraham that what You say is the truth? »

« I am the Truth and Wisdom. Who believes in Me will have justice, wisdom, love and peace. »

« I want to believe You. Yes, I want to believe You. I feel there is something in You which is not in the others. Well. I will now go to the priest and I will say to him: "I am not going to repudiate her any longer. I will keep her and I will only ask God to help me to feel less the pain of being childless." Aava: do not cry.

We will ask the Master to come again to keep me good, and you… continue to love me. »

The woman cries louder, because of the contrast between her previous sorrow and her present joy.

Jesus instead smiles. « Do not cry. Look at Me. Look up woman. »

She looks up. She looks at His bright face through her tears.

« Come here, man. Kneel down beside your wife. I will now bless" you and sanctify your union. Listen: "Lord God of our fathers, Who made Adam with the dust of the soil and gave him Eve as a helpmate, that they might populate the earth with men, bringing them up in Your holy fear, descend with Your blessing and Your mercy, open and fecundate the womb that the Enemy had closed to lead them to a double sin of adultery and despair. Have mercy on these two children, Holy Father, Supreme Creator. Make them happy and holy. May she be as prolific as a vineyard, and he her protector, as the elm-tree supports the vine. Descend, o Life, to give life. Descend, o Fire, to inflame. Descend, o Power, to activate. Descend! Grant them that for the praise feast for the fruitful crops next year they may offer You their living sheaf, their first born, a son, sacred to You, Eternal Father, Who bless those who hope in You." » Jesus has prayed in a thundering voice, His hands stretched out over their bowed heads. The people no longer refrain themselves and they gather together, Peter in front of them all.

« Stand up. Have faith and be holy. »

« Oh! Stay, Master! » beg the reconciled couple.

« I cannot. I will come back. I will be here very often. »

« Stay, stay. Speak also to us! » shout the crowd. Jesus blesses but does not stop. He promises only to come back soon. And He goes to His hospitable house, followed by a small crowd.

« Inquisitive man: what should I do to you? » He asks Peter on the way.

« Whatever You wish. However, I was there… »

They enter the house, they dismiss the crowd that make comments on the words they heard, and they sit down to supper.

Peter is still inquisitive. « Master, will there really be a son? »

« Have you ever seen Me promise things which do not come true? Do you think that I would take the liberty of using the confidence in the Father to lie and deceive? »

« No… but… Could You do that to all married couples? »

« I could. But I do it only where I see that a son can be an incentive to holiness. I do not do it where it would be a hindrance. »

Peter ruffles his grizzled hair and becomes quiet.

The shepherd Joseph comes in. He is covered in dust like one who has walked a long way.

« You? Why are you here? » asks Jesus after a greeting kiss.

« I have some letters for You. Your Mother gave me them and one is from Her. Here they are. » And Joseph hands Him three small rolls of a kind of thin parchment, tied with a little ribbon. The largest one is also sealed. The second one has only a knot, the third one shows a broken seal. « This one is from Your Mother » says Joseph, pointing at the one with the knot. Jesus unfolds it and reads it. First in a low voice and then loud. « "To My beloved Son, peace and blessings. A messenger from Bethany arrived here at the first hour on the calends of the month of Elul. It was the shepherd Isaac, to whom I gave the kiss of peace and refreshments in Your name and out of gratitude on my part. He brought Me these two letters which I am sending on to You, and he told Me that Your friend Lazarus of Bethany presses You to consent to his request. My beloved Jesus, blessed Son and Lord, I also have two things to ask You. One is to remind You that You promised Me to call Your poor Mother to instruct Her in the Word. The other is that You should not come to Nazareth without speaking to Me first" »

Jesus stops all of a sudden, He stands up, and goes towards James and Judas. He embraces them tightly and ends repeating by heart the words: « “Alphaeus has returned to the bosom of Abraham at the last full moon, and great was the mourning of the town… » The two sons weep on Jesus' chest, Who goes on: « “At the last hour he wanted You. But You were far away. But it is a consolation for Mary, who considers it a sign of God's forgiveness, and it must give peace also to My nephews.” Have you heard? She says so. And She knows what She is saying. »

« Give me the letter » implores James.

« No, it would hurt you. »

« Why? What can it say more painful than the death of a father?… »

« That he cursed us » sighs Judas.

« No. Not so » says Jesus.

« You say so… not to pierce us. But it is so. »

« Read, then. »

And Judas reads: « “Jesus: I beg You, and also Mary begs You; do not come to Nazareth until the mourning is over. Their love for Alphaeus makes the Nazarenes unfair towards You and Your Mother cries because of that. Our good friend Alphaeus comforts Me and calms the town. The report by Aser and Ishmael on Chuza's wife caused a great stir. But Nazareth is now a sea agitated by different winds. I bless You, My Son, and I ask Your peace and blessing for My soul. Peace to My nephews. Mother”. »

The apostles make their comments and comfort the weeping brothers.

But Peter says: « Are You not reading those? »

Jesus nods assent and opens Lazarus' letter. He calls Simon Zealot. They read together, in a comer. They then open the other roll and read it as well, they discuss between themselves; and I see that the Zealot endeavors to persuade Jesus about something, but he is not successful.

Jesus, with the rolls in His hand, comes to the centre of the room and says: « Listen, friends. We are one family and there are no secrets among us. And if it is compassion to conceal evil, it is justice to make good known. Listen to what Lazarus of Bethany writes: “To Lord Jesus peace and blessing, and peace and health to my friend Simon. I received Your letter and, servant as I am, I placed my heart, my speech and all my means at Your service to make You happy and to have the honor of not being a useless servant. I went to Doras, to his castle in Judaea, to ask him to sell me his servant Jonah, as You wish. I confess that if I had not been requested by Simon, a faithful friend, on Your behalf, I would not have faced that mocking, cruel, impious jackal. But for You, my Master and Friend, I feel I can face also Mammon. Because I think that who works for You, is near You and consequently is protected. And I have certainly been helped, because, contrary to expectations, I won. The discussion was a hard one and his first refusals humiliating. Three times I had to bow down to that powerful slave-driver. He then forced me to wait some days. At last here is the letter. It befits the asp he is. And I almost dare not say to You: – Give in to gain Your ends –, because he is not worthy to have You. But there is no other way. I accepted on Your behalf and I signed. If I did the wrong thing, rebuke me. But believe me: I tried to serve You as well as I could. Yesterday a Judaean disciple of Yours came, stating that he came in Your name to find out whether there was any news to be taken to You. He said he was Judas of Kerioth. But I preferred to wait for Isaac to send the letter. And I was surprised that You had sent someone else, since You know that Isaac comes here every Sabbath to rest. I have nothing else to tell You. Only, kissing Your holy feet, I beg You to bring them to Your servant and friend Lazarus, as promised by You. Health to Simon. To You, Master and Friend, a kiss of peace and a prayer for blessing. Lazarus”.

And now the other one: “Health to Lazarus. I decided. You will have Jonah for twice the amount. But I make the following terms and I will not change them for any reason. I want Jonah to finish the harvests of the year, that is he will be handed over at the moon of Tishri, at the end of the moon. I want Jesus of Nazareth to come personally to take him, and I will ask Him to enter my house, that I may meet Him. I want payment immediately after signing the contract. Goodbye. Doras”. »

« What a pest! » shouts Peter. « But who is paying? I wonder how much he wants and we… we are always without a farthing! »

« Simon is paying. To make Me and poor Jonah happy. He is buying only the wreck of a man, who will not serve him at all. But he gains great merit in Heaven. »

« You? Oh! » They are all surprised. Even Alphaeus' sons forget their sorrow because of their amazement.

« It is he. It is just that it should be known. »

« It would also be just if it were known why Judas Iscariot went to Lazarus. Who sent him? Did You? »

But Jesus does not reply to Peter. He is very grave and pensive. He comes out of His meditation only to say: « Give some refreshment to Joseph and then let us go and rest. I will prepare a reply for Lazarus… Is Isaac still at Nazareth? »

« He is waiting for me. »

« We shall all go. »

« No. Your Mother says… » They are all in utter confusion.

« Be quiet. That is what I want. My Mother speaks with Her loving heart. I judge with My reason. I prefer to do it while Judas is away. And I want to hold out a friendly hand to My cousins Simon and Joseph, and mourn with them before the mourning is over. We will then go back to Capernaum, to Gennesaret, that is to the lake, awaiting the end of the month of Tishri. And we will take the Maries with us. Your mother needs affection. We will give it to her. And Mine needs peace. I am Her peace. »

« Do You think that at Nazareth?… » asks Peter.

« I do not think anything. »

« Oh! Well! Because, if they should hurt Her, or cause Her sorrow!… They will have to deal with me! » says Peter completely upset.

Jesus caresses him, but He is lost in thought. He is sad, I would say. He then goes between Judas and James and sits down embracing them to comfort them. The others speak in low voices not to disturb their sorrow.

105. Jesus Makes Peace with His Cousin Simon in the House of Mary of Alphaeus.

12th February 1945.

The sun is sinking in a bright red sunset, that like a fire about to go out, is becoming deeper and deeper until it becomes ruby-violet: a beautiful rare hue, that fading slowly, colors all the western sky, until it shades into the dark cobalt-blue sky, where the east is steadily advancing with its stars and its crescent moon, now beginning her second phase. Farmers are hastening back to their homes, where spirals of smoke from the low little houses in Nazareth reveal that fires have already been lit.

Jesus is about to go back to town, and contrary to the opinion of the others, He does not want anyone to go and inform His Mother.

« Nothing will happen. Why upset Her beforehand? » He says.

He is now in the streets. Some people salute Him, some whisper behind His back, some rudely turn their backs and slam their doors when the group of the apostles passes by.

Peter's miming is really wonderful. But also the others are somewhat worried. Alphaeus' sons look like two convicts. They are walking beside Jesus, their heads lowered, but they watch everything and now and again they look at each other dismayed and concerned for Jesus. The Master, as if nothing were the matter, reciprocates the greetings with His usual kindness, bends down to caress the children, who in their simplicity do not side with anybody, and are always the friends of their Jesus, Who is always so affectionate towards them.

One of them, a fine chubby child, four years old at most, leaves his mother's skirt, runs towards Him and stretches out his little arms saying: « Take me! » And as Jesus satisfies him and picks him up, the child kisses Him with his lips soiled by the fig he is eating, and then he carries his love to the point of offering a little morsel of the fig to Jesus saying: « Take it! It's good! » Jesus accepts the offering and smiles at being fed by the budding little man.

Isaac, laden with pitchers, is coming from the fountain. He sees Jesus, lays down the pitchers and shouts: « Oh! My Lord! » running towards Him. « Your Mother has just gone back home. She was at Her sister-in-law's. But… Have You received the letter? » he asks.

« That is why I am here. Do not say anything to Mother for the time being. I am going to Alphaeus' house first. »

Isaac, wise as he is, replies only: « I will obey You », he takes his pitchers and goes towards the house.

« We are going now. You, My friends, will wait for us here. I will not be long. »

« Most certainly not! We shall not enter the mourning house, but we will stay outside over there. Is that right? » says Peter.

« Peter is right. We will remain in the street. But near You. »

Jesus bows to their wish. But He smiles and says: « They will do Me no harm. Believe Me. They are not bad. They are only humanly passionate. Let us go. »

I see them in the street of the house and then at the entrance to the kitchen garden. Jesus goes in first, followed by Judas and James. Jesus is now on the kitchen threshold. Inside, near the fireplace, there is Mary of Alphaeus, who is cooking and weeping. In a comer, there are Simon and Joseph, with other men, sitting in a small group. Amongst the men there is Alphaeus of Sarah. They are sitting there, as silent as statues. It is probably their custom. I do not know.

« Peace to this house and peace to the soul which departed from it. »

The widow utters a cry and makes an instinctive gesture of pushing Jesus back and placing herself between Him and the others. Simon and Joseph stand up, gloomy and disconcerted. But Jesus pretends that He has not noticed their hostile attitude. He goes close to the two men (Simon looks as if he is already fifty years old or more) and stretches out His hands in a gesture of friendly invitation. The two brothers are more disconcerted than ever. But they dare not make any rude gesture. Alphaeus of Sarah is in a state of extreme agitation and is clearly suffering. The other men are expressionless awaiting the outcome.

« Simon, since you are now the head of the family, why do you not receive Me? I have come to mourn with you. How much I would have liked to be with you in the hour of sorrow! But I was far away, through no fault of Mine. You are a just man, Simon. And you must admit it. »

The man is still aloof.

« And you, Joseph, whose name is so dear to Me, why do you not accept My kiss? Will you not allow Me to mourn with you? Death unites true affections. And we love one another. Why should there now be disunity? »

« Because of You our father died a vexed man » says Joseph harshly. And Simon: « You should have stayed here. You knew that he was dying. Why did You not stay? He wanted You… »

« I could not have done more than what I had already done. And you know that… » Simon, who is more fair, says: « It is true. I know that You came and he sent You away. But he was ill and depressed. »

« I know and I said to your mother and your brothers: “I bear him no grudge, because I understand his heart.” But God is above everybody. And God wanted this sorrow for everybody. For Me, because, believe Me, I suffered as if a piece of My flesh had been torn from Me; for your father, who in his suffering understood a great truth, which had been obscure to him throughout his life; for you, as this pain gives you the opportunity of making a sacrifice which is more salutary than a sacrificed steer; and for James and Judas, who are now as mature as you, dear Simon, because this pain is their greatest burden and it oppresses them like a millstone, it has made them adults and of a perfect age in the eyes of God. »

« What truth did my father see? Only one: that his own blood, at the last hour, was hostile to him » replies Joseph harshly.

« No. He understood that the spirit is above blood. He understood the pain of Abraham and because of that he had Abraham to assist him » replies Jesus.

« I wish it were so! But who can assure us? »

« I can, Simon. And more than I, your father's death can. Did he not ask for Me? You said so. »

« I did. It is true. He wanted Jesus. And he used to say: “At least my soul would not die! He can do it! I sent Him away and He will not come any more. Oh! To die without Jesus! What a horrid man you are! Why did I reject Him?” Yes, that is what he said. He would also say: “And He asked me many times: 'Must I go?' and I sent Him away… Now He will not come any more.” He wanted You. Your Mother sent for You, but they could not find You at Capernaum and he cried so much. And with his last ounce of strength he took Your Mother's hand and wanted Her beside him. He could hardly speak. But he said: “The Mother is

somewhat the Son. I am keeping Her to have some of Him, because I am afraid of death." Poor father! »

There is an eastern scene with cries and gestures of sorrow, in which they all take part, also James and Judas who have dared to go in. Jesus is the most quiet, He weeps only.

« Are You shedding tears? You loved him, then? » asks Simon.

« Oh! Simon! Why do you ask Me? If I could have avoided it, do you think that I would have let him suffer? I am with the Father, but not above the Father. »

« You cure dying people, but You did not cure him » remarks Joseph bitterly.

« He did not believe in Me. »

« That is true, Joseph » points out his brother Simon.

« He did not believe and did not renounce his ill-feeling. There is nothing I can do when there is lack of faith and hatred. I therefore say to you: do not hate your brothers. Here they are. Their torture is not to be aggravated by your ill-feeling. Your mother is torn to shreds more by this living hatred, than by death that ends in itself, and in the case of your father, it ended in peace, because his desire to have Me gained him God's forgiveness. I am not speaking of Myself, neither am I asking anything for Myself. I am in the world, but I am not of the world. What is alive in Me, compensates Me for what the world denies Me. I suffer with My humanity, but I raise My spirit above the earth and I rejoice in celestial matters. But they!… Do not violate the law of love and blood. Love one another. In James and Judas there is no offence against their blood. But even if there were, you must forgive. Look at things in the right way and you will see that they are the most offended ones, as you do not understand the necessities of their souls enraptured by God. And yet they have no grudge, but only a desire for love. Is that right, My cousins? »

Judas and James, who are clasped in their mother's arms, nod while weeping.

« Simon, you are the oldest. Set the example… »

« I… as far as I am concerned… But the world… but You… »

« Oh! the world! It forgets and changes at each daybreak… And I! Come: give Me your brotherly kiss. I love you. You know I do. Divest yourself of those scales that make you hard and are not yours, but have been imposed by strangers not as just as you are. Always judge with your upright heart. » Simon, still somewhat reluctant, stretches out his arms. Jesus kisses him and then leads him towards his brothers. They kiss one another weeping and moaning.

« It is your turn now, Joseph. »

« No. Do not insist. I remember my father's suffering. »

« In actual fact you are perpetuating it by your grudging attitude. »

« It does not matter. I am faithful. »

Jesus does not insist. He addresses Simon: « It is late in the evening. But if you do not mind… Our hearts are burning with the desire to revere his remains. Where is Alphaeus? Where did you bury him? »

« Behind the house. Where the olive grove ends against the crag. A respectable sepulcher. »

« Please, take Me there. Mary, take heart. Your husband is jubilant because he sees your children in your bosom. Stay here. I am going with Simon. Be in peace! Joseph: I am saying to you what I said to your father: "I bear you no grudge. I love you. When you want Me, call Me. I will come and mourn with you." Goodbye. » And Jesus goes out with Simon…

The apostles look at them inquisitively. But they see that they are in perfect harmony and they are happy.

« Will you come, too » says Jesus. « They are My disciples, Simon. They wish to revere your father, too. Let us go. »

They walk through the olive-grove and it all ends.

Jesus says:

« Insert here the third and fourth visions given on 13th February 1944.

As you see, Simon, less obstinate, yielded to justice, if not completely, at least partially, with holy promptness. And after the meeting for Alphaeus' death, he did not become My disciple, never mind an apostle, as in your ignorance you

called him about a year ago, but at least he was a non-hostile spectator. He was also the guardian of his mother and of Mine, when they were to be escorted and defended from people's lampooning. But he was not so strong as to impose himself on those who called Me “insane”; and was still so much a man as to be a little ashamed of Me and to worry about dangers to the whole family, because of My apostolate against sects. But he is already on the right way. On which way, after the Sacrifice, he proceeded more and more steady until he professed his faith in Me with his blood. Grace at times operates instantaneously, at times slowly. But it always operates where there is a will to be just.

Go in peace. Be in peace in your sorrows. The time preparatory to Easter is beginning and you are to carry the Cross for Me. I bless you, Mary of Jesus' Cross. »

106. Jesus Is Driven Out of Nazareth and He Comforts His Mother. Reflections on Four Contemplations.

The evening of 13th of February 1944.

I see a large square room. I call it a large room, although I realise it is the synagogue in Nazareth (as my internal informant tells me) because there is nothing but the bare walls painted pale yellow and a sort of desk on one side. There is also a tall lectern with some rolls on it. Lectern or bookcase, call it as you wish. It is, in short, a kind of an inclined table, supported by one leg, and on which there are some rolls lined up. There are some people praying, but not as we pray, they are all facing on one direction, with their hands not joined, but approximately as a priest stands at the altar. Above the desk and the lectern there are some lamps.

I do not understand the reason for this vision, which does not change but remains fixed for some time. But Jesus tells me to write it and I do so.

I am once again in the synagogue in Nazareth. The rabbi is now reading. I hear his singsong nasal voice, but I do not understand the words, which are pronounced in a language unknown to me.

Amongst the people there is also Jesus with His apostle-cousins and with others who are obviously relatives, but I do not know them.

After the reading the rabbi looks at the crowd in a mute invitation.

Jesus comes forward and asks to preside at the meeting today. I hear His beautiful voice reading the passage of Isaiah quoted by the Gospel: The spirit of the Lord has been given to me... And I hear the comment He makes, calling Himself the bearer of the Gospel, of the law of love that replaces the previous rigour with mercy, so that health will be granted to all those who on account of the sin of Adam were diseased in their souls and indirectly also in their bodies, because sin always gives rise to vice and vice to bodily illness. Therefore all those who are prisoners of the Evil Spirit will be freed. I have come to break their chains, to reopen the way to Heaven, to give light to blind souls and hearing to deaf ones. The time of the Grace of the Lord has come. The Grace is amongst you and is speaking to you. The Patriarchs desired to see this day, the existence of which was proclaimed by the Most High and its time was foretold by the Prophets. And informed by a supernatural inspiration, they already know that the dawn of this day has risen and their entry to Paradise is now close at hand and they exult in their souls, saints who require only My blessing to be citizens of Heaven. You see it. Come to the light which has risen. Divest yourselves of your passions to be agile in following Christ. Have a good will to believe, to improve yourselves, to desire health and you will be given health. It is in My hands. But I only give it to those who have a good will to receive it. Because it would be an offence to Grace to give it to those who want to continue to serve Mammon.

A murmur runs through the synagogue. Jesus looks round. He reads on faces and into hearts and goes on: understand your thoughts. Because I am from Nazareth, you would like a privileged favour. But you want it not out of power of faith, but out of selfishness. So I solemnly tell you that no prophet is made welcome in his own country. Other countries have accepted Me and will accept Me with greater faith, also those, whose names are a scandal for you. There I will gather My followers, whereas I will not be able to do anything in this country, because it is closed and hostile to Me. But I wish to remind you of Elijah and Elisha. The former found faith in a Phoenician woman, the latter in a Syrian. And they were able to work a miracle for her and for him. The people dying of starvation in Israel and the lepers in Israel did not receive bread and cleanliness, because their hearts had not the good will, the fine pearl, that the Prophets could see. The same will happen also to you, who are hostile to and

incredulous of the Word of God.

The crowds become enraged, they curse and endeavour to lay hands on Jesus. But the apostle-cousins, Judas, James and Simon, defend Him and the enraged Nazarenes then hustle Jesus out of the town. They follow Him as far as the brow of the hill, threatening Him, not only with words. But Jesus turns round, immobilises them with His magnetic glance and walks through them uninjured and disappears along a mountain path.

I see a small, very small village. A handful of houses. A hamlet, as we would call it nowadays. It is higher up than Nazareth which can be seen below and it is only a few miles from it. A very poor hamlet.

Jesus is speaking to Mary sitting on a low wall near a little house. It is perhaps the house of friends or perhaps a hospitable one, according to the eastern laws of hospitality. And Jesus has taken shelter there after He was driven out of Nazareth, waiting for His apostles, who have certainly scattered through the countryside, while Jesus was with His Mother.

His three apostle-cousins are not with Him just now. They are inside, in the kitchen, and they are talking to an elderly woman whom Thaddeus calls mother. I thus understand that she is Mary of Clopas. She is a rather elderly woman and I recognise her as the vioman who was with the Mary, the mother of Jesus at the wedding at Cana. Mary of Clopas and her sons have certainly withdrawn there to leave Jesus and Mary free to speak.

Mary is distressed. She has heard what happened at the synagogue and she is sorrowful. Jesus comforts her. Mary entreats her Son to keep away from Nazareth, where everybody is ill-disposed towards Him, even their other relatives, who consider Him a madman anxious to give rise to ill-feeling and discussions. But Jesus makes a gesture smiling. He seems to be saying: It takes more than that! Never mind! But Mary insists.

He then answers: “Mother, if the Son of man should go only where He is loved, He should turn His step from this world and go back to Heaven. I have enemies everywhere. Because the Truth is hated, and I am the Truth. But I did not come to find easy love. I came to do the will of the Father and to redeem man. You are love, Mother, My love, that compensates Me for everything. You, and this little herd, which grows in numbers every day with some little sheep that I snatch from the wolves of passions and I lead to the fold of God. All the rest is duty. I have come to fulfill this duty and I must accomplish it even to the extent of crashing against the stony hearts unyielding to good. Nay, only after I have fallen, wetting their hearts with blood, I will soften them, stamping on them My Sign that will cancel the Enemy's sign. Mother, I descended from Heaven for that. I can only wish to accomplish that.”

“Oh! Son! My Son!” Mary's voice is heart-rending. Jesus caresses her. I notice that Mary is wearing on her head, besides a veil, also her mantle. She is more than ever veiled, like a priestess.

“I shall be away for some time, to make you happy. When I am nearby, I will send someone to inform you.

Send John. I seem to be seeing you, somehow, when I see John. Also his mother is full of care for me and for You. It is true that she hopes to have privileged positions for her sons. She is a woman and a mother, Jesus. We must bear with her. She will speak also to you about it. But she is sincerely affectionate. And when she is freed from the humanity which ferments in her as in her sons, as in the others, as in everybody, my Son, she will be great in her faith. It is painful that everybody should hope to receive worldly welfare from You, a welfare, that even if it is not human, is selfish. But sin is in them with its lust. The blessed hour, so much dreaded, although the love of God and of man makes me desire it, when You will cancel Sin, has not yet come.

“Oh! that hour! How Your mother's heart trembles because of that hour! What will they do to You, Son? Son Redeemer, of Whom the Prophets predict such a martyrdom?”

“Do not think about it, Mother. God will help you at that hour. God will help Me and you. And after there will be peace. I tell You once again. Now go, because it is growing dark and you have a long way to go. I bless you.”

Jesus says:

« Little John: much work today. But we are one day late and it is not possible to go slow. That is why I have given you strength today. I granted you the four contemplations to be able to speak to you of Mary's sorrows and Mine, in preparation for My passion. I should have spoken to you about them yesterday, Saturday, the day dedicated to My Mother. But I had pity on you. Today we

must make up for the time lost. After the sorrows which I have made known to you, Mary had also these. And I with Her.

My eyes had seen into the heart of Judas Iscariot. No one must think that the Wisdom of God has not been able to understand that heart. But, as I told My Mother, he was necessary. Woe to him for being the traitor! But a traitor was necessary. Deceitful, shrewd, greedy, lustful, dishonest, more intelligent and cultured than the masses, he had been able to impose himself on everybody. Daring as he was, he smoothed the way for Me, also when the way was a difficult one. He was above all fond of standing out and showing his position of trust near Me. He was not obliging out of instinctive charity, but only because he was one of those whom you would call a "hustler". That enabled him also to look after the purse and approach women. Two things which he loved without restraint, together with a third one: position amongst men.

The Pure, Humble Virgin, Detached from earthly wealth, could but feel disgust for that serpent. I felt disgust, too. And only I and the Father and the Spirit know what I had to overcome to be able to endure him at My side. But I will tell you later.

Likewise I was aware of the hostility of priests, Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees. They were shrewd foxes who endeavoured to drive Me into their dens to tear Me to pieces. They were thirsty for My blood. And they tried to set traps for Me everywhere to catch Me, to bring accusations against Me and get rid of Me. Their intrigue lasted three long years and it was appeased only when they learned that I was dead. They slept happily that night. The voice of the accuser had been silenced forever. That is what they thought. No. It was not yet dead. It will never be and it thunders and thunders and curses those who nowadays are like them. How much pain My Mother suffered through their fault! And I cannot forget that pain.

That the crowd was inconstant, was nothing new. It is the beast that licks the hand of the tamer if it is armed with a whip or offers a piece of meat to satisfy its hunger. But if the tamer falls and can no longer make use of the lash, or if he has no more food for its hunger, then it rushes at him and tears him to pieces. It is sufficient to tell the truth and to be good, to be hated by the crowd, after the first moment of enthusiasm. The truth is a reproach and a warning. Goodness deprives one of the lash and causes those who are not good to be no longer afraid. Thus: "crucify Him", after shouting: "hosanna". My life as a Master is overwhelmed by these two voices. And the last one was "crucify Him." The hosanna is like the deep breath taken by a singer before high notes. Mary, on Good Friday evening, heard once again within Herself all the false hosannas, which had turned into shouts for the death of Her Creature, and She was pierced by them. I will not forget that either.

The humanity of the apostles! How much of it! I was carrying in My arms, to lift them up to Heaven, stones which weighed down towards the earth. Even those who did not contemplate the possibility of becoming ministers of an earthly king, as Judas Iscariot did, those who did not think of coming to the throne in My place, if need be, as he did, were still eager for glory. The day came when also My John and his brother craved for that glory, that dazzles you like a mirage also in celestial matters. It is not the holy longing for Paradise, that I want you to have. But it is a human desire that your holiness may be known. Not only, but it is like the greediness of a money-changer, of a usurer, whereby, in exchange for a little love given to Him to Whom I told you that you must give yourselves entirely, you claim a place at His right hand side in Heaven.

No, My children. No. Before you must be able to drink all the chalice that I drank. All of it: with its charity given in return for hatred, its chastity against the allurements of sensuality, with its heroism in trials, with its holocaust for the love of God and one's brothers. Then, when you have fulfilled your duty completely, you must still say: "We are useless servants", and wait for My Father and yours to grant you, out of His goodness, a place in His Kingdom. You must strip yourselves, as you saw Me stripped in the Praetorium, of everything that is human, keeping only the indispensable, which is respect towards the gift of God, that is life, and towards your brothers to whom we may be more useful from Heaven than on the earth, and leaving to God to clothe you with the immortal stole, made immaculate in the blood of the Lamb.

I have shown you the sorrows preparatory to My Passion. I shall show you more. Although they are sorrows, your soul rested contemplating them. That is enough now. Be in peace. »

107. Jesus in the House of Johanna of Chuza with His Mother.

13th February 1945.

I see Jesus going towards the house of Johanna of Chuza. When the doorkeeper servant sees Who is arriving, he utters such a cry of joy that the entire household is astir. Jesus enters smiling and giving His blessing.

Johanna rushes from the garden full of flowers to throw herself at Jesus' feet and kiss them. Also Chuza comes, and he first bows down deeply and then kisses the hem of Jesus' tunic.

Chuza is a handsome man about forty years old. He is not very tall but well built, his hair is dark with only a tinge of silver-grey at his temples. His eyes are lively and dark, his complexion pale and his dark square-cut beard is well cared for.

Johanna is taller than her husband. The only trace of her recent illness is her remarkable slenderness, which, however, is less gaunt than before. She looks like a thin supple palm-tree crowned with her beautiful head with deep black most sweet eyes. She has a thick shock of raven black hair charmingly arranged. Her smooth large forehead looks even whiter under such genuine blackness and her well shaped little mouth stands out with its healthy red lips between soft pale cheeks, which are like petals of scarlet camellias. She is a beautiful woman… the one who gives the purse to Longinus on Calvary. Then she was weeping, distressed and completely covered by her veil. Now she is smiling and bareheaded. But it is she.

« To what do I owe the joy of having You as my guest? » asks Chuza.

« To My need of stopping to await My Mother. I am coming from Nazareth… and I have to make My Mother come with Me for some time. I will go to Capernaum with Her. »

« Why not here with me? I am not worthy, but… » says Johanna.

« You are well worthy. But My Mother is with Her sister-in-law, whose husband died a few days ago. »

« The house is large enough to receive more than one guest. And You have given me such joy that no part of it is precluded from You. Give Your orders, Lord, since You turned away death from this abode and You have given it back its gracefully blooming rose » says Chuza, supporting his wife, of whom he must be very fond. I understand that from the way he looks at her.

« I do not give orders. I accept. My Mother is tired and has suffered much recently. She is worried about Me, and I wish to show Her that there are people who love Me. »

« Well! Bring Her here, then! I will love Her as a daughter and a maid » exclaims Johanna. Jesus consents.

Chuza goes out to give the necessary orders at once and while the vision splits into two, leaving Jesus in the wonderful garden, intent on speaking to Chuza and his wife, I follow and see the arrival of the comfortable speedy wagon in which Jonathan has gone to Nazareth to bring Mary.

The town, of course, is in some confusion over the matter. And when Mary and Her sister-in-law, revered as two queens by Jonathan, climb into the wagon, after giving the key of the house to Alphaeus of Sarah, the fuss increases. The wagon leaves, while Alphaeus takes his revenge over the rough handling of Jesus in the synagogue, by saying: « Samaritans are better than we are! You have seen how a man of Herod's reveres His Mother!… Whilst we… ! I am ashamed of being a Nazarene. »

There is uproar between the two parties. Some desert from the opposition party and come towards Alphaeus and are profuse in their excuses.

« Of course » answers Alphaeus. « Guests in the house of the Procurator. You have heard what his steward said: “My master begs You to honor his house.” He is honored, see? And he is the rich and powerful Chuza, and his wife is a royal princess. And he is honored! And we, that is you, have thrown stones at Him. Shame! »

The Nazarenes do not reply and Alphaeus presses with greater vigour: « Of course, to have Him is to have everything! And no support of man is required. But do you think it is useless to have Chuza as a friend? Is it of good omen to be despised by him? Do you realize that he is the Procurator of the Tetrarch? That is nothing, is it? Play the Samaritans with Christ! You will draw upon yourselves the hatred of the mighty ones. And then… I will be glad to see you! Without help from Heaven or from the earth! Fools! Wicked misbelievers! » The storm of insults and rebukes goes on, while the Nazarenes go away dejected like beaten dogs. Alphaeus is alone at the door of Mary's house like an avenging

archangel…

It is late evening when on the road alongside the lake Jonathan's wagon arrives to the trot of strong horses. Chuza's servants, who were already on sentry-duty at the door, give the signal and they rush with lamps, thus adding to the moonlight.

Johanna and Chuza rush there. Also Jesus appears, smiling, with the group of the apostles behind Him. When Mary comes off, Johanna prostrates herself on the ground and salutes: « Praise to the flower of the royal family. Praise and blessing to the Mother of the Word Savior » and Chuza bows down so low, that he could not bow any lower not even before Herod, and he says: « Blessed be this hour that brings You to me. Blessed are You, Mother of Jesus. »

Mary replies kindly and humbly: « Blessed be Our Savior and blessed be the good people who love My Son. » They all enter the house, received with deep effusion of respect. Johanna is holding Mary's hand and smiles at Her saying: « You will allow me to serve You, will you not? »

« Not Me, but Him. Always serve and love Him. And you will have given Me everything. The world does not love Him… It is My grief. »

« I know. Why this dislike from one part of the world, whereas others would give their lives for Him? »

« Because He is the sign of contradiction for many. Because He is the fire that purifies metal. Gold is purified. The scum falls to the bottom and is thrown away. I was told since He was a little child… And day by day the prophecy is fulfilled… »

« Do not cry, Mary. We will love and defend Him » comforts Johanna.

But Mary continues Her silent weeping, which only Johanna can see in the semidark comer where they are sitting. It all ends.

108. Jesus at the Vintage in the House of Anna. Miracle of a Paralytic Child.

14th February 1945.

The whole country of Galilee is busy in the joyful vintage work. Men, climbing up high ladders, pick the grapes from pergolas and vines; women, their heads laden with baskets, take the golden and ruby grapes to where the crushers are waiting. Songs, burst of laughter, jokes are exchanged from hillock to hillock and from garden to garden. The smell of must is everywhere. Bees are humming and seem intoxicated, so fast do they fly about and dance from the remaining vine shoots, still laden with grapes, to the baskets and vats where the grapes sought by them get lost in the thick juice of the must. Children, their faces painted with juice like fauns, scream like swallows, running on the grass, in the yards and in the streets.

Jesus is going to a town not far from the lake. It is a town on the plain; it looks like a wide riverbed between two remote mountain ranges stretching northwards. The plain is well irrigated because a river (I think it is the Jordan) flows across it. Jesus is going along the main road and is cheered by many shouting: « Rabbi! Rabbi! » Jesus passes by and blesses.

Before the town there is a rich estate, at the entrance to which there is an elderly couple waiting for the Master. « Come in. When they finish working, they will all gather here to hear You. How much joy You bring us! It spreads from You as the lymph spreads through the shoots and becomes a joyful wine for our hearts. Is that Your Mother? » asks the landlord.

« Yes, She is. I brought Her here to you, because She also is now in the group of My disciples. The last to be received, the first in faithfulness. She is the Apostle. She preached Me even before I was born… Mother, come. One day, it was in the first times when I was evangelising, this mother did not make Me miss You, so kind she was to Your tired Son. »

« May the Lord grant you His grace, merciful woman. »

« I have grace, because I have the Messiah and You. Come. The house is cool and the light is not so bright. You will be able to rest. You must be tired. »

« My only tiredness is the hatred of the world. But to follow Him and listen to Him! It has been My desire since My earliest childhood. »

« Did You know that You were to be the future Mother of the Messiah? »

« Oh! no. But I hoped to live long enough to hear Him and serve Him, the last of His evangelized followers, but faithful! oh! faithful! »

« You now hear Him and serve Him. And You are the first. I am a mother, too,

and I have wise children. When I hear them speak, my heart leaps with pride. And what do You feel hearing Him? »

« A gentle ecstasy. I sink into My nothingness, and Goodness, which is He Himself, lifts Me up with Him. I then see in a simple glance the eternal Truth, and it becomes the blood and flesh of My spirit. »

« Blessed be Your heart! It is pure and that is why it can understand the Word. We are harder because we are full of faults… »

« I would like to give My heart to everybody for that, that love might enlighten you to understand. Because, believe Me, it is love, and I am the Mother and therefore love is natural in Me, it is love that makes all undertakings easy. »

The two women go on speaking, the old one near the ever so young Mother of my Lord, while Jesus talks to the landlord near the vats, into which the teams of vintagers pour the grapes. The apostles, sitting in the shade of a jasmin bower, enjoy bread and grapes with good appetite.

The sun is about to set and the work slowly comes to an end. The husbandmen are by now all in the large rustic yard, where there is a strong smell of crushed grapes. Other farmers have come from nearby houses.

Jesus climbs a little staircase that leads up to a gallery wing of the house, under which sacks of victuals and agricultural implements are stored. How Jesus smiles climbing those few steps! I see Him smiling while His soft hair is gently blowing in the evening breeze. I wonder why He is smiling so brightly. The joy of His smile, like the wine of which the landlord was speaking, enters my heart, very sad today, and comforts it.

(It is not the first thing that relieves me today. Even this morning, and you (1) saw me weeping because of a sharp spiritual sorrow, He, at Holy Communion, appeared to me as usual when you say: « Here is the Lamb of God ». But He did not just look at you lovingly, Father, and smile at me. He departed from your side, on the left hand side of the bed and passed to the right one, with His long, slightly rolling gait, caressing me with His long hands and saying: « Do not weep! »… But now His smile fills me with peace.)

He turns round. He sits down on the last step at the top of the stair-case, which becomes a gallery for the more fortunate listeners, that is the owners of the house, the apostles and Mary, Who, always humble, had not even tried to climb up to that place of honor, but is led there by the landlady. She is sat one step below Jesus, so that Her fair-haired head is at the height of Jesus' knees, and as She is sitting sideways, She can look at His face with Her look of a dove in love. Mary's delicate profile stands out neatly, as in marble, against the dark wall of the rustic gallery.

Farther down, there are the apostles and the owners. All the husbandmen are in the yard, some standing, some sitting on the ground, some have climbed on to the vats or up the fig trees which are at the four corners of the yard.

Jesus speaks slowly, sinking His hand into a large sack of corn placed behind Mary's back: He seems to be playing with the grain, or to be caressing it with pleasure, while gesticulating calmly with His right hand.

« I was asked: “Come, Jesus, to bless the work of man.” And I have come. I bless it in the name of God. Because, every work, if honest, deserves to be blessed by the eternal Lord. But I said it: the first condition to receive blessings from God is to be honest in all one's actions.

Now let us consider together when and how actions are honest. They are honest when they are done having eternal God present in one's soul. Can one ever sin if one says: “God is looking at me. God's eyes are on me and He does not miss the least detail of my actions”? No. One cannot. Because the thought of God is a salutary thought and diverts man from sin more than any human threat.

But must one only fear eternal God? No. Listen. You were told: “Fear the Lord your God.” And the Patriarchs and the Prophets trembled when the Face of God, or an angel of the Lord, appeared to their just souls. Truly, in time of divine wrath, the apparition of the Supernatural must make hearts tremble. Who, even if as pure as a child, does not tremble before the Powerful One, before Whose eternal brightness are the adoring angels, prostrated in the heavenly hallelujah? God mitigates with a veil of pity the unbearable refulgence of an angel to allow the human eye to look at it without having eyes and mind burned out. What must it therefore be to see God?

But it is so, as long as the wrath lasts. But when it is replaced by peace and the God of Israel says: “I have sworn it. And I will keep My pact. Here is He Whom I am sending, and it is I, although not being I, but My Word, Who becomes flesh to be Redemption”, then love must take the place of fear, and nothing but love is to be given to eternal God, joyfully, because the time of peace has come for the

earth and between God and man. When the first spring winds spread the pollen of the vine flowers, the farmer must still be watchful, because many injuries may be caused to the fruit by inclement weather and insects. But when the happy day of vintage comes, then all fears cease and hearts rejoice in the certainty of the harvest.

The Shoot of the stock of Jesse has sprung, preannounced by the Prophets. He is now amongst you: a rich bunch which brings you the juice of eternal Wisdom and only asks to be picked and squeezed to be Wine for men. A wine of endless delight for those who will feed on Him. But woe to those who having had this Wine within reach will reject it, and three times woe to those who after feeding on it will reject it or mix it within themselves with the food of Mammon.

And now I am going back to the first idea. The first condition to have God's blessing, both in spiritual and human deeds, is honesty of intentions.

He is honest who says: "I abide by the Law not to be praised by men, but out of loyalty to God." He is honest who says: "I follow Christ not because of the miracles He works, but for the advice of eternal life He gives me." He is honest who says: "I work not for a greedy gain, but because also work has been set by God as a means of sanctification on account of its formative, mortifying, preservative and elevating values. I work to be able to help my neighbor, I work to be able to make the wonders of God known, Who of a tiny grain makes a tuft of ears, of a grape-stone makes a huge vineyard, of a fruitstone makes a tree, and of me, a man, a poor nothing, who was made out of nothing by His will, He makes His assistant in the unremitting work of perpetuating cereals, vines and orchards, as well as populating the earth with men."

There are people who work as hard as pack animals, but their only religion is to increase their wealth. If their more unfortunate companion dies of privations and fatigue beside them; if the children of that poor man die of starvation, what does it matter to the greedy hoarder of riches? There are others, who even harder-hearted, do not work but make other people work and they accumulate wealth by their sweat. And others squander what they meanly extort from other people's work. Their work is certainly not honest. And do not say: "And yet God protects them." No. He does not protect them. Now they enjoy an hour of triumph. But they will soon be struck by divine rigour, which both in time and in eternity will remind them of the commandment: "I am the Lord your God. Love Me above all things and love your neighbor as yourself." Oh! If those words resound eternally, they will be more dreadful than the lightning of Sinai!

You are told many words, too many. I will tell you only these: "Love God. Love your neighbor." They are like the work in the vineyard in spring, that makes the vine shoots fruitful. The love of God and of your neighbor is like the harrow that clears the soil of the harmful herbs of selfishness and of evil passions; it is like the hoe that digs a circle round the shoot to isolate it from infectious parasite herbs and to nourish it with cool irrigation water; it is like the shears that remove what is superfluous and confine the strength, directing it to where it will bear fruit; it is a tie that fastens and supports with a robust pole, finally it is the sun that ripens the fruits of good will and makes them fruits of eternal life. You are now jubilant because it has been a good year, the crops are plentiful and the vintage rich. But I solemnly tell you that this joy of yours is less than a tiny grain of sand as compared to the immeasurable jubilation that will be yours when the eternal Father will say to you: "Come, My fruitful shoots grafted into the true Vine. You have helped in all kinds of work, also in painful ones, to bear abundant fruit, and you are now coming to Me, rich with sweet juices of love for Me and your neighbor. Blossom in My gardens forever and ever."

Aim at that eternal happiness. Pursue that good with loyalty, with gratitude bless the Eternal Father Who assists you in reaching it. Bless Him for the grace of His Word, bless Him for the grace of a good harvest. Love the Lord with gratitude and do not fear. God gives one hundred to one to those who love Him. »

Jesus would have finished. But they all shout: « Bless us, bless us! Your blessing upon us! » Jesus stands up, He stretches out His arms and in a thundering voice He says: « May the Lord bless you and keep you, may His Face shine on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord uncover His Face to you and bring you peace. The Name of the Lord be in your hearts, in your homes and in your fields. »

The little crowd which had gathered utter cries of joy and applause for the Messiah. They then become quiet and open out to let pass through a mother, who is carrying in her arms a paralytic child, about ten years old. At the foot of the staircase, she holds him out, as if she were offering him to Jesus.

« She is one of my servants. Her boy last year fell from the terrace and broke his back. He will lie on his back all his life » explains the landlord.

« She has been hoping in You all these months… » adds the landlady.

« Tell her to come to Me. »

But the poor woman is so excited, that she seems to be paralyzed. She trembles all over and trips on her long dress while climbing up the high steps with her son in her arms.

Mary, compassionate, stands up and goes down to meet her. « Come. Do not be afraid. My Son loves you. Give Me your child. It will be easier for you to climb up. Come, My daughter. I am a Mother, too » and She takes the child, smiling kindly at him, and then goes up with Her piteous load weighing 'on Her arms. The boy's mother follows Her crying.

Mary is now before Jesus. She kneels down and says: « Son! For the sake of this mother! » Nothing else.

Jesus does not even ask the usual question: « What do you want Me to do for you? Do you believe that I can do it? » No. Today He smiles and says: « Woman, come here. »

The woman goes beside Mary. Jesus lays His hand on her head and says only: « Be happy » and He has not yet finished saying the words, when the boy, who so far had been lying heavily on Mary's arms, with his legs hanging loose, sits up all of a sudden and with a cry of joy: « Mummy! », he runs to take refuge in his mother's lap.

The shouts of hosanna seem to be penetrating the sky now all red at sunset.

The woman, clasping her son to heart, does not know what to say and she asks: « What must I do to tell You that I am happy? »

And Jesus, caressing her once again: « You must be good and love God and your neighbor and bring your son up in this love. »

But the woman is not yet content. She would like to… she would like to… and at last she asks: « A kiss of Yours and of Your Mother's to my child. »

Jesus bends down and kisses him and Mary does likewise. And while the woman is going away happy, surrounded by cheering friends, Jesus explains to the landlord: « Nothing else was needed. He was in My Mother's arms. Even without any word I would have cured him, because She is happy when She can relieve distress and I want to make Her happy. »

And Jesus and Mary exchange one of those glances that only one who has seen them can understand, so deeply meaningful are they.

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(1) It is to be remembered that Maria Valtorta often addresses her spiritual Father in the « Poem ».

109. Jesus at Doras' House. Death of Jonah.

15th February 1945.

I see once again the plain of Esdraelon, by day. A cloudy late November day. It must have rained during the night, one of the first rains of the dreary winter months, because the earth is damp but not muddy. And it is windy. A damp wind that blows away the yellow leaves and pierces one's bones with its breath saturated with moisture.

In the fields there are a few yokes of oxen ploughing. They laboriously turn the rich heavy soil of this fertile plain, preparing it for seed-time. And what upsets me is to see that in some places it is the men themselves that work as oxen, pushing the ploughshare with all the strength of their arms and even with their chests, pressing their feet in the soil already turned, toiling like slaves in this work which is very hard also for robust bulls.

Also Jesus looks and notices. And His face turns so sad as to weep.

The disciples, only eleven, because Judas is still absent and the shepherds are no longer here, speak among themselves and Peter says: « Also a boat is small, poor and laborious… But it is one hundred times better than this pack-animal job! » He then asks: « Are they perhaps Doras' servants? » Simon Zealot replies: « I don't think so: his fields are beyond that orchard, I think. And we can't see them yet. »

But Peter, always curious, leaves the road and walks along a hedge between two fields. Four thin peasants, wet with perspiration have sat down for a moment on its borders. They are panting with fatigue. Peter asks them: « Are you Doras' men? »

« No, but we belong to his relative, to Johanan. And who are you? »

« I am Simon of Jonas, a fisherman of Galilee until the moon of Civ. Now I am Peter of Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah of the Gospel. » Peter says so with the respect and glory with which one would say: « I belong to the high divine Caesar of Rome » and much more, too. His honest face is shining with joy in professing himself of Jesus.

« Oh! the Messiah! Where, where is He? » ask the four unhappy men.

« That one over there. The tall fair-headed one, clad in dark red. The one who is now looking here, and is smiling waiting for me. »

« Oh!… If we went there… would He send us away? »

« Send you away? Why? He is the friend of the unhappy, the poor, the oppressed, and I think that you… yes, you are just them… »

« Oh! we are indeed! But not like Doras' men. At least we have as much bread as we want and we are not lashed unless we stop working, but… »

« So that, if the fine master Johanan should find you here talking, he… ».

« He would lash us more than he would lash his dogs… »

Peter whistles significantly. He then says: « Well it is better if we do this… » and cupping his hands to his mouth he calls out loud: « Master. Come here. There are some hearts that are suffering and they want You. »

« But what are you saying? Him to come here?! But we are ignoble servants! » The four men are terrified at such boldness.

« But lashes are not pleasant. And if that fine Pharisee should turn up, I would not like to have a share myself… » Peter says laughing and with his big hand he shakes the most terrified of the four men. Jesus with His long stride is about to arrive. The four men do not know what to do. They would like to run and meet Him, but they are paralyzed with respect. Poor beings completely frightened by human wickedness. They fall flat on their faces, adoring the Messiah Who is coming towards them.

« Peace to all those who desire Me. Who desires Me, desires good, and I love him as a friend. Get up. Who are you? »

But the four just lift their faces off the ground, and remain kneeling and quiet.

Peter explains: « They are four servants of the Pharisee Johanan, a relative of Doras. They would like to speak to You, but if he comes, there will be a volley of blows, that is why I said to You: “Come.” Get up, boys. He will not eat you! Have faith. Just think that He is a friend of yours. »

« We… we know about You… Jonah told us… »

« I have come for him. I know that he announced Me. What do you know of Me? »

« That You are the Messiah. That he saw You a baby. That the angels sang peace to good people with Your coming, that You were persecuted… that You were saved and that now You have been looking for Your shepherds and… You love them. These last things he told us now. And we thought: if He is so good as to look for some shepherds and love them, He would certainly be also a little fond of us… We need so much someone who may love us… »

« I love you. Do you suffer much? »

« Oh!… But Doras' men even more. If Johanan found us talking here!… But today he is at Gerghesa. He has not yet come back from the Feast of the Tabernacles. But his steward this evening will give us food after measuring the work that we have done. But it does not matter. We will not rest for our meal at the sixth hour and we will make up for this time. »

« Tell me, man. Would I be able to work that implement? Is it a difficult task? » asks Peter.

« No, it's not difficult. But it is hard work. It takes a lot of strength. »

« I have that. Show me. If I succeed, you can talk and I will play the ox. You, John, Andrew and James, come to the lesson. We will abandon fish for the worms of the soil. Come on! » Peter lays his hands on the cross-bar of the beam. There are two men at each plough, one on each side of the long beam. He looks and imitates all the gestures of the peasant. Strong as he is and rested, he works well and the man praises him.

« I am a master in ploughing happily » exclaims good Peter. « Come on, John! Come here. An ox and a bull-calf at each plough. James and that mute calf of my brother at the other one. Right! Heave away! » and the two ploughs proceed

side by side turning the soil and cutting furrows in the long field at the end of which they turn round and cut a fresh furrow. They seem to have worked as farmers all their lives.

« How good Your friends are! » says the boldest of Johanan's servants. « Did You make them such? »

« I have guided their goodness. As you do with the pruner's shears. Goodness was already in them. It now blossoms well because there is Who takes care of it. »

« They are also humble. They are Your friends and yet they are serving us, poor servants, like that! »

« Only those who love humility, meekness, continence, honesty and love, love above all, can stay with Me. Because who loves God and his neighbor, possesses in consequence all virtues and gains Heaven. »

« Shall we be able to gain it, too, we, who have no time to pray, to go to the Temple, not even to raise our heads off the furrows? »

« Tell Me: do you hate him who deals with you so hard? Is there in you rebellion and reproach to God for putting you amongst the lowest of the earth? »

« Oh! no, Master! It is our fate. But when tired we throw ourselves on our pallets, we say: “Well, the God of Abraham knows that we are so exhausted that we are not able to say more than: 'Blessed be the Lord!'”, and we also say: “Also today we have lived without sinning”… You know… we could also cheat a little and eat a fruit with our bread, or pour some oil on to the boiled vegetables. But the master said: “Bread and vegetables are sufficient for servants, and at harvest time a little vinegar in the water to quench their thirst and give them strength.” And we do that. After all… we could be worse off. »

« And I solemnly tell you that the God of Abraham smiles at your hearts, whilst He turns a severe face towards those who insult Him in the Temple with false prayers, while they do not love their fellows. »

« Oh! but they love people like themselves! At least… it looks as if they do, because they respect one another with gifts and bows. It is for us that they have no love. But we are different from them, and it is fair. »

« No. It is not fair in My Father's Kingdom. But different will be the way of judging. Not the rich and the mighty ones, as such, will receive honors. But only those who have always loved God, loving Him above themselves and above everything else, such as money, power, women, a bountiful table; and loving their fellow men, that is all men, both rich and poor, well-known and unknown, learned and without culture, good and bad. Yes, you must love also bad people. Not because of their wickedness, but out of pity for their souls which they wound to death. It is necessary to love them imploring the Celestial Father to cure them and redeem them. In the Kingdom of Heaven those will be blessed who have honored the Lord with truth and justice, who have loved their parents and relatives out of respect; those who have not stolen anything in any way, that is who have given and exacted what is just, also in the work of servants; those who have not killed any reputation or creature and have not desired to kill, even when the behavior of other people is so cruel as to excite hearts to disdain and rebellion; those who have not sworn falsehood damaging one's neighbor and the truth; those who have not committed adultery or any carnal sin; those, who being mild and resigned, have always accepted their lot without envying others. Of those is the Kingdom of Heaven, and also a beggar can be a happy king up there, whereas a Tetrarch, with all his power, will be less than nothing, nay, more than nothing: he will be a prey to Mammon, if he has sinned against the eternal law of the Decalogue. »

The men listen to Him gaping. Near Jesus there are Bartholomew, Matthew, Simon, Philip, Thomas, James and Judas of Alphaeus. The other four continue working, red in their faces and hot, but cheerful. Peter is quite enough to keep them all merry.

« Oh! How right Jonah was in calling You: “Holy!” Everything is holy in You: Your words, Your look, Your smile. We have never felt our souls thus… ! »

« Have you not seen Jonah for a long time? »

« Since he has been ill. »

« Ill? »

« Yes, Master. He cannot stand it any more. He was already dragging himself along before. But after the summer work and the vintage he is unable to stand up. And yet that… makes him work… Oh! You say that we must love everybody. But it is very difficult to love hyenas! And Doras is worse than a hyena! »

« Jonah loves him… »

« Yes, Master. And I say that he is a saint like those who have been martyred because of their loyalty to the Lord Our God. »

« You have spoken the truth. What is your name? »

« Micah, and this is Saul, and this is Jowehel, and this is Isaiah. »

« I will mention your names to the Father. And you were saying that Jonah is very ill? »

« Yes, as soon as he finishes his work he throws himself on the straw and we don't see him. The other servants of Doras tell us. »

« Will he be working now? »

« Yes, if he can stand up. He should be beyond that apple orchard. »

« Was Doras' harvest a good one? »

« Yes, it was famous all over the area. The plants had to be propped up owing to the miraculous size of the fruit, and Doras had to have new vats made because there were so many grapes that the usual ones could not contain them. »

« Doras must have rewarded his servant! »

« Rewarded! Oh! Lord, how little You know of him! »

« But Jonah told Me that years ago Doras thrashed him to death for the loss of a few bunches and that he became a slave through debt, because his master blamed him for the loss of a few crops. Since this year he had a miraculous abundance, he should have given him a prize. »

« No. He lashed him savagely, accusing him of not having the same abundance in past years, because he had not taken due care of the land. »

« But that man is a beast! » exclaims Matthew.

« No. He is soulless » says Jesus. « I leave you, My sons, with a blessing. Have you bread and food for today? »

« We have this bread » and they show Him a dark loaf which they take out of a sack lying on the ground.

« Take My food. I have but this. But I am staying at Doras' today and… »

« You at Doras' house? »

« Yes. To ransom Jonah. Did you not know? »

« No one knows anything here. But… distrust him, Master. You are like a lamb in the wolf's den. »

« He will not be able to do Me any harm. Take My food. James, give them what we have. Also your wine. You must rejoice a little, too, My poor friends. Both your souls and your bodies. Peter! Let us go. »

« I am coming, Master. There is only this furrow to cut. » And he runs to Jesus, his face drawn with fatigue. He dries himself with the mantle he had taken off, he puts it on again and he laughs happily. The four men cannot thank them enough.

« Will you pass by here again, Master? »

« Yes. Wait for Me. You will say goodbye to Jonah. Can You do that? »

« Oh! yes. The field is to be ploughed by evening. More than two thirds has been done. How well and quickly. Your friends are strong! May God bless You. Today for us is a greater feast than Passover. Oh! May God bless you all! »

Jesus goes straight to the apple-orchard. They cross it and reach Doras' fields. Other peasants are at the ploughs or are bent down removing all the loose herbs from the furrows. But Jonah is not there. The men recognize Jesus and salute Him without leaving their work.

« Where is Jonah? »

« After two hours he fell on the furrow and has been taken home. Poor Jonah. He will not have to suffer long now. He is nearing his end. We shall never have a better friend. »

« You have Me on the earth and him in Abraham's bosom. The dead love the living with a double love: their own and the love they obtain by being with God, therefore a perfect love. »

« Oh! Go to him at once. That he may see You in his suffering! » Jesus blesses and goes away.

« What are You going to do now? What will You say to Doras? » ask the disciples.

« I will go as if I knew nothing. If he sees that he is being met fairly and squarely, he may be pitiless towards Jonah and the servants. »

« Your friend is right: he is a jackal » says Peter to Simon.

« Lazarus speaks nothing but the truth and he is not a backbiter. You will meet him and you will like him » replies Simon.

The house of the Pharisee can be seen. Large, low, but well built, in the middle of an orchard now fruitless. A country house, but rich and comfortable. Peter and Simon go ahead to warn.

Doras comes out. An old man with the hard profile of a rapacious person. Ironic eyes, a serpent's mouth wriggling a false smile in a beard more white that black. « Hail, Jesus » he greets informally and with obvious condescension.

Jesus does not say: « Peace »; He replies: « May your salutation return to you. »

« Come in. My house receives You. You have been as punctual as a king. »

« As an honest person » replies Jesus.

Doras laughs as if it was a joke.

Jesus turns round and says to His disciples, who had not been invited: « Come in. They are My friends. »

« Let them come in… but isn't that one the exciseman, the son of Alphaeus? »

« This is Matthew, the disciple of Christ » says Jesus in a tone that the other understands and he gives a laugh more forced than before.

Doras would like to crush the « poor » Galilean Master under the wealth of his house which is sumptuous inside. Sumptuous and icy. The servants seem slaves. They walk with bent shoulders, stealing away swiftly,' always afraid of punishment. One feels that the house is dominated by coldheartedness and hatred.

But Jesus cannot be crushed by a display of wealth or by reminding Him of one's wealth and relatives and Doras, who understands the indifference of the Master, takes Him to his orchard-garden, showing Him rare plants and offering Him their fruits, which servants bring on golden trays and cups. Jesus enjoys and praises the delicious fruit, partly preserved as a julep, and they are beautiful peaches, partly in their natural state, and they are pears of a rare size.

« I am the only one to have them in Palestine and I don't think that there are any in the whole peninsula.

I sent for them to Persia and even farther away. The caravan cost me as much as a talent. But not even the Tetrarchs have such fruits. Perhaps not even Caesar has them. I count all the fruits and I want their stones. And the pears are eaten only at my table because I do not want even one seed to be taken away. I send some to Annas, but only cooked ones so that they are sterile. »

« But they are plants of God. And all men are equal. »

« Equal? No! I equal to… to Your Galileans? »

« Souls come from God and He creates them equal. »

« But I am Doras, the faithful Pharisee!… » He looks as proud as a peacock in saying so.

Jesus darts a glance at him with His sapphire eyes which are becoming brighter and brighter, a sign that denotes oncoming pity or severity. Jesus is so much taller than Doras and towers over him, stately in His purple tunic near the small, slightly bent Pharisee, wrinkled in a garment strikingly wide and rich in fringes.

Doras, after some time of self-admiration, exclaims: « Jesus, why did You send Lazarus, the brother of a prostitute, to the house of Doras, the pure Pharisee? Is Lazarus Your friend? You must not do that. Don't You know that he is anathematized because his sister Mary is a prostitute? »

« I know but Lazarus and his deeds which are honest. »

« But the world remembers the sin of that house and sees that its stains spread to its friends… Don't go there. Why are You not a Pharisee? If You wish… I am influential… I will have You accepted, although You are a Galilean. I can do anything in the Sanhedrin. Annas is in my hands, like the edge of my mantle. People would be more afraid of You. »

« I want only to be loved. »

« I will love You. You can see that I already love You because I am yielding to

Your wish and I am giving You Jonah. »

« I paid for him. »

« True, and I am surprised that You can afford to pay so much. »

« Not I. A friend paid for Me. »

« Well, well. I am not inquisitive. I say: You see that I love You and I want to make You happy. You will have Jonah after our meal. It is only for You that I make this sacrifice… » and he laughs his cruel laughter.

Jesus darts a more and more severe glance at him, His arms folded on His chest. They are still in the orchard garden awaiting mealtime.

« But You must make me happy. A joy for a joy. I am giving You my best servant. I am therefore depriving myself of something useful for the future. This year Your blessing, I know that You were here at the beginning of summer, has given me crops which have made my farm famous. Now bless my herds and my fields. Next year I will not regret the loss of Jonah… and in the meantime I will find someone like him. Come and bless. Give me the joy of being celebrated throughout Palestine and having folds and granaries full of all sorts of good things. Come » and he grasps Jesus and tries to drag Him, overwhelmed by gold-fever.

But Jesus resists. « Where is Jonah? » he asks severely.

« Where they are ploughing. He wanted to do also that for his good master. But before the meal is over he will come. In the meantime, come and bless the herds, the fields, the orchards, the vineyards, the oilmills. Bless everything. Oh! How fruitful they will be next year! Come then. »

« Where is Jonah? » asks Jesus in a louder thundering voice.

« I told You! Where they are ploughing. He is the first servant and does not work: he is at the head of the men. »

« Liar! »

« Me? I swear to it by Jehovah! »

« Perjurer! »

« Me? I a perjurer? I am the most faithful believer! Watch how You speak! »

« Killer! » Jesus has been raising His voice louder all the time and this last word is like thunder. His disciples go near Him, servants look out of doors frightened. Jesus' face is unendurable in its severity. Phosphorescent rays seem to be emanating from His eyes.

Doras is frightened for a moment. He shrinks, a bundle of fine cloth near the tall person of Jesus, clad in a dark red woollen tunic. Then his pride prevails and he shouts with his squeaky voice like a fox's:

« Only I give orders in my house. Get out, vile Galilean. »

« I will go out after cursing you, your fields, herds and vineyards, for this year and the years to come. »

« No, don't! Yes. It is true. Jonah is ill. But he is being taken care of. He is well looked after. Withdraw Your curse. »

« Where is Jonah? Let a servant lead Me to him, at once. I paid for him; and since he is a piece of merchandise, a machine, for you, I consider him as such; and since I purchased him, I want him. »

Doras pulls out a gold whistle from his chest and blows it three times. A group of servants, both of the house and of the fields, come out from everywhere, they run near the dreaded master, bowing down so deeply, that they seem to be crawling, « Bring Jonah to Him and hand him over. Where are You going? »

Jesus does not even answer. He follows the servants who have rushed beyond the garden towards the peasants' dwellings, the filthy holes of the poor peasants. They enter Jonah's hovel.

He is only skin and bones now and is panting half-naked because of a high temperature, on a cane-mat, where the mattress is a patched up garment and the blanket an even more worn out mantle. The same woman as last time is looking after him as best she can.

« Jonah! My friend! I have come to take you away! »

« You? My Lord! I am dying… but I am happy to have You here! »

« My faithful friend, you are now free, and you will not die here. I am taking you to My house. »

« Free? Why? To Your house? Oh! Yes. You did promise me that I would see Your Mother. »

Jesus is most loving, bending over the miserable bed-of the unhappy man. And Jonah seems to be recovering on account of his joy. « Peter, you are strong. Lift up Jonah, and you, give your mantles. This bed is too hard for one in his state. »

The disciples take off their mantles at once, they fold them several times and lay them on the mat, using some as a pillow. Peter lays down his load of bones and Jesus covers him with His own mantle.

« Peter, have you got any money? »

« Yes, Master, I have forty coins. »

« Good. Let us go. Cheer up, Jonah. A little more trouble and then there will be so much peace in My house, near Mary… »

« Mary… yes… oh! Your house! » In his extreme weakness poor Jonah weeps. He can but weep.

« Goodbye, woman. The Lord will bless you for your mercy. »

« Goodbye, Lord. Goodbye, Jonah. Pray for me. » The young woman is weeping.

When they are at the door, Doras appears. Jonah makes a gesture of fear and covers his face. But Jesus lays a hand on his head and goes out beside him, more stern than a judge. The unhappy procession goes out into the rustic yard and takes the orchard path.

« That bed is mine! I sold You the servant, not the bed. »

Jesus throws the purse at his feet without saying a word.

Doras picks up the purse and empties it. « Forty coins and five didrachmas. It's too little! »

Jesus looks the greedy revolting torturer up and down, but does not reply. It is impossible to say what His gesture means.

« At least tell me that You are withdrawing the anathema! »

Jesus crushes him once again with a glare and a few words: « I entrust you to the God of Sinai » and goes past upright, beside the rustic litter, which Peter and Andrew are carrying most cautiously.

When Doras sees that it is all to no good, that the punishment is certain, he shouts: « We will meet again, Jesus! I will have You in my clutches again! I will fight You to death. You can take that worn out man. I no longer need him. I will save his burial money. Go, go away, cursed Satan! I will set the whole Sanhedrin on You. Satan! Satan! »

Jesus feigns that He does not hear. The disciples are dismayed.

Jesus attends only to Jonah. He looks for the smoothest and most sheltered paths until they reach a crossroad near Johanan's fields. The four peasants run to say goodbye to their friend who is leaving and to Jesus Who is blessing.

But the road from Esdraelon to Nazareth is a long one, and they cannot proceed speedily, because of their pitiful load. There is no wagon or cart along the main road. There is nothing. They proceed in silence. Jonah seems to be sleeping, but he holds on to Jesus' hand.

Towards evening, a military Roman wagon catches up with them.

« In the name of God, stop » says Jesus lifting His arm.

The two soldiers stop; from under the cover pulled over the wagon, as it has started raining, peeps out a pompous noncommissioned officer. « What do You want? » he asks Jesus.

« I have a dying friend. I ask you to take him into the wagon. »

« We are not allowed… but… get on. We are not dogs either. » The litter is lifted into the wagon.

« Your friend? Who are You? »

« Rabbi Jesus of Nazareth. »

« You? Oh!… » The non-commissioned officer looks at Him curiously. « If it is You, then… get on as many as you can. But don't let anyone see you… It is an order… but above orders there is also humanity, isn't there? You are good, I know. Eh! We soldiers know everything… How do I know? Even stones speak well or evil, and we have ears to listen to them in order to serve Caesar. You are not a false Christ like the others before You, who were agitators and rebels. You

are good. Rome knows. This man… is very ill. »

« That is why I am taking him to My Mother. »

« Hum! She won't cure him for long! Give him some wine. It's in that canteen. Aquila, whip the horses, Quintus, give me the ration of honey and butter. It's mine, it will do him good. He has a cough and honey will help. »

« You are good. »

« No. Not quite so bad as many. And I am happy to have You here with me. Remember Publius Quintilianus of the Italica legion. I stay at Caesarea. But I am now going to Ptolomais. Inspection order. »

« You are not My enemy. »

« I? I am an enemy of bad people. Never of good people. And I would like to be good, too. Tell me: What doctrine do You preach for us, military people? »

« The doctrine is one only, for everybody. Justice, honesty, continence, compassion. One must do one's duty without any abuses. Also in the hard necessities of the army, one must be human. And one must endeavor to know the Truth, that is God, one and eternal, without which knowledge every action is deprived of grace and consequently of eternal reward. »

« But when I am dead, what will I do with the good I have done? »

« Who comes to the true God will find that good in the next life. »

« Am I going to be born again? Will I become a tribune or even an emperor? »

« No. You will become like God, being united to His eternal beatitude in Heaven. »

« What? Me in Olympus? Amongst the gods? »

« There are no gods. There is the true God. The One I preach. The One Who hears you and notes your goodness and your desire to know the Good. »

« I like that! I did not know that God could be concerned with a poor heathen soldier. »

« He created you, Publius. He therefore loves you and would like to have you with Himself. »

« Eh!… why not? But… no one ever speaks to us of God. »

« I will come to Caesarea and you will hear Me. »

« Oh! Yes. I will come to hear You. There is Nazareth. I would like to serve You further. But if they see me… »

« I will get off, and I bless you for your kindness. »

« Hail, Master. »

« May the Lord show Himself to you, soldiers. Goodbye. »

They get off and resume walking.

« In a short while you will be able to rest, Jonah » says Jesus encouragingly.

Jonah smiles. He becomes calmer and calmer as night falls and now that he is sure that he is far from Doras. John and his brother run ahead to inform Mary. And when the little procession arrives in Nazareth, almost deserted in the late evening, Mary is already at the door awaiting Her Son.

« Mother, here is Jonah. He is taking shelter under Your kindness to begin enjoying his Paradise. Are you happy, Jonah? »

« Happy! Happy! » whispers the exhausted man as if he were in ecstasy.

He is taken into the little room where Joseph died.

« You are in My father's bed. And here is My Mother, and I am here. See? Nazareth becomes Bethlehem, and you are now the little Jesus between two people who love you, and these are the ones who venerate you as the faithful servant. You cannot see the angels, but they are waving their bright wings above you and are singing the words of the Christmas psalm…»

Jesus pours all His kindness on poor Jonah who is getting worse from one second to the next. He seems to have resisted so far to die here… but he is happy. He smiles and tries to kiss Jesus' hand and Mary's, and to say… but his anguish interrupts his words. Mary comforts him like a mother. And he repeats: « Yes… yes » with a blissful smile on his emaciated face.

The disciples, standing at the kitchen garden entrance, are silent and watch deeply moved.

« God has listened to your long desire. The Star of your long night is now becoming the Star of your eternal Morning. You know its name » says Jesus.

« Jesus, Yours! Oh! Jesus! The angels… Who will sing the angelical hymn for me? My soul can hear it… but also my ears wish to hear it… Who?… to make me sleep happy… I am so sleepy! So much work I have done! So many tears… So many insults… Doras… I forgive him… but I do not want to hear his voice and I hear it. It is like the voice of Satan near me, who am dying. Who will cover that voice for me with the words that came from Heaven? »

It is Mary Who on the same tune as Her lulluby sings softly: « Glory to God in the Highest Heaven and peace to men down here. » And She repeats it two or three times because She sees that Jonah calms down on hearing it.

« Doras does not speak any more » he says after some time. « Only the angels… It was a Child… in a manger… between an ox and a donkey… and it was the Messiah… And I adored Him… and with Him there was Joseph and Mary… » His voice fades away in a short gurgle and then there is silence.

« Peace in Heaven to the man of good will! He is dead. We shall bury him in our poor sepulcher. He deserves to await the resurrection of the dead near My just father » says Jesus.

And it all ends, while Mary of Alphaeus, informed I do not know by whom, is coming in.

110. Jesus in the House of Jacob near Lake Merom.

17th February 1945.

I would say that Palestine, besides the lake of Galilee and the Dead Sea, had another small lake or pond, in short a sheet of water, the name of which I do not know. I am not at all good at reckoning dimensions, but with my naked eye I would say that this small basin is about two miles by one and a half. Very small, as one can see. But its green shores are pretty and also its surface which is so blue and calm that it seems a huge chip of sky-blue enamel veined in its centre by a lighter and slightly more wavy stroke of the brush, perhaps because of the current of the river which flows into it in the north and flows out in the south, and which, because of the lightness of the water, which above all I do not think is deep, does not stop flowing, but like a live stream in the middle of still waters, it shows its vitality and presence by means of a different hue and light ripples of the water.

There are no sailing-boats on the little lake, but only a few rowing-boats, in which a solitary fisherman casts or hauls his fishing baskets, or ferries a traveller who wants to take a short cut. And there are endless herds of sheep, which have certainly come down from the mountain pastures in view of the oncoming autumn, and are grazing on the green and rich pastures of the shores.

At the southern end of the lake, which is oval shaped, there is a main road running from east to west, or rather from north east to south west. It is quite well kept and is very busy with wayfarers going to the villages scattered in the area. Jesus is proceeding on this road with His disciples.

It is a rather dull day and Peter remarks: « It would have been better if we had not gone to that woman. The days are getting shorter and shorter and the weather worse and worse… and Jerusalem is still so far away. »

« We will arrive in time. And believe Me, Peter, we obey God more by doing a good deed than by an external ceremony. That woman is now blessing God with all her creatures, around the head of the family, who has recovered so well that he will be able to be in Jerusalem for the Feast of the Tabernacles, whereas by that time he would have been sleeping under bandages and ointments in a sepulcher. Never corrupt faith with the outward appearance of acts. Never criticise. How can you be surprised at Pharisees if you, too, fall into an error of lack of compassion and you close your heart to your neighbor and say: “I serve God and that is enough”? »

« You are right, Master. I am more ignorant than a little ass. »

« And I am keeping you with Me to make you wise. Do not be afraid. Chuza has offered Me the wagon almost as far as Jabbok. It is a short way from there to the ford. He insisted so much and with such valid reasons, that I had to accept it, although I deem that the King of the poor should make use of the means of the poor. But Jonah's death caused a delay and I have to modify My plans according to such unexpected events. »

The disciples talk of Jonah, pitying his poor life and envying his happy death.

Simon Zealot whispers:

« I was not able to make him happy and give the Master a true disciple who had matured in long martyrdom and unshakable faith… and I am sorry. The world is in such need of faithful creatures, believing in Jesus, to balance the many people who deny and will deny! »

« It does not matter, Simon » answers Jesus. « He is happier, now. And more active. And you have done more than anyone would have done for him and for Me. I thank you also on his behalf. He now knows who freed him. And he blesses you. »

« Well, then, he curses Doras, too » exclaims Peter.

Jesus looks at him and says: « Do you think so? You are mistaken. Jonah was a just man. Now he is a saint. He did not hate or curse when he was alive. He does not hate or curse now. From his place of expectation, he is looking at Paradise, and as he already knows that Limbo will soon let the expectants out, he is jubilant. He does nothing else. »

« And Doras… will he be struck by Your anathema? »

« In what way, Peter? »

« Well… by making him think and change… or by punishing him. »

« I have entrusted him to the justice of God. I, the Love, have abandoned him. »

« Good gracious! I would not like to be him. »

« Neither would I! »

« Nor I! »

« No one would, because what will the justice of the Perfect Being ever be like? » say the disciples.

« It will be ecstasy for the good, it will be a thunderbolt for the satans, My friends. I solemnly tell you: to be for a whole life a slave, a leper, a beggar is regal happiness, as compared to one hour, one single hour, of divine punishment. »

« It's raining, Master. What shall we do? Where shall we go? » In fact the first large drops of rain are falling and bouncing on the lake, which has become dark reflecting the sky, now overcast, and it looks as if it is going to rain more heavily.

« To some house. We will ask for shelter in the name of God. »

« And let us hope that we will find someone as good as the Roman. I did not think they were like that… I had always avoided them as being impure and I see that… if I take everything into account, they are better than many of us » says Peter.

« Do you like the Romans? » asks Jesus.

« Eh!… I find that they are not worse than we are. But they are Samaritans… »

Jesus smiles but does not say anything.

They meet a woman who is driving eight sheep in front of her.

« Woman, can you tell us where we can find shelter?… » asks Peter.

« I am the servant of a poor lonely man. But if you want to come… I think my master will receive you kindly. »

« Let us go. »

They proceed under the heavy shower, walking fast in the middle of the sheep trotting with their fat bodies to escape the downpour. They leave the main road to take a little one leading to a low house. I recognize the house of the peasant Jacob, the peasant of Matthias and Mary, the two little orphans of the August vision, I think.

« It's over there! Run ahead while I take the sheep to the fold. Beyond the wall there is a yard through which you go to the house. He will be in the kitchen. Never mind if he is not very talkative… He has a great deal of trouble. »

The woman goes toward a small hut on the right hand side. Jesus turns to the left with His disciples. There is the threshing-floor with the well and the stone oven at the farther end and the apple-tree on one side and there is the wide open door of the kitchen where a wood fire is lit and a man is repairing a broken rural implement.

« Peace to this house. I ask you to give shelter for tonight to Me and My companions » says Jesus on the threshold of the door.

The man looks up. « Come in » he says, « and may God give back to You the peace You are offering. But… peace here! For some time peace has been Jacob's enemy. Come in. Come in!… Come in all. A fire is the only thing I can give you in plenty… because… Oh! but… But You, now that You have taken off Your hood (Jesus had covered His head with the edge of His mantle, holding it tight under His chin with His hand) and I can see You properly… You are, yes, You are the Galilean Rabbi, the one who is called Messiah and works miracles… Is it You? In the name of God tell me. »

« I am Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah. Do you know Me? »

« I heard You speak last month in the house of Judas and Anna… I was with the vintagers because… I am poor… A chain of misfortunes: hail, grubs, diseased plants and herds… What I had was sufficient for me, as I am alone, with only one maid servant. But now I have run into debt because I am persecuted by bad luck… To avoid selling all my sheep, I worked in the houses of other people… After all… my fields!… They looked as if a battle had been fought on them, they were so burnt, and the vines and the olive-trees so fruitless. Since my wife died, and that was six years ago, Mammon seems to be amusing himself here. See? I am working at this plough. But the wood is all broken. What shall I do? I am not a carpenter and I go on tying it up. But it is no use. And I must watch also farthings now… I will sell another sheep to have the tools repaired. The roof leaks… but the field matters to me more than the house. What a pity! The sheep are all pregnant… and I was hoping to replenish my herd… Who knows!»

« I see that I have come to bother you, when you already have so many worries. »

« You a bother? No. I heard You speak and… I still have in my heart what You said. It is true that I have worked honestly, and yet… But I think that I was not yet good enough. I think that perhaps it was my wife who was good, as she felt pity for everybody, my poor Leah, who died too early, too early for her husband… I think that the wealth of those days came from Heaven because of her. And I want to become better, because of what You say and to imitate my wife. And I am not asking for much… only to remain in this house, where she died, where I was born… and to have a piece of bread for myself and the woman who works as my maid and as a shepherdess and helps as well as she can. I have no male servants. I had two and they were enough, as I also worked in the fields and in the olive-grove… But I have bread only for myself, and not much either… »

« Do not deprive yourself of it, to give it to us… »

« No, Master. If I had only one morsel, I would give it to You. It is an honor for me to have You… I would never have hoped for so much. But I am telling You my troubles because You are good and You understand. »

« Yes, I understand. Give Me that hammer. You do not do it that way. You will break the wood. Give Me also that spike, but make it red-hot first. It will be easier to make a hole in the wood and we will put the peg in without any trouble. Let Me do it. I was a carpenter… »

« You want to work for me? No! »

« Let Me do it. You are giving Me hospitality and I want to help you. Men must love one another, each giving what one can. »

« You give peace, wisdom and You work miracles. You are already giving a great deal, a great deal indeed! »

« I give also My work. Come, do as I tell you… » And Jesus, Who is wearing only His tunic, works quickly and skilfully at the split beam, He drills holes, fastens and bolts it and tests it until He feels that it is firm. « It will still work for a long time. Till next year. And then you will get a new one. »

« I think so, too. That ploughshare has been in Your hands and it will bless my land. »

« Not because of that, Jacob, it will bless it. »

« Why then, my Lord? »

« Because you are merciful. You do not foster ill-feelings of selfishness and envy, but you accept My doctrine and you practise it. Blessed be the merciful. They will receive mercy. »

« In what way am I being merciful to You, my Lord? I have practically no place or food for Your needs. All I have is my good will and never before have I regretted being poor, as I do now, because I cannot honor You and Your friends. »

« Your good will is enough for Me. I solemnly tell you that also a cup of water given in My name is a great thing in the eyes of God. I was a tired wayfarer caught in a storm, and you have given Me hospitality. Mealtime comes and you say to Me: “I offer You what I have.” Night falls, and you offer Me a friendly roof. What more do you want to do? Be confident, Jacob. The Son of man does not look at the pomp of reception or of food, but He looks at the feelings of one's heart. The Son of God says to the Father: “Father, bless My benefactors and all those who in My name are merciful to their brothers.” That is what I am saying for you. »

The servant, who has spoken to her master while Jesus was working at the plough comes back with some bread, some fresh milk, a few withered apples and a tray of olives.

« That is all I have » apologises the man.

« Oh! In your food I see a food that you cannot see! And I feed on it because it has a celestial flavour. »

« Do You, the Son of God, perhaps feed on some food which angels bring to You? Perhaps You live on the bread of the spirit. »

« Yes, the spirit has a greater value than the body, and not only in Me. I do not feed on angelical bread, but on the love of the Father and of men. That is what I find also at your table and I bless the Father Who led Me to you with love, and I bless you because you receive Me with love and give Me love. That is My food as well as doing the will of the Father. »

« Then bless and offer the food to God in my stead. Today You are the head of my family and You will always be my Master and Friend. »

Jesus takes the bread and offers it holding it up on the palms of His hands, saying a psalm, I think. He then sits down, breaks it and hands it out…

It all ends thus.

111. Return to the Jordan Ford near Jericho.

18th February 1945.

« I am surprised that the Baptist is not here » says John to the Master. They are all on the eastern bank of the Jordan, near the famous ford where the Baptist once used to baptize.

« And he is not even on the other bank » points out James.

« They may have caught him again, hoping to get another purse » remarks Peter. « Those crooks of Herod certainly deserve the cross! »

« We shall cross to the other side and ask » says Jesus.

They do cross over and they ask a ferryman of the other bank: « Does the Baptist no longer baptize here? »

« No, he doesn't. He is at the border with Samaria. That is the state we are in! A holy man has to take shelter near the Samaritans to protect himself from the citizens of Israel. Why are we surprised if God abandons us? I am surprised at one thing only: that He does not make a Sodom and Gomorrah of the whole of Palestine!… »

« He does not because of the just people who are there, because of those, who although not yet completely just, are thirsty for justice and follow the doctrine of those who preach holiness » replies Jesus.

« Two, then: the Baptist and the Messiah. I know the former, because I served him also here at the Jordan, ferrying some believers to him, without asking for any payment, because he says that one is to be content with what is just. I thought that it was just that I should be satisfied with what I earned doing other jobs and that it was unfair to ask to be paid for taking souls to be purified. My friends said that I was mad. But after all… Since I was happy with the little I had, who could complain? On the other hand I see that so far I have not died of starvation, and I hope that Abraham will smile at me when I die. »

« You are in the right, man. Who are you? »

« Oh! My name is a great one and it makes me laugh because my only wisdom is concerned with oars. My name is Solomon. »

« You possess the wisdom for judging that who cooperates to a purification

must not corrupt it with money. I tell you, that not only Abraham, but the God of Abraham will smile at you as at a faithful son, when you die. »

« Oh! God! Is that true? Who are You? »

« I am a just man. »

« Listen: I told You that there are two in Israel: one is the Baptist, the other the Messiah. Are You the Messiah? »

« Yes, I am. »

« Oh! Eternal mercy! But… one day I heard some Pharisees say… Never mind… I do not want to foul my mouth. You are not what they said. Their tongues are more forked than vipers'!… »

« Yes, I am, and I say to you: you are not very far from the Light. Goodbye, Solomon. Peace be with you. »

« Where are You going, Lord? » The man is dumbfounded at the revelation and is speaking in a completely different tone. Before it was a good natural person who spoke. Now it is an adoring believer.

« I am going to Jerusalem via Jericho. I am going to the Tabernacles. »

« To Jerusalem?… You too? »

« I am a son of the Law, too. I do not repeal the Law. I give it light and strength so that it may be fulfilled in a perfect way. »

« But Jerusalem already hates You! I mean, the great ones, the Pharisees in Jerusalem. I told You that I heard… »

« Leave them alone. They do their duty, what they think is their duty. I do Mine. I solemnly tell you, that until the hour comes, they will not be able to do anything. »

« Which hour, Lord? » ask the disciples and the ferryman.

« The hour of the triumph of Darkness. »

« Will You live until the end of the world? »

« No. There will be a more dreadful darkness than the darkness of the extinguished stars and of our planet, dead with all its inhabitants. And it will take place when men extinguish the Light, which is I. The crime has already been committed by many. Goodbye, Solomon. »

« I will follow You, Master. »

« No. Come to the Bel Nidrasc in three days' time. Peace be with You. »

Jesus sets out amongst His pensive disciples.

« What are you thinking of? Do not be afraid for Me or yourselves. We have passed through the Decapolis and Perea, and everywhere we have seen farmers working in the fields. In some places the land was still covered with stubble and couch-grass, an arid hard land, encumbered with parasite plants, the seeds of which had been carried there from the desert waste by the summer winds. They were the fields of lazy and fast living people. In other places the soil had already been turned by the ploughshare, and stones, bramble and couch-grass had been cleared away by fire and man's toil. And what before was harmful, that is the useless plants, was turned by the purifying fire and man's toil into good manure and useful fertilizing salts. The soil may have suffered because of the pain caused by the share that cut into it and rummaged through it, and because of the biting fire that scorched its wounds. But it will rejoice in spring, more beautiful, saying: “Man tortured me to give me these rich crops which make me beautiful.” And they were the fields of the willing people. And in other places the soil was already soft, also the ashes had been cleared away, it was a real nuptial bed for its fertile union to the seed, that gives so many glorious ears of wheat. And they were the fields of people who were so generous as to reach perfection in activity. Well, the same applies to hearts. I am the Share and My word is the Fire, to prepare men for the eternal triumph.

There are those who, lazy or fast living, do not yet ask for Me, do not want Me, are satisfied with their vices and wicked passions, which look like green floral garments, and are instead bramble and thorns, which tear souls to pieces, and tie them into faggots for the fire in Gehenna. For the time being the Decapolis and Perea are like that… and are not the only ones. They do not ask for miracles, because they do not want My sharp word nor the ardour of My fire. But their hour will come. In other places there are those who accept My sharp word and My ardour, and they think: “It is painful. But it purifies me and will make me productive of good deeds.” They are the ones, who, although they have not the heroism of acting, allow Me to act. It is the first step on My way. And finally

there are those who help My work with their own continuous diligent work and they do not walk, but they fly on the way to God. They are the faithful disciples: you and the others scattered throughout Israel. »

« But we are few… against so many. We are humble… against the mighty ones. How can we defend You, should they wish to hurt You? »

« My friends, remember the dream of Jacob. He saw an incalculable multitude of angels ascending and descending a ladder that from Heaven reached down to the Patriarch. A multitude, and yet it was but a part of the angelical cohorts… Well, if even all the cohorts that sing hallelujah to God in Heaven should come down to defend Me, when the hour comes, they will be of no avail. Justice is to be fulfilled… »

« You mean injustice! Because You are holy and if they hurt You and hate You, they are unjust. »

« That is why I say that the crime has already been committed by some. Who broods over thoughts of murder, is already a murderer, who broods over thoughts of theft, is already a thief, who over thoughts of adultery, is already an adulterer, who of betrayal, is already a betrayer. The Father knows and I know. But He allows Me to go. And I go. Because that is what I came for. But the crops will ripen and will be sown once and once again before the Bread and the Wine are given as food to men. »

« There will be a banquet of joy and peace, then! »

« Of peace? Yes. Of joy? Also. But… oh, Peter! oh, My friends! How many tears will be shed between the first and the second chalice! And only after the last drop of the third chalice has been drunk, great will be the joy amongst the just, and certain the peace to men of good will. » (1)

« And You will be there. Won't You? »

« I?… Is the Head of the family ever absent from the rite? Am I not the Head of the large family of Christ? »

Simon Zealot, who has never spoken, says, as if he were speaking to himself: « "Who is coming in garments stained in crimson? He is richly clothed, marching so full of strength." "It is I, who speak of integrity and am powerful to save." "Why are your garments red, your clothes as if you had trodden the winepress?" "I have trodden the winepress alone. My year of redemption has come." »

« You have understood, Simon » remarks Jesus.

« I have understood, my Lord. »

The two look at each other; the others look at them astonished and they ask one another: « Is he talking of the red clothes that Jesus is wearing even now, or of the royal purple which He will put on when the hour comes? »

Jesus does not pay attention and does not seem to hear anything else.

Peter takes Simon to one side and asks: « Since you are learned and humble, explain your words to me, who am ignorant. »

« Yes, brother. His name is Redeemer. The chalices of the banquet of peace and joy between man and God, and the earth and Heaven, He will fill them Himself with His Wine, pressing Himself in sufferings because of His love for us all. He will therefore be present, notwithstanding the powers of Darkness will have then apparently extinguished the Light, Which is He. Oh! We must love our Christ very much, because many will refuse to love Him. Let us make sure that in the hour of dereliction, the lament of David may not be applied to us reproachingly: "A pack of dogs (with us amongst them) surrounds Me." »

« Do you think so?… But we will defend Him, at the cost of dying with Him. »

« We will defend Him… But we are men, Peter. And our hearts will melt even before His bones are disjointed… Yes, we will be like the ice-cold water in the sky that lightning melts into rain and then the wind freezes once again on the ground. We are like that! Our present courage of being His disciples, because His love and His presence condense us into a virile boldness, will melt under the striking lightning of Satan and of the satans… And what will be left of us? Then, after the vile necessary test, faith and love will unite us firmly again and we will be like crystal proof against cuts. But we will be aware of that and we will succeed if we love Him very much while we have Him. Then, I do believe, because of His word, that we shall not be enemies and betrayers. »

« You are a learned man, Simon. I am… illiterate. And I am also ashamed of asking Him so many questions. And I suffer when I hear that there are so many reasons for tears… Look at His face: it seems to be washed by secret tears. Look at His eyes: they look neither at the sky nor at the ground. They are open on a

world unknown to us. And how tired and bent His carriage is! He seems to have grown old because of His worries. Oh! I don't like Him like that! Master! Master! Smile. I don't like to see You so sad. You are as dear to me as a son, and I would give You my chest as a pillow, to make You sleep and dream of other worlds… Oh! forgive me if I said to You "son". It's because I love You, Jesus. »

« I am the Son… That name is My Name. But I am no longer sad. See? I am smiling because you are friendly to Me. Over there, there is Jericho, completely red in the sunset. Two of you should go and look for lodgings. The others and I will go and wait for you beside the synagogue. Go. » And it all ends while John and Judas Thaddeus set out looking for a hospitable house.

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(1) Reference is made here to the Jewish ritual for the celebration of the Passover Supper, described by Mishna, a fundamental text of the Talmud, codified in the – century after Christ. At least four chalices were to be consumed at the Passover Supper. According to the Poem of the Man-God, there was great sadness between the first and the second chalice (probably because of the prediction by Christ of Judas' betrayal). But after the third chalice (that is, the one consecrated into the Blood of Christ) there was great joy and peace (probably an allusion to the wonderful speech of Jesus to the Apostles after the departure of Judas).

112. Jesus in the House of Lazarus. Martha Speaks of the Magdalene.

19th February 1945.

I see the market square in Jericho, its trees and shouting vendors. In a comer there is Zacchaeus, the tax-collector, intent on his legal and illegal extortions. He must deal also in jewellery because I see him weighing and appraising jewels and valuables, I do not know whether they are given to him as payment of taxes, instead of money, or whether they are sold for other necessities.

It is now the turn of a slender woman, who is completely clad in a huge rust-grey mantle. Also her face is covered with yellowish closely woven byssus which prevents her face from being seen. One can see only the slimness of her figure which is visible notwithstanding the huge greyish cloak that envelops her. She must be young, at least according to the little that can be seen, that is, one hand which for a moment she takes out of her mantle to hand over a gold bracelet, and her feet, shod in rather sophisticated sandals, fitted with uppers and interlacing leather straps, so that only her smooth juvenile toes and part of her slim white ankles are visible. She gives her bracelet without saying one word, takes the money without any objection and turns round to go away.

I now notice that behind her there is the Iscariot, who watches her carefully and when she is about to go away, he says a word to her, which I do not catch. But she does not reply, as if she were dumb, and she hastens away in her mass of clothes.

Judas asks Zacchaeus: « Who is she? »

« I do not ask my customers their names, especially when they are as kind as she is. »

« Young, isn't she? »

« Apparently. »

« Is she Judaean? »

« Who knows?! Gold is yellow in all countries. »

« Show me that bracelet. »

« Do you want to buy it? »

« No. »

« Well, nothing doing. What do you think? That it will start talking in her place? »

« I wanted to see if I could find out who she is… »

« Are you so interested? Are you a necromancer who divines, or a bloodhound that scents? Go away, forget her. If she is like that, she is either honest and unhappy or she is a leper. Therefore… nothing doing. »

« I am not craving for a woman » replies Judas contemptuously.

« May be… but by the looks of your face I can hardly believe it. Well, if you do not want anything else, please step aside. I have other people to attend to. »

Judas goes away angrily and asks a bread vendor and a fruit seller whether they know the woman who had just bought some bread and apples from them, and whether they know where she lives.

They do not know. They reply: « She has been coming here for some time, every two or three days. But we do not know where she lives. »

« But how does she speak? » insists Judas.

The two laugh and reply: « With her tongue. »

Judas abuses them and goes away… and runs into the group of Jesus and His disciples, who are coming to buy some bread and food for their daily meal. The surprise is reciprocal and… not very enthusiastic. Jesus says only: « You are here? » and while Judas mumbles something, Peter breaks into a loud laugh and says: « Here, I am blind and a misbeliever. I cannot see the vineyards. And I don't believe in the miracle… »

« What are you saying? » ask two or three disciples.

« I am speaking the truth. There are no vineyards here. And I cannot believe that Judas, in all this dust, can gather grapes simply because he is a disciple of the Rabbi. »

« Vintage finished a long time ago » replies Judas harshly.

« And Kerioth is many miles away » concludes Peter.

« You are attacking me at once. You are hostile to me. »

« No. I am not such a fool as you think. »

« That is enough » commands Jesus. He is severe. He addresses Judas: « I was not expecting to see you here. I thought you would be in Jerusalem for the Tabernacles. »

« I am going there tomorrow. I have been waiting here for a friend of our family, who… »

« Please, that is enough. »

« Do You not believe me, Master? I swear… »

« I did not ask you anything, and please do not say anything. You are here. That is enough. Are you thinking of coming with us or have you still got business to attend to? Answer frankly. »

« No… I have finished. In any case that fellow is not coming and I am going to Jerusalem for the Feast. And where are You going? »

« To Jerusalem. »

« Today? »

« I will be at Bethany this evening. »

« At Lazarus' house? »

« Yes, at Lazarus'. »

« Well, I will come too. »

« Yes, come as far as Bethany. Then Andrew with James of Zebedee and Thomas will go to Gethsemane to make preparations and wait for us all, and you will go with them. » Jesus stresses the last words in such a way that Judas does not react.

« And what about us? » asks Peter.

« You will go with My cousins and Matthew where I will send you and will come back in the evening. John, Simon, Bartholomew and Philip will stay with Me, that is, they will go and announce in Bethany that the Rabbi has come and will speak to the people at the ninth hour. »

They walk quickly across the barren countryside. There is an impending storm, not in the clear sky, but in their hearts, they are all conscious of it, and they proceed silently.

When they reach Bethany, and coming from Jericho Lazarus' house is one of the first to be met, Jesus dismisses the group that is to go to Jerusalem and then the other one which He sends towards Bethlehem saying: « Go and do not worry. Half way you will find Isaac, Elias, and the others. Tell them that I will be in Jerusalem for many days and I expect them to bless them. »

In the meantime Simon has knocked at the door and had it opened. The servants inform Lazarus who comes at once.

Judas Iscariot, who had gone a few yards ahead, comes back with the excuse of saying to Jesus: « I have displeased You, Master. I realize it. Forgive me » and at the same time through the open gate he casts sidelong glances at the garden and at the house.

« Yes. It is all right. Go. Do not keep your companions waiting. »

And Judas must go.

Peter whispers: « He was hoping there might be a change in the instructions. »

« Never, Peter. I know what I am doing. But bear with that man… »

« I will try. But I cannot promise… Goodbye, Master. Come, Matthew and you two. Quick. »

« My peace be always with you. »

Jesus enters with the remaining four and after kissing Lazarus He introduces John, Philip and Bartholomew, and then dismisses them and remains alone with Lazarus.

They go towards the house. This time, under the beautiful porch there is a woman. She is Martha. She is swarthy and tall, although not quite so tall as her sister, who is fair-haired and rosy; but she is a beautiful young woman with a balanced and well shaped plump body, a little dark head, a smooth brown forehead. Her eyes are kind, mild, dark long-shaped and as soft as velvet, between her dark eyelashes. Her nose is slightly turned down and her small lips are very red against her dark cheeks. She smiles showing strong snow-white teeth.

She is wearing a dark blue woollen dress with red and dark green galloons round the neck and at the end of her wide short sleeves, from which two other sleeves unfold, of very fine white linen, tied and pleated at the wrists by a little cord. Her very fine white blouse shows also at the top of her breast, round the lower part of her neck where it is held tight by a cord. As a belt she is wearing a scarf of blue, red and green, of a fine cloth which is tied round the upper part of her hips and hangs down her left side in a tuft of fringes. A rich and chaste dress.

« I have a sister, Master. Here she is, Martha, she is good and pious. She is the consolation and the honor of the family and the joy of poor Lazarus. Before she was my first and only joy. Now she is the second, because You are the first. »

Martha prostrates herself on the floor and kisses the hem of Jesus' tunic.

« Peace to the good sister and to the chaste woman. Stand up. »

Martha rises to her feet and goes into the house with Jesus and Lazarus. She then asks to leave to attend to the house.

« She is my peace… » whispers Lazarus, and he looks at Jesus. An inquisitive look. But Jesus pretends He does not see it.

Lazarus asks: « And Jonah? »

« He is dead. »

« Dead? Then… »

« I got him when he was dying. But he died a free man and happy in My house, at Nazareth, between Me and My Mother. »

« Doras practically killed him for You before handing him over! »

« Yes, with fatigue and also with blows. »

« He is a devil and hates You. That hyena hates the whole world… Did he not tell You that he hates You? »

« Yes, he did. »

« Distrust him, Jesus. He is capable of anything, Lord… what did Doras tell You? Did he not tell You to shun me? Did he not place poor Lazarus in a disgraceful light? »

« I think that you know Me well enough to understand that I judge for Myself and according to justice, and that when I love, I love without considering whether such love may procure Me good or evil according to the views of the world. »

« But that man is cruel and he injures and hurts severely… He tormented me also some days ago. He came here and he told me… Oh! I am so vexed already! Why does he want to take You also away from me? »

« I am the solace of those who are tormented and the companion of those who are forlorn. I have come to you also for that.. »

« Ah! Then You know?… Oh! shame on me! »

« No. Why on you? I know. So what? Shall I anathematise you, who are suffering? I am Mercy, Peace, Forgiveness, Love for everybody; and what shall I be for those who are innocent? The sin for which you suffer is not yours. Shall I be pitiless towards you if I feel pity also for her?… »

« Have You seen her? »

« I have. Do not cry. »

But Lazarus, his head resting on his folded arms on a table, is weeping, sobbing painfully.

Martha appears at the door and looks in. Jesus nods to her to be silent. And Martha goes away with big tears running silently down her cheeks.

Lazarus calms down little by little and apologises for his weakness. Jesus comforts him and since His friend wishes to withdraw for a moment, He goes out into the garden and walks among the flower-beds, where some purple roses are still in bloom.

Martha joins Him shortly afterwards. « Master, has Lazarus spoken to You? »

« Yes, Martha, he has. »

« Lazarus cannot set his mind at rest since he is aware that You know and that You have seen her… »

« How does he know? »

« First, that man who was with You and says he is Your disciple: the young one, tall, swarthy, cleanshaven… then Doras. The latter lashed You with his contempt, the former only said that You had seen her on the lake… with her lovers… »

« Do not cry for that! Do you think that I am unacquainted with your wound? I was aware of it since I was with the Father… Do not lose heart, Martha. Raise your heart and your head. »

« Pray for her, Master. I pray… but I cannot forgive completely and perhaps the Eternal Father rejects my prayer. »

« You are right: you must forgive to be forgiven and heard. I already pray for her. But give Me your forgiveness and Lazarus'. You, a good sister, can speak and achieve even more than I can. His wound is too fresh and sore for My hand to touch it even lightly, You can do it. Give Me your full holy forgiveness, and I will… »

« Forgive… We will not be able. Our mother died of grief through her ill deeds and… they were still slight compared with the present ones. I see my mother's torture… it is always present to me. And I see what Lazarus is suffering. »

« She is ill, Martha, and insane. Forgive her. »

« She is possessed, Master. »

« And what is diabolic possession but a disease of the spirit infected by Satan to the extent of degenerating into a spiritual diabolic being? How can certain perversions in human beings be explained otherwise? Perversions that make man much worse than beasts in ferocity, more lewd than monkeys in lust, and so on, and make a hybrid, in which man, animal and demon are mingled. That is the explanation of what amazes us as an inexplicable monstrosity in so many creatures. Do not weep. Forgive. I see. Because My sight is sharper than the sight of the eye or of the heart. I see God. I see. I tell you: forgive, because she is ill. »

« Cure her, then! »

« I will cure her. Have faith. I will make you happy. But forgive and tell Lazarus to forgive. Forgive her. Love her. Be on familiar terms with her. Speak to her as if she were like you. Speak to her of Me… »

« How do You expect her to understand You, the Holy One? »

« She may not seem to understand. But My Name, even by Itself, is salvation. Get her to think of Me and to mention My Name. Oh! Satan runs away when a heart thinks of My Name. Smile, Martha, at this hope. Look at this rose. The rain of the past days had spoiled it, but look, the sun today has opened it, and it is even more beautiful because the drops of rain on the petals adorn it with diamonds. Your house will be like that… Tears and sorrow, now, and later…

joy and glory. Go! Tell Lazarus, while I, in the peace of Your garden, will pray the Father for Mary and for you… »

It all ends thus.

113. In Lazarus' House Again after the Tabernacles. Invitation of Joseph of Arimathea.

20th February 1945.

I do not know how I will be able to write so much, because I hear that Jesus wants to appear with the Gospel as He lived it, and I suffered all through the night to remember the following vision, of which I scribbled the words I heard, as best I could, in order not to forget them [… I

And now, at 11 o'clock, I see this.

Jesus is once again in Lazarus' house. From what I hear, I gather that the Tabernacles have already been celebrated and that Jesus has come back to Bethany through the insistence of His friend, who would never like to be separated from Jesus. I also realize that Jesus is at Lazarus' only with Simon and John, while the others are scattered in the area. Finally I understand that there has been a kind of meeting of friends, still loyal to Lazarus, who has invited them so that they may meet Jesus.

I understand all that, because Lazarus expounds even more clearly the moral characters of each. Speaking of Joseph of Arimathea, he defines him 'a true and just Israelite'. He says: « He dare not say so, because he is afraid of the Sanhedrin, of which he is a member, and which already hates You. But he hopes to see in You the One Predicted by the Prophets. He spontaneously asked me if he could come to meet You and form his own opinion of You, as he did not think that what Your enemies said about You was right… Pharisees have come from as far as Galilee to accuse You of sin. But Joseph's evaluation was: "Who works miracles has God with him. Who has God cannot be in sin. Nay he can but be one loved by God." And he would like to have You at Arimathea, as his guest. He asked me to tell You. And I beg You: please grant his request and mine. »

« I have come for the poor and for those who suffer in their souls and bodies, rather than for the mighty ones who consider Me only an interesting object. But I will go to Joseph's. I am not against the mighty ones on purpose. One of My disciples – the one who out of curiosity and self-proclaimed importance came to your house, without any order from Me… but he is young and we must bear with him – can testify to My respect for the mighty castes who proclaim themselves the "guardians of the Law" and… they mean "the sustainers of the Most High". Oh! The Eternal Father sustains Himself by Himself. None of the doctors ever had the same respect as I had for the officials of the Temple. »

« I know. A great many know… But only the best call such attitude by the right name. The others… call it "hypocrisy". »

« One gives what one has in oneself, Lazarus. »

« True. But go to Joseph. He would like to have You next Sabbath. »

« I will go. You can let him know. »

« Also Nicodemus is good. Yes… he said to me… Can I tell You a piece of criticism on one of Your disciples? »

« Yes, do. If he is a just man he will say what is just; if unjust, he will criticise a conversion, because the Spirit gives light to the spirit of man, if he is an upright man; and the spirit of man guided by the Spirit of God possesses a superhuman wisdom and can read the truth in hearts. »

« He said to me: "I do not criticise the presence of unlearned people or of excisemen among the disciples of Christ. But I do not consider worthy of being one of His disciples, the man who I do not know whether he is for Him or against Him, but is like a chameleon, which takes the color and the appearance of what is around it." »

« That is the Iscariot. I know. But believe Me: youth is a wine that ferments and then becomes purified. When fermenting it swells and foams and overflows in all directions through excess of vigour. A springtime wind blows in all directions and seems a mad ruffler of foliage. But it is the wind we have to thank for fecundating flowers. Judas is wine and wind. But he is not evil. His behavior upsets and perturbs, it even hurts and causes one to suffer. But he is not completely wicked… he is a fiery colt. »

« You say so… I am not competent to judge him. I still feel bitter at the fact that he told me that You had seen her… »

« But your bitterness is now sweetened by honey, because of My promise…»

« Yes, but I remember that moment. Sorrow is not forgotten even when it ends.»

« Lazarus, Lazarus! You worry about too many things… and so trifling. Let days go by like air bubbles that vanish and never come back in their bright or sad hues. And look at Heaven. It does not vanish: it is for the just. »

« Yes, Master and Friend. I will not criticise the fact that Judas is with You, or the fact that You keep him. I will pray that he may not be harmful to You. »

Jesus smiles and it all ends.

114. Jesus Meets Gamaliel at the Banquet of Joseph of Arimathea.

21st February 1945.

Arimathea is a mountainous town, too. I do not know why, but I imagined it on a plain. Instead it is on the mountains, which, however, are already sloping down to the plain, and from certain turns of the road the flat country appears to be fertile towards the west and it fades away on the horizon, in this November morning, in a low mist that looks like an endless sheet of water.

Jesus is with Simon and Thomas. There are no other apostles with Him. I am under the impression that He wisely appraises the feelings of the people He has to approach, and according to the circumstances, He takes those who can be accepted without annoying the landlord too much. These Jews must be more touchy… than romantic little women…

I can hear them speaking of Joseph of Arimathea, and Thomas, who probably knows him very well, describes his beautiful large estate which stretches along the mountain, particularly towards Jerusalem along the road that runs from the capital to Arimathea and links this town to Joppa. I hear them say so, and Thomas praises also the fields that Joseph possesses along the roads on the plain.

« At least men are not treated like animals here! Oh! That Doras! » says Simon.

In fact the workers here are well fed and clothed and have the appearance of satisfied people who are well. They greet respectfully because they obviously know who the tall handsome Man is, Who is going to the house of their master along the countryside of Arimathea. And they watch Him, speaking among themselves in low voices.

When Joseph's house comes into sight, a servant, after bowing low, asks: « Are You the Rabbi we are expecting? »

« I am » replies Jesus.

He salutes bowing again and runs to inform the landlord.

In fact before Jesus reaches the boundary of the house – completely surrounded by a high hedge of evergreens, which replace here the high wall around Lazarus' house and isolates it from the road, being at the same time the continuation of the garden around the house, richly planted with trees and at present very bare of foliage – Joseph of Arimathea, in his wide fringed robe, comes to meet Him and bows very low with his arms folded on his chest. It is not the humble salutation of a person who acknowledges in Jesus the God become Flesh and who humbles himself by kneeling to the ground to kiss His feet or the hem of His tunic, but it is a salutation of deep respect. Jesus also bows and then gives His greeting of peace.

« Come in, Master. You have made me happy by accepting my invitation. I was not expecting so much compliance from You. »

« Why not? I go also to Lazarus' house and… »

« Lazarus is a friend of Yours… I am a stranger. »

« You are a soul seeking the truth. The Truth, therefore, does not reject you. »

« Are You the Truth? »

« I am the Way, the Life and the Truth. Who loves and follows Me will have the certain Way, the blessed Life and will know God; because God, besides being Love and Justice, is Truth. »

« You are a great Doctor. Wisdom emanates from every word of Yours. » He then turns to Simon: « I am happy that you have come back to my house, too,

after such a long absence. »

« I was not absent of my own accord. You are aware of my fate and of how many tears were shed during the life of the little Simon of whom your father was so fond. »

« I know. And I think that you know that I never spoke one word against you. »

« I know everything. My faithful servant told me that I am indebted also to you, if my property was respected. May God reward you for it. »

« I was influential in the Sanhedrin and I made use of my position to help, with justice, a friend of my house. »

« Many were the friends of mine and many were influential in the Sanhedrin. But they were not as just as you are… »

« And who is this? I seem to have met him… But I do not know where… »

« I am Thomas, called Dydimus… »

« Ah! Yes! Is your old father still alive? »

« Yes, still alive. In his business, with my brothers. I left him for the Master. But he is happy that I did. »

« He is a true Israelite, and, since he has got to the point of believing that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, he can but be happy that his son is amongst His favorites. »

They are now in the garden, near the house.

« I have kept Lazarus. He is in the library, reading a summary of the last meetings of the Sanhedrin. He did not want to stay because… I know that You are already aware… That is why he did not want to stay. But I said: "No. It is not fair that you should be so ashamed. No one will insult you in my house. Please stay. Who ignores his surroundings is alone against the whole world. And since in the world there is more wickedness than goodness, who is alone is knocked down and trodden on." Was I not right? »

« You were and You did the right thing » replies Jesus.

« Master… today there will be Nicodemus and… Gamaliel. Do You mind? »

« Why should I? I acknowledge his wisdom. »

« Yes. He was anxious to see You… and he wanted to insist on his point of view. You know… ideas. He says that he has already seen the Messiah, and that he is waiting for the sign that He promised him, at His revelation. He also says that You are "a man of God". He does not say: "the Man". He says: "a man of God". A rabbinical subtlety, isn't it? You are not offended, are You? »

« Subtlety. You are right. We must bear with them. The best ones will prune by themselves all the superfluous branches that make, them bear foliage and no fruit, and will come to Me. »

« I wanted to inform You of his words, because he will certainly repeat them to You. He is frank » points out Joseph.

« A rare virtue which I appreciate very much » replies Jesus.

« Yes. I also said to him: "But Lazarus of Bethany is with the Master." I told him… because… well, because of his sister. But Gamaliel replied: "Is she present? No? Well then? The mud falls off the garment which is no longer in the mud. Lazarus has shaken it off himself. And he does not contaminate my garment with it. And then I am of the opinion that if a man of God goes to his house, I, a doctor of the Law, can go there too." »

« Gamaliel's judgement is correct. He is a Pharisee and a doctor to the backbone, but still honest and just. »

« I am happy to hear You say so. Master, here is Lazarus. »

Lazarus bends down to kiss Jesus' tunic. He is happy to be with Him, but he is obviously agitated while waiting for the guests. I am sure that poor Lazarus, to his well known torment, known to men because handed down by history, has to add these moral sufferings, unknown to and ignored by most people, that is, the dreadful sting of the thought: « What will this man say to me? What does he think of me? How does he consider me? Will he offend me by means of words or scornful glances? » A sting that tortures all those who have a blot in their families.

They have now entered the very rich hall where the tables have been laid and they are waiting only for Gamaliel and Nicodemus, because four other guests have already arrived. I hear them being introduced with their respective names: Felix, John, Simon and Cornelius.

There is a great stir and rushing of servants when Nicodemus and Gamaliel arrive. Gamaliel is always stately in his snow-white robe which he wears with regal majesty. Joseph rushes to meet him and their reciprocal salutations are pompous exchanges of respect. Also Jesus is bowed and He bows to the great rabbi who greets Him with the salutation: « The Lord be with You » to which Jesus replies: « And may His peace always be your companion. » Also Lazarus bows down and all the others do likewise.

Gamaliel sits at the centre of the table, between Jesus and Joseph. Lazarus is beside Jesus, Nicodemus beside Joseph. The meal starts after the ritual prayers, which Gamaliel says after an oriental exchange of courteousness among the three main personages, that is, Jesus, Gamaliel and Joseph.

Gamaliel is very dignified but not proud. He listens more than he speaks. But anyone can understand that he ponders on every word of Jesus and often looks at Him with his deep dark severe eyes. When Jesus becomes silent because a subject has been exhausted, Gamaliel revives the conversation by means of a suitable question.

Lazarus at first is somewhat confused. But later he takes heart and he speaks, too.

No direct allusion is made to Jesus' personality until the meal is almost over. Then a discussion starts between the guest named Felix and Lazarus, who is later joined and supported by Nicodemus and finally by the guest named John, on miracles as proof in favor or against a person.

Jesus is silent. He sometimes smiles in a mysterious way, but is silent. Also Gamaliel is quiet. His elbow is leaning on the bed and he is staring at Jesus. He seems to be wishing to decipher some supernatural word engraved on the pale smooth skin of Jesus' thin face. He seems to be analysing every fibre of it.

Felix maintains that John's holiness is incontestable and from such undisputed and indisputable holiness he draws a conclusion unfavorable to Jesus Nazarene, the author of many famous miracles. He says:

« Miracles are not a proof of holiness because the life of the prophet John is devoid of them, and yet no one in Israel leads a life like his. There are no banquets, no friendships, no comforts for him. He suffers and is imprisoned for the sake of the Law. He lives in solitude, because although he has disciples, he does not live with them and he finds faults also in the most honest and thunders out against everybody. Whereas… eh! this Master here of Nazareth, has worked miracles, it is true, but I see that He, too, loves what life offers and does not disdain friendships and, forgive me if one of the Elders of the Sanhedrin says this to You, he is too easy in giving, in God's name, forgiveness and love to well known sinners marked by anathema. You should not do that, Jesus. »

Jesus smiles, but does not speak. Lazarus replies in His stead: « Our powerful Lord is free to direct His servants as and where He wishes. He granted the power of working miracles to Moses. He did not grant it to Aaron, His first High Priest. So? What is your conclusion? Is one more holy than the other? » Certainly answers Felix.

« Then Jesus is more holy, because He works miracles. »

Felix is disconcerted. But he raises a captious objection: « Aaron had already been given the pontificate. It was enough. »

« No, my friend » replies Nicodemus. « His pontificate was a mission. A holy mission, but nothing more than a mission. Not always and not all the high priests of Israel were holy men. And yet they were high priests, even if they were not holy. »

« You are not saying that the High Priest is a man devoid of grace!… » exclaims Felix.

« Felix… don't let us play with fire. You, Gamaliel, Joseph, Nicodemus and I, we all know many things… » says the guest named John.

« What? What? Gamaliel, say something!… » Felix is scandalized.

« If he is fair, he will speak the truth which you do not want to hear » say the three men who are bitter against Felix.

Joseph endeavors to bring about peace. Jesus is silent as well as Thomas, the Zealot and the other Simon, the friend of Joseph. Gamaliel seems to be playing with the fringes of his robe, but he looks at Jesus inquisitively.

« Speak then, Gamaliel » shouts Felix.

« Yes, do speak » say the three opponents.

« I say: the frailties of the family are to be concealed » says Gamaliel.

« That's not an answer! » shouts Felix. « It looks as if you are admitting that there are faults in the house of the High Priest. »

« He is the soul of truth » reply the three men.

Gamaliel draws himself up and turns towards Jesus. « Here is the Master Who overshadows the most learned men. Let Him speak about it. »

« You wish so and I obey. I say: a man is a man. A mission is beyond man. But man, invested with a mission, becomes capable of accomplishing it as a superman, when through a holy life, he has God as his friend. It is He Who said: "You are a priest according to the order given by Me." What is written on the Pectoral? "Doctrine and Truth". That is what the High Priest ought to possess. Doctrine is acquired by constant meditation, aiming at the knowledge of the Most Wise One. Truth is achieved by means of absolute loyalty to good. Who intrigues with evil, finds Falsehood and loses Truth. »

« Very well! You have replied as a great rabbi. I, Gamaliel, am telling You. You surpass me. »

« Let Him explain then, why Aaron did not work miracles and Moses did » raves Felix.

Jesus replies readily: « Because Moses had to impose himself on the dull, heavy and even hostile mass of the Israelites and had to succeed in having ascendancy over them, in order to bend them to the will of God. Man is the eternal savage and the eternal child. He is struck by what exceeds the common order of things. And a miracle is such. It is a light waved before dimmed eyes, it is a sound produced near plugged ears. It wakes people up. It draws their attention. It makes them say: "God is here." »

« You are saying that to Your own benefit » retorts Felix.

« To My benefit? What do I gain by working a miracle? Do I look taller if I stand on a blade of grass? Such is a miracle with regard to holiness. There are saints who never worked miracles. There are magicians and necromancers, who work them by means of dark powers, that is, they do superhuman things, which, however, are not holy, and they are demons. I shall be I, even if I work no more miracles. »

« Excellent! You are great, Jesus! » approves Gamaliel.

« And according to you, who is this great man? » urges Felix addressing Gamaliel.

« The greatest prophet I know, both with regard to His deeds and to His words » replies Gamaliel.

« He is the Messiah, I am telling you, Gamaliel. Believe me, you are wise and just » says Joseph.

« What? You too, the guide of the Judaeans, the Elder, our glory, are falling into this idolatry of a man? Who can prove to you that He is the Christ? I will not believe Him even if I see Him work miracles. Why does He not work one in front of us? You that praise Him, should tell Him, and you, too, that defend Him » says Felix to Gamaliel and Joseph.

« I did not invite Him to amuse my friends and I beg you to remember that He is my guest » replies Joseph gravely.

Felix gets up and goes away, a cross and rude man.

There is silence. Jesus turns to Gamaliel: « Are you not asking for miracles to believe? »

« It will not be the miracles of a man of God to remove the thorn I have in my heart, that is, three questions that are always without an answer. »

« Which questions? »

« Is the Messiah alive? Was it that one? Is it this one? »

« It is He, I tell you, Gamaliel! » exclaims Joseph. « Don't you think that He is holy? Different? Powerful? You do? Well, then? What are you waiting to believe? »

Gamaliel does not reply to Joseph. He turns to Jesus: « Once… do not be upset, Jesus, if I am tenacious of my ideas… Once, when the great wise Hillel was still alive, we both believed that the Messiah was in Israel. There was a great

brightness of a divine sunshine on that cold day in a bitter winter! It was Passover… Men were worried about the frozen crops… I said, after I heard those words: "Israel has been saved! As from today there will be abundance in the fields and blessings in our hearts! The Expected One has revealed Himself in His first refulgence." And I was not wrong. You may all remember the harvest of that embolismic year, a year of thirteen months, as it happens also this year. »

« Which words did you hear? Who spoke them? »

« One… a little more than a child… but God was shining on His innocent gentle face… I have been thinking of it and remembering it for the last nineteen years… and I try to hear that voice again… that spoke words of wisdom… In which part of the world does He now live? I ponder… He was God. In the appearance of a little boy in order not to frighten men. And like lightning that dashing across the sky appears flashing northwards, southwards, eastwards and westwards, He, the Divine Being, in His appearance of merciful beauty, with the face and voice of a child and a divine mind, wanders on the earth to say to men: "I am." So I think… When will He come back to Israel?… When? And I think: when Israel will become the altar for His feet; and my heart moans seeing the abjection of Israel: never. Oh! What a harsh reply! But true! Can the Holiness descend into Its Messiah as long as there is abomination amongst us? »

« It can and does descend, because it is Mercy » replies Jesus.

Gamaliel looks at Him pensively and then asks: « What is Your true Name? »

And Jesus stands up, stately, and says: « I am Who I am. The Thought and the Word of the Father. I am the Messiah of the Lord. »

« You?… I cannot believe it. Great is Your Holiness. But that Child, in Whom I do believe, said then:

"I will give a sign… These stones will vibrate when My hour comes." I am awaiting that hour to believe. Can you give it to me, to convince me that You are the Expected One? »

They are now both standing, tall, stately, one in his wide white linen robe, the other in his plain dark red woollen tunic, one elderly, the other young, both with deep dominating eyes, staring at each other. Jesus then lowers His right arm, which He had folded on His chest, and as if He were swearing, He exclaims: « You want that sign? And you will have it! I repeat the far off words: "The stones of the Temple of the Lord will vibrate hearing My last words." Wait for that sign, doctor of Israel, a just man, and then believe, if you wish to be forgiven and saved. Blessed before time, if you could believe before! But you cannot. Centuries of wrong beliefs, on a just promise, and heaps of pride, are your bulwark against Truth and Faith. »

« You are right. I will wait for that sign. Goodbye. The Lord be with You. »

« Goodbye, Gamaliel. May the Eternal Spirit enlighten you and guide you. »

They all greet Gamaliel who goes away with Nicodemus, John and Simon (the Sanhedrin member). Jesus, Joseph, Lazarus, Thomas, Simon Zealot and Cornelius stay.

« He will not bend!… I would like him to be one of Your disciples. He would be of conclusive weight in Your favor… But I am unable » says Joseph.

« Do not worry. No weight can save Me from the storm which is already approaching. But Gamaliel, if he does not bend in My favor, will not bend against Christ either. He is one who is waiting… » It all ends.

115. Cure of the Little Dying Boy. The Soldier Alexander. Intimation to Jesus.

22nd February 1945.

The interior of the Temple. Jesus is with His disciples very close to the real and true Temple, that is, to the Holy Place which only the priests could enter. It is a beautiful large courtyard which one enters through a hall and from which through an even richer court one reaches the high terrace on which is the cube of the Holy.

My effort is quite useless! If I should see the Temple a thousand times and describe it two thousand, I would always be defective in describing this stately labyrinth, both because of the complexity of the place, and of my ignorance of names and my incapacity to draw a chart…

They seem to be praying. Also many other Israelites, all men, are there praying

each on his own account. The evening of a dull November day falls early.

I hear people shouting and I perceive the cross stentorean voice of a man cursing also in Latin, mingled to shrill piercing Jewish voices. It is like the bustle of a struggle and the shrill voice of a woman shouts:

« Oh! Let him go! He says that He will save him. »

The concentration of the stately courtyard is broken. Many heads turn round towards the spot whence the voices are coming. Also Judas Iscariot, who is with the disciples, turns round. Tall as he is, he sees and says: « A Roman soldier is struggling to come in! He is violating, he has already violated the Holy Place! How horrible! » Many echo his words.

« Let me pass, you Jewish dogs! Jesus is here. I know! I want Him! I don't care about your stupid stones. The boy is dying and He will save him. Get away! Hypocritical hyenas… »

As soon as Jesus realizes that He is wanted, He goes towards the hall where the struggle is taking place, He reaches it and shouts: « Peace and respect to the place and to the hour of the offering. »

« Oh! Jesus! Hail! I am Alexander. Make room, you dogs! »

And Jesus says calmly: « Yes, make room. I will take the heathen elsewhere, as he does not know what this place is for us. »

They move aside and Jesus reaches the soldier, whose cuirass is stained with blood. « Are you wounded? Come. We cannot stay here » and He takes him through the other court and beyond it.

« I am not wounded. A little boy… My horse, near the Antonia, got out of hand and knocked him down. Its hooves split his head. Proculus said: “Nothing doing!” It's… it's no fault of mine… but it happened through me and his mother is desperate. I saw You passing by… and coming here… I said: “Proculus cannot, but He can.” I said: “Woman, come. Jesus will cure him.” Those mad people kept me back… and perhaps the child is dead. »

« Where is he? » asks Jesus.

« Under the arcade, in his mother's lap » answers the soldier already seen at the Fish Gate.

« Let us go » and Jesus walks away even faster, followed by His disciples and a train of people.

On the steps limiting the arcade, leaning against a column, there is a tormented woman, weeping over her dying child. The little boy is wan, his half open purple lips are breathing heavily as is typical of people whose brains have been injured. A bandage is tied round his head, stained with blood at the back of his neck and at his forehead.

« His head is split at the front and at the back. His brains can be seen. A head is tender at that age and the horse was a huge one and had been shod recently » explains Alexander.

Jesus is close to the woman, who does not even speak any more, agonizing as she is over her dying son. He lays His hand on her head. « Do not cry, woman » He says with all the kindness of which He is capable, that is with infinite kindness. « Have faith. Give Me your child. »

The woman looks at Him stupified. The crowd curse the Romans and pity the dying boy and his mother. Alexander is filled with anger, for the unfair charges, and with compassion and hope. Jesus sits beside the woman because He sees that she is unable to make any gesture. He bends down. He takes the little wounded head in His long hands, He bends lower, over the waxen little face, breathes over the wheezing little mouth… a few moments. Then He smiles, a smile hardly perceptible through His locks of hair which have fallen forward. He straightens Himself. The child opens his little eyes and makes the gesture of sitting up. His mother fears that it is his last movement and screams pressing him to her heart.

« Let him go, woman. Child, come to Me » says Jesus, still sitting beside the woman and stretching out His hands with a smile. And the boy throws himself confidently into those arms and weeps, not out of sorrow, but because of the fear which is coming back to him with his returning memory.

« There is no horse here, the horse is not here » Jesus assures him. « It is all over. Is it still painful here? »

« No, but I am afraid, I am afraid! »

« See, woman. It is nothing but fear. It will soon be over. Bring Me some water. The blood and bandages are affecting him. John, give Me one of the apples you have… Take, little one. Eat it. It is good… »

They bring water. It is the soldier Alexander who brings it in his helmet.

Jesus makes the gesture of undoing the bandage.

Alexander and the mother say: « No! He is coming round… but his head is split! … » Jesus smiles and unties the bandage. One, two, three, eight turns. He removes the blood-stained cloth. From the middle of his forehead to the back of his neck, on his right-hand side, it is all one clot of blood, still soft, among the child's hair. Jesus wets a bandage and washes…

« But underneath there is the wound… if You remove the clot it will start bleeding again » insists Alexander.

The mother closes her eyes not to see.

Jesus continues to wash. The clot melts… now the child's hair is clean. It is wet, but there is no wound underneath. Also his forehead is healed. There is only a tiny red mark where was the scar.

The crowd shout out of amazement. The woman dares to look and when she sees, she no longer controls herself. She throws herself on Jesus, embracing Him with her child and weeps. Jesus puts up with the effusion and the shower of tears.

« Thank You, Jesus » says Alexander. « I was sorry I had killed this innocent boy. »

« You have been good and trustful. Goodbye, Alexander. Go back to your work. »

Alexander is about to go away, when some officials of the Temple and some priests arrive like so many hurricanes. « The High Priest orders You, through us, to leave the Temple, You and the heathen desecrator. At once. You have upset the offering of the incense. That man has entered a place reserved exclusively to Judaeans. It is not the first time that the Temple has been disturbed because of You. The High Priest together with the Elders on duty, orders You never to put foot in here again. Go away, and stay with Your heathens. »

« We are not dogs either. He said: “There is only one God, creator of the Judaeans and of the Romans.” If this is His House and I was created by Him, I ought to be allowed to come in as well » replies Alexander, stung by the scornful tone in which the priests pronounce « heathens ».

« Be quiet, Alexander. I will speak » cuts in Jesus, Who has handed the boy back to his mother after kissing him, and is now standing up. He says to the group who are turning Him out: « No one can forbid a believer, a true Israelite, whom no one can prove guilty of sin, to pray near the Holy. »

« But to explain the Law in the Temple, yes, he can be forbidden. You assumed the right, without having it, and without asking for it. Who are You? Who knows You? How dare You usurp a name and a position which do not belong to You? »

Jesus looks at them with knowing eyes, He then says: « Judas of Kerioth, come here. »

Judas does not appear to be very enthusiastic about the invitation. He had tried to disappear as soon as the priests and the officials of the Temple arrived (however, they are not wearing military uniforms: it must be a civil office). But he is obliged to obey because Peter and Judas of Alphaeus push him forward.

« Judas, please answer. And you, look at him. You know him. He is of the Temple. Do you know him? »

They are obliged to reply: « Yes, we do. »

« Judas, what did I ask you to do when I spoke here for the first time? And why were you amazed? And what did I say to you in reply to your amazement? Speak and be frank. »

« He said to me: “Call the official on duty that I may ask him for permission to teach.” And he gave His name, He explained who He was and mentioned His tribe… and I was astonished as I considered it a useless formality, since He says that He is the Messiah. And He said to me: “It is necessary and when the hour comes, remember that I never lacked in respect to the Temple and its officials.” Yes. That is what He said. I must say so to honor the truth. » At the beginning Judas spoke somewhat uncertain, as if he were annoyed. Then, with one of his typical sudden changes, he became certain, almost arrogant.

« I am astonished that you should defend Him. You have betrayed our trust in you » says a priest to Judas reproachfully.

« I have not betrayed anyone. How many of you are of the Baptist! So, are they traitors? I am of Christ. That's all. »

« Well, He must not speak here. He may come as a believer. It is even too much for one who is friendly with heathens, prostitutes and excisemen… »

« Reply to Me, now » says Jesus, severe but calm. « Who are the Elders on duty? »

« Doras and Felix, Judaeans. Joachim of Capernaum and Joseph, Ituraean. »

« I understand. Let us go. Refer to the three accusers, because the Ituraean cannot have accused, that the Temple is not all Israel and Israel is not the whole world, and that the slobber of reptiles, however plentiful and most poisonous, will not drown the Voice of God, neither will its poison paralyse My going amongst men until the hour comes. And after… oh! tell them that after, men will do justice to the executioners and will raise the Victim making It their only love. Go. And let us go. » And Jesus covers Himself with His wide heavy dark mantle and goes out in the middle of His disciples.

Behind them is Alexander who stayed for the discussion. Outside the enclosure, near the Antonia Tower, he says: « I say goodbye to You, Master. And I ask You to forgive me for being the cause of a reproach for You. »

« Oh! Do not worry! They were looking for a pretext. If it was not you, it would have been someone else… In Rome you have games in the Circus with beasts and snakes, have you not? Well, I tell you that no beast is more wild and deceitful than a man who wants to kill another man. »

« And I tell You that I have travelled through all the regions of Rome, at Caesar's service. But nowhere amongst the thousands of people I have met, did I find anyone more divine than You. No, not even our gods are as divine as You are! They are vindictive, cruel, quarrelsome, liars. You are good. You are really a Man, not man. Hail, Master. »

« Goodbye, Alexander. Proceed in the Light. »

It all ends.

116. Jesus Speaks to Nicodemus, at Night, at Gethsemane.

24th February 1945.

Jesus is in the kitchen of the little house in the olive-grove, having supper with His disciples. They are talking of the events of the day, which, however, is not the special happening just described, because I hear them talking of other events, amongst which is the cure of a leper near the sepulchres, along the Bethphage road.

« There was also a Roman centurion watching » says Bartholomew. And he continues: « He asked me, while on horseback: “Does the man you follow often do such things?” and when I answered in the affirmative, he exclaimed: “Then He is greater than Aesculapius and will become richer than Croesus.” I replied: “He will always be poor, according to the world, because He never receives, but gives and only wants souls to take to the true God.” The centurion looked at me amazed, then spurred his horse and galloped away. »

« There was also a Roman lady in a litter. It must have been a woman. The curtains were not drawn but she was peeping through them. I saw her » says Thomas.

« Yes, it was near the top bend of the road. She had told them to stop when the leper cried: “Son of David, have mercy on me!” One of the curtains was then drawn and I saw her look at You through a valuable lens, then she laughed ironically. But when she saw that You cured him only by giving a command, she called me and asked me: “Is He the one they call the true Messiah?” I replied “Yes” and she said to me: “Are you with Him?” and then she asked: “Is He really good?” » says John.

« Then you saw her! What was she like? » ask Peter and Judas.

« Well!… A woman… »

« What a great discovery! » says Peter laughing. And the Iscariot insists: « But was she beautiful, young, rich? »

« Yes. I think that she was young and also beautiful. But I was watching Jesus more than I was looking at her. I wanted to see if the Master was setting out again… »

« Fool! » mumbles Judas between his teeth.

« Why? » asks James of Zebedee defending his brother. « My brother was not a dandy in search of affairs. He replied out of courtesy. But he did not lack in his first quality. »

« Which? » asks the Iscariot.

« That of a disciple, whose only love is the Master. »

Judas, very cross, lowers his head.

« In any case… it is not the right thing to be seen talking to the Romans » says Philip. « They are already accusing us of being Galileans, and thus less "pure" than Judaeans. And that because of our birth. Then they accuse us of staying often at Tiberias, a meeting place of Gentiles, Romans, Phoenicians , Syrians… and then… oh! of how many things they accuse us!… »

« You are good, Philip, and you are drawing a veil over the harshness of the truth you are telling. But the truth, without any veil, is this: of how many things they accuse Me » says Jesus Who has been quiet so far.

« After all, they are not completely wrong. Too many contacts with the heathens » says the Iscariot.

« Do you think that only those are heathens who have not Moses' law? » asks Jesus.

« Well, who else? »

« Judas!… Can you swear on our God that you have no heathenism in your heart? And can you swear that the most prominent Israelites have none? »

« Master… I do not know about the others… but I can swear with regard to myself. »

« According to you, what is heathenism? » asks Jesus again.

« It is to follow a false religion, to worship gods » replies Judas violently.

« Which are? »

« The gods of Greece and Rome, the Egyptian ones… that is the gods with thousands of names, and of non-existent people, who according to the pagans, fill their Olympus. »

« No other god exists? Only the Olympic ones? »

« Which other ones? Are they not already too many? »

« Too many, yes. But there are many more and incense is burnt at their altars by every man, also by priests, Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, all people of Israel, am I right? Not only, but it is burnt also by My disciples. »

« Ah! Certainly not! » they all say.

« No? My friends… Which of you does not have a secret cult, or several secret cults? One has beauty and smartness. Another the pride of his knowledge. Another bums incense to his hope of becoming a great man, from a human point of view. Another worships women. Another money… Another kneels down before his knowledge… and so on. I solemnly tell you that there is no man who is not stained with idolatry. Why then disdain those who are pagans by misfortune, when you remain pagans by your own free will, although you belong to the true God? »

« But we are men, Master » exclaim many of them.

« That is true. Then… be charitable to everybody because I have come for everybody and you are not worth more than I am. »

« However, we are being accused and Your mission is being obstructed. »

« It will be carried on just the same. »

« With regard to women » says Peter, who probably because he is sitting next to Jesus, is in such a transport of delight, that he is very good. « For some days, and precisely since You spoke at Bethany the first time after we came back to Judaea, a woman, all covered with a veil, has been following us all the time. I do not know how she finds out our intentions. I know that she is almost always either in the last rows of people listening to You when You speak, or behind the crowds that follow You when You walk about, or even behind us when we go announcing You in the country. At Bethany, the first time, she whispered to me

from behind her veil: “That man you said is going to speak, is He really Jesus of Nazareth?” I replied to her that He was and in the evening she was behind the trunk of a tree listening to You. Then I lost sight of her. But now, here in Jerusalem, I have seen her two or three times. Today I asked her: “Do you need Him? Are you not well? Do you want alms?” She always shook her head, because she never speaks to anyone. »

« One day she said to me: “Where does Jesus live?” and I said to her: “At Gethsemane” » says John.

« You clever fool! You shouldn't. You should have said: “Uncover your face. Make yourself known and I will tell you” » says the Iscariot, bad tempered.

« But when have we ever asked for such things?! » exclaims John, simple-minded and innocent.

« You can see other people. She is always veiled. She is either a spy or a leper. She must not follow us and learn about us. If she is spying, it is to harm us. Perhaps she is paid by the Sanhedrin for that… »

« Ah! Does the Sanhedrin use such methods? » asks Peter. « Are you sure? »

« Most certain. I was of the Temple and I know. »

« Lovely! That fits like a glove what the Master just said » remarks Peter.

« What? » Judas is already flushed with anger.

« That also amongst priests there are heathens. »

« What's that to do with paying a spy? »

« Quite a lot! Too much, indeed! Why do they pay? To overthrow the Master and triumph over Him. So they are placing themselves on the altar with their foul souls under their clean clothes » replies Peter with good common sense.

« Well, the fact is » cuts short Judas « that woman is dangerous to the crowd and to us. To the crowd if she is a leper, to us if she is a spy. »

« That is, to Him, eventually » replies Peter.

« But if He falls, we fall, too… »

« Ah! Ah! » laughs Peter and concludes: « And the idol will break into pieces, if it falls, and we lose our time, our reputation and perhaps our lives, then, Ah! Ah! it is better to try and not let it fall or… move away in time, is that right? I instead… look, I embrace Him closer. If He falls, overthrown by the traitors of God, I want to fall with Him » and Peter clasps Jesus in his short arms.

« I did not realise that I had done so much harm, Master » says John very sadly: he is facing Jesus. « Hit me, ill-treat me, but save Yourself. It would be dreadful if I were the cause of Your death!… I could never forgive myself. I feel that tears would leave burning marks on my cheeks and scald my eyes. What have I done! Judas is right: I am a fool. »

« No, John, you are not, and you did the right thing. Let her come. Always. And respect her veil. It may be worn as a protection in the struggle between sin and the desire for redemption. Do you know what wounds are caused on a being when such struggle takes place? Do you know how much one weeps and blushes? You, John, a dear son with the heart of a good child, you said that your face would be marked by tears if you were to cause harm to Me. But you must know that when a revived conscience begins to gnaw at the flesh, that was sinful, in order to destroy it and triumph with its soul, it must consume everything that was an attraction for the flesh, and the creature ages and withers under the blaze of the devouring fire. Only later, when redemption is complete, a second, holy and more perfect beauty is formed again, because it is the beauty of the soul that emerges from the eyes, from the smile, from the voice and from the honest pride on the forehead on which God's forgiveness has descended and shines like a diadem. »

« So I did not do the wrong thing?… »

« No, you did not. Neither did Peter. Leave her alone. Now you may all go and rest. I will stay with John and Simon, to whom I wish to speak. Go. »

The disciples withdraw. Perhaps they sleep in the oil-mill. I do not know. They go away, and they certainly do not go back to Jerusalem, where the gates have been closed for hours.

« You said, Simon, that Lazarus sent Isaac and Maximinus to you today, when I was at David's Tower. What did he want? »

« He wanted to tell You that Nicodemus is at his house and would like to speak to You secretly. I took the liberty of saying: “Let him come. The Master will wait for him at night.” You can be alone only by night. That is why I said to

You: “Dismiss them all, except John and me.” We need John to go to the Kidron bridge and wait for Nicodemus who is in one of Lazarus' houses, outside the wall. I had to stay to explain the situation. Have I done the wrong thing? »

« No, you have done the right thing. Go, John, to your place. »

Jesus and Simon are by themselves. Jesus is pensive. Simon respects His silence. But Jesus interrupts it suddenly and, as if He were concluding an internal thought in a loud voice, He says: « Yes. That is the best thing to do. Isaac, Elias and the others are sufficient to keep alive the idea which is becoming known amongst good and humble people. For the mighty ones… There are other means. There is Lazarus, Chuza, Joseph, and others… But the mighty ones… do not want Me. They tremble and are afraid for their power. I will go away from these Judaean hearts, who are becoming more and more hostile to the Christ. »

« Are we going back to Galilee? »

« No, but we are going far from Jerusalem. Judaea is to be evangelised. It is part of Israel, too. But here, you see what happens… Everything serves to accuse Me. I am withdrawing. And for the second time… »

« Master, here is Nicodemus » says John going in first.

They greet one another, then Simon takes John and goes out of the kitchen, leaving the two alone.

« Master, forgive me if I wanted to speak to You in secret. I do not trust many people with regard to You and myself. I am not acting entirely out of cowardice. It is also prudence and the desire to be of greater assistance to You, than if I belonged to You openly. You have many enemies. I am one of the few here who admire You. I sought Lazarus' advice. Lazarus is powerful by birth, he is feared because he stands high in the favour of the Romans, he is just in the eyes of God, he is wise by matured talent and learning, he is a true friend of Yours and mine. Those are the reasons why I wanted to speak to him. And I am happy that he came to the same conclusion as I did. I informed him of the last… discussions at the Sanhedrin about You. »

« The last accusations. Tell the plain truth. »

« The last accusations. Yes, Master. I was about to say: “Well, I am one of His followers, too” so that at least one would be in Your favour in that assembly. But Joseph, who was beside me, whispered: “Be quiet. Do not let us disclose our thoughts. I will explain later.” And when we came out he said: “It is better that way. If they know that we are His disciples, they will keep us in the dark about their thoughts and decisions, and will be able to harm Him and us. If, instead, they think that we are only inquiring into His life, they will not resort to subterfuges.” I realised that he was right. They are so… wicked! I also have my interests and my duties… and Joseph has his… You understand, Master… »

« I do not reproach you in any way. I was saying that to Simon, before you came here. And I have decided to go away from Jerusalem. »

« You hate us because we do not love You! »

« No. I do not hate even My enemies. »

« You say so. It is true. You are right. How sorrowful for me and Joseph! And Lazarus? What will Lazarus say, who today had decided to let You leave this place and go to one of the houses he owns in Zion. Lazarus is a very wealthy man. A large part of the town belongs to him as well as much land in Palestine. His father, to his own wealth and to Eucheria's, who belonged to Your tribe and family, added the reward of the Romans to their faithful servant, and he bequeathed a very large heritage to his children. And what matters more, a veiled but potent friendship with Rome. Without it, no one would have saved the household from abuse, after Mary's disgraceful behaviour, her divorce, which was granted to her only because of her position, her licentious life in that town which is his domain, and in Tiberias, the elegant brothel which Rome and Athens have turned into a prostitution bed for many of the chosen people. Truly, if the Syrian Theophilus had been a more convinced proselyte, he would not have given his children the Hellenistic upbringing which kills so much virtue and disseminates so much voluptuousness, and which, imbibed and expelled without any consequence by Lazarus and especially by Martha, infected and proliferated in the dissolute Mary and made her the disgrace of her family and of Palestine! No, without the powerful shelter of the favour of Rome, they would have been anathematised more than lepers. But since the situation is such, take advantage of it. »

« No. I am going to withdraw. Who wants Me will come to Me. »

« I should not have spoken! » Nicodemus is depressed.

« No. Wait and be convinced » and Jesus opens a door and calls: « Simon! John! Come here. »

The two disciples rush in.

« Simon, tell Nicodemus what I was saying to you when he arrived. »

« That the shepherds are sufficient for the humble people, Lazarus, Nicodemus and Joseph with Chuza for the mighty ones and that You are going away from Jerusalem without leaving Judaea. That is what You were saying. Why do You ask me to repeat it? What has happened? »

« Nothing. Nicodemus is afraid I might be going away because of what he told Me. »

« I told the Master that the Sanhedrin is more and more hostile, and that He ought to put Himself under Lazarus' protection. He protected your property because Rome is on his side. He would protect also Jesus. »

« It is true. It is good advice. Although my caste is disliked also by Rome, a word of Theophilus saved my property during my proscription and my leprosy. And Lazarus is very friendly to You, Master. »

« I know. But I have decided. And I do what I said. »

« We are going to lose You, then! »

« No, Nicodemus. Men of all sects go to the Baptist. Men of all sects and positions will be able to come to Me. »

« We came to You because we knew that You were greater than John. »

« You may still come. I will be a solitary rabbi like John, and I will speak to the crowds willing to hear the voice of God and capable of believing that I am that Voice. And the others will forget Me. If they are at least capable of that. »

« Master, You are sad and disappointed. And You are right. Everybody listens to You. And they believe in You so much that they obtain miracles. Even one of Herod's men, whose natural goodness must be corrupted by that incestuous court, even Roman soldiers believe in You. Only we in Zion are so hard… But not everybody. You know… Master, we know that You have come from God, that You are His doctor, and there is none greater than You. Also Gamaliel says so. No one can work the miracles that You work unless God is with him. Also learned people like Gamaliel believe that. Why then can we not have the same faith as the humble people of Israel? Oh! Tell me. I will not betray You, even if You should say to me: “I lied to corroborate My wise words with a seal that nobody can deride.” Are You the Messiah of the Lord? The Expected One? The Word of the Father, incarnate to teach and redeem Israel according to the Covenant? »

« Are you asking that by yourself, or have others sent you to ask it?. »

« By myself, Lord. I have a storm and a torment within me. Contrasting winds and voices. Why do I, a mature man, not have the Peaceful certainty that this fellow has, although he is almost illiterate and a boy, the certainty that gives such a smile to his face, such light to his eyes, such sunshine to his heart? How do you believe, John, to be so certain? Teach me, son, your secret, by means of which you were able to see and understand that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah! »

John becomes as red as a strawberry, he then bends his head, as if he were apologising for saying such a great thing, and replies simply: « By loving. »

« By loving! And what about you, Simon, an upright man, on the threshold of old age, you, a learned man, so tried as to be induced to fear deceit everywhere? »

« By meditating. »

« Loving! Meditating! I also love and meditate and I am not yet certain! »

Jesus cuts in saying: « I will tell you the true secret. They knew how to be born again, with a new spirit, free from all ties, virgin of all ideas. And they therefore understood God. If one is not born again, one cannot see the Kingdom of God nor believe in its King. »

« How can a grown man be born again? Ejected from his mother's womb, man cannot go back into it. Are You referring perhaps to reincarnation, in which many pagans believe? No, it is not possible of You. In any case it would not be going back into a womb, but a reincarnation beyond time. That is, not now. How? »

« There is but one life of the body in the world and only one eternal life of the soul beyond the world. Now I am not speaking of the flesh and blood, but of the

immortal spirit, which is born to true life by means of two things: through water and the Spirit. But the greater is the Spirit, without Whom water is but a symbol. He who has been cleansed through water, must then purify himself through the Spirit and through the Spirit he must become inflamed and shine, if he wishes to live in the bosom of God here and in the eternal Kingdom. Because what is born of the flesh, is and will remain flesh, and dies with the flesh after serving it in its carnal lusts and sins. But what is born of the Spirit is spirit and it lives going back to the Spirit of which it was born, after bringing up its own spirit to the perfect age. The Kingdom of Heaven will be inhabited only by those beings which have reached a perfect spiritual age. Do not be surprised, therefore, if I say: "It is necessary for you to be born again." These two knew how to be born again. The younger subdued the flesh and caused his spirit to revive by putting his ego on the stake of love. All matter was burnt. From the ashes there arose his fresh spiritual flower, a wonderful helianthus that turns towards the eternal Sun. The older one laid the axe of honest meditation to the root of his old way of thinking, he uprooted the old plant leaving only the shoot of good will, of which he caused his new thoughts to be born. He now loves God with a new spirit and sees Him. Everybody has his own method of reaching the harbour.

Every wind is good providing one knows how to unfurl the sails – You feel the wind blowing, and according to its direction you can adjust the brails. But you cannot tell where the wind comes from, neither can you call the one you need. Also the Spirit calls and It comes calling and passes by. But only who is alert can follow it. A son knows the voice of his father, the spirit knows the voice of the Spirit of which it was born. »

« How can that happen? »

« You, a teacher in Israel, are asking Me? Do you not know these things? We speak about and witness to what we know and have seen. Now, then, I speak about and witness to what I know. How will you ever be able to believe what you have not seen, if you do not believe the witness I am bearing to you? How can you believe in the Spirit, if you do not believe in the Incarnate Word? I have descended to ascend again and take with Me those who are down here. Only One descended from Heaven: the Son of Man. And only One will ascend to Heaven with the power to open Heaven: I, the Son of Man. Remember Moses. He raised a serpent in the desert to heal the diseases of Israel. When I am raised, those who are now blind, deaf, dumb, mad, lepers, ill because of the fever of sin, will be cured and whoever believes in Me will have eternal life. Also those who believe in Me, will have that blissful life. Do not bend your forehead, Nicodemus. I have come to save, not to lose. God did not send His Only-Begotten Son into the world so that those in the world might be condemned, but that the world might be saved through Him. In the world I have found all the sins, all the heresies, all the idolatries. But can the swallow flying swiftly over dust soil its feathers with it? No. It only takes along the sad roads of the earth a particle of blue sky, and the scent of the sky, it utters a call to rouse men and make them raise their eyes from the mud and follow its flight which returns to the sky. I do likewise. I have come to take you with Me. Come!… Who believes in the Only Begotten Son will not be judged. He is already saved, because the Son speaks in his favour to the Father and says: "He loved Me." But it is useless to perform holy deeds, if one does not believe. He has already been judged because he did not believe in the name of the Only-Begotten Son of God. Which is My Name, Nicodemus? »

« Jesus. »

« No. Saviour. I am Salvation. Who does not believe in Me, rejects his salvation and is judged by the eternal Justice. And this is the judgement: "Light was sent to you and to the world, in order to save you, but you and men preferred darkness to light, because you preferred evil actions, which were customary to you, to the good actions that He pointed out to you, that you might follow them and be saints." You hated the Light because evil-doers love darkness for their crimes, and you avoided the Light that It might not illuminate your hidden wounds. I am not referring to you, Nicodemus. But that is the truth. And the punishment will be proportioned to the judgement, both for individuals and for communities. With regard to those who love Me, and practise the truth I teach, and are therefore born in their spirits a second time, by a more genuine birth, I say that they are not afraid of the light, on the contrary they go towards it, because their own light increases the light by which they were enlightened, a reciprocal glory that makes God happy in His children and the children in the Father. No, the children of the Light are not afraid of being enlightened. Nay, in their hearts and by means of their deeds they say: "Not I, He, the Father, He, the Son, He, the Spirit, have worked the good in me. Glory be to them, forever." And from Heaven replies the eternal song of the Three Who love one another in their perfect Unity: "Eternal blessing to you, true son of Our will." John, remember those words when the time comes to write them. Nicodemus, are you convinced? »

« Yes, Master, I am. When will I be able to speak to You again? »

« Lazarus will know where to take you. I am going to him before going away from here. »

« I am going, Master. Bless Your servant. »

« My peace be with you. »

Nicodemus goes out with John.

Jesus addresses Simon: « Do you see the work of the power of Darkness? Like a spider, it lays its snares and entangles and imprisons who does not know how to die in order to be born again like a butterfly, so strong as to tear the dark cobweb and go beyond it, carrying on its golden wings pieces of shining network as a souvenir of its victory, like oriflammes and banners taken from the enemy. To die to live. To die to give you strength to die. Come, Simon, and rest. And God be with you. »

It all ends.

117. Jesus at Lazarus' House Before Going to the « Clear Water».

25th February 1945.

Jesus is climbing the steep path that takes one to the plateau on which Bethany is built. This time He is not going along the main road, He has taken another road which is steeper and faster and runs from northwest to east and is much less beaten, probably because it is so steep. Only wayfarers in a hurry make use of it; those who have herds and prefer to avoid the bustle of the main road; those, who, like Jesus today, do not wish to attract the attention of many people. He is climbing ahead of His disciples, talking animatedly to the Zealot. Behind, in a group, are His cousins with John and Andrew, then in another group James of Zebedee, Matthew, Thomas and Philip; Bartholomew, Peter and the Iscariot are last.

When they reach the plateau, on which Bethany looks very pleasant in the sunshine of a clear November day, and from which, looking eastwards, the Jordan valley and the Jericho road can be seen, Jesus tells John to go and inform Lazarus of His arrival. While John walks away fast, Jesus proceeds slowly with His disciples, and is greeted everywhere by local people.

The first person to come from Lazarus' house is a woman, who prostrates herself to the ground saying: « Happy is this day for the house of my landlady. Come, Master. Here is Maximinus, and there is Lazarus, at the gate. »

Also Maximinus comes towards them. I do not know exactly who he is. I am under the impression that he is either a relative, not quite so rich, entertained as a guest by Theophilus' children, or a steward of their large estates, treated as a friend because of his merits and his long service in the house. Perhaps he is the son of one of the stewards of the father, and has been given the same position by Theophilus' children. He is a little older than Lazarus, that is, he is about thirty-five years old, perhaps a little more. « We were not expecting to have You so soon » he says.

« I ask hospitality for one night. »

« If it was forever, You would make us very happy. »

They are at the entrance and Lazarus kisses and embraces Jesus and greets the disciples. Then holding his arm round Jesus' waist, he enters the garden with Him and departs from the others asking at once: « To what do I owe the joy of having You? »

« To the hatred of the members of the Sanhedrin. »

« Have they done You ill? Again? »

« No. But they want to. The time has not yet come. Until I have ploughed the whole of Palestine and sown the seed, I must not be overthrown. »

« You must also reap the harvest, my good Master. It is only fair that it should be so. »

« My friends will reap My harvest. They will use the sickle where I sowed. Lazarus, I have decided to go away from Jerusalem. I know it is of no use. I know beforehand. But it will enable Me to evangelise, if nothing else. In Sion I am denied also that. »

« I sent Nicodemus to tell You to go to one of my houses. No one dares to

violate it. You would fulfill Your mission without any trouble. And, oh! my house. It would be the most blessed of all my houses because it would be sanctified by Your teaching, by Your very breathing in it! Give me the joy of being useful to You, my Master. »

« You see that I am already giving you it. But I cannot stay in Jerusalem. I would not be molested, but those who came to Me would. I am going towards Ephraim, between this place and the Jordan. I will evangelise it and I will baptise as the Baptist did. »

« In that part of the country I have a little house. It is used to store the tools of workers. Sometimes they sleep there when making hay or at vintage time. It is a very poor house. Just a roof on four walls. But it is in my land. And it is known… And such knowledge will frighten jackals. Accept it, Master. I will send servants to prepare it… »

« It is not necessary. If your peasants sleep there, it will be quite sufficient also for us. »

« I will not make it magnificent, but I will add more beds, oh! plain ones, as You wish, and I will make them take blankets, seats, amphoras and cups. You must eat and cover yourselves, particularly during the winter months. Let me see to it. I do not even have to do it myself. Here is Martha coming. She has a practical and diligent talent for all household matters. She was born for the house and to be the comfort of the bodies and souls in the house. Come, my gentle and chaste hotel-keeper! See? I, too, have taken shelter under her motherly care, in her part of the heritage. Thus I do not miss my mother so badly. Martha, Jesus is retiring to the plain of the “Clear Water”. There is nothing beautiful there, except the soil which is fertile; the house is a sheepfold. But He wants a poor house. We must furnish it with the bare essentials. Give the orders, please, you are so clever! » and Lazarus kisses the beautiful hand of his sister who then lifts it to caress him with true motherly love.

Then Martha says: « I will go at once. I will take Maximinus and Marcella with me. The men of the wagon will help to sort things out. Bless me, Master, so that I may take with me something of Yours. »

« Yes, My kind hotel-keeper. I will call you as Lazarus did. I give you My heart to take with you, in your own heart. »

« Do You know, Master, that Isaac, Elias and the others are in this part of the country today? They asked me for pastures down in the plain, to be together for a little while, and I agreed. They are moving today. I expect them here for their meal. »

« I am glad. I will give them instructions… »

« Yes, so that we may keep in touch with one another. However, You will come now and again… »

« Yes, I will. I have already spoken to Simon about it. And as it is not fair that I should invade your house with My disciples, I will go to Simon's house… »

« No, Master. Why give me that pain? »

« Do not investigate, Lazarus. I know it is the right thing. »

« But, then… »

« But, then, I will always be in your domains. What even Simon does not know, I do know. He who wanted to purchase, without showing himself and without discussion, to be near Lazarus of Bethany, was the same son of Theophilus, the faithful friend of Simon the Zealot and the great friend of Jesus of Nazareth. It is one whose name is Lazarus, who doubled the amount of money for Jonah and did not deduct it from Simon's substance to give him the joy of being able to do a lot for the poor Master and for the poor of the Master. It is Lazarus of Bethany, who discreetly and diligently organises, guides and helps all the good efforts to assist, comfort and protect Me. I know. »

« Oh! don't say that! I thought I had arranged things so well and secretly! »

« There is secrecy for men. Not for Me. I read into hearts. Shall I tell you why your natural goodness is tinged with supernatural perfection? Because you are asking for a supernatural gift, the salvation of a soul, your own holiness and Martha's. And you feel that it is not enough to be good according to the world, but it is necessary to be good according to the laws of the spirit, to receive grace from God. You did not hear My words. But I said: “When you do a good deed, do it secretly, and the Father will give you a great reward.” You did it out of a natural inclination to humility. And I solemnly tell you that the Father is preparing for you a reward that you cannot even imagine. »

« Mary's redemption?!… »

« That, and much, much more. »

« What then, Master, more than that is impossible? »

Jesus looks at him and smiles. He then says in the tone of a psalm:

« The Lord reigns and His saints with Him. With His beams He interlaces wreaths and lays them on the heads of His saints. That they may shine forever in the eyes of God and of the universe.

Of what material is it made? Of which stones is it adorned? Gold, most pure gold is the ring, made with the double fire of the divine love and the love of man, chiselled by the will that hammers, files, cuts and refines.

Pearls in great abundance and emeralds more green than grass in April, turquoises as blue as the sky and opals as translucent as the moon, amethysts like chaste violets, and jaspers and sapphires and hyacinths and topazes. They are set for a whole lifetime.And a ring of rubies as the final touch, a great crown on the glorious forehead.

Because the blessed man will have had faith and hope, he will have had meekness and chastity, moderation and strength, justice and prudence, infinite mercy and at the end he will have written with his blood My Name and his faith in Me, his love for Me, and his name in Heaven.

Rejoice, just people of the Lord. Man does not know and God sees. In eternal books He writes My promises and your deeds, and your names with them, princes of the future century, eternally triumphant with the Christ of the Lord. »

Lazarus looks at Him amazed. He then whispers: « Oh!… I… will not be able…»

« Do you think so? » And Jesus picks a flexible willow branch hanging loose over the path and says: « Look: as My hand easily bends this branch, so love will mould your soul and make an eternal crown of it. Love is the individual redeemer. Who loves begins his own redemption. The Son of man will accomplish its fulfillment. »

It all ends.

118. Jesus at the «Clear Water ». Preliminaries for Life in Common with the Disciples.

26th February 1945.

If this little low rustic house is compared to the Bethany house, it is certainly a sheepfold, as Lazarus says. But if it is compared to the houses of Doras' peasants, it is quite a good dwelling.

It is very low and very wide, of solid structure, it has a kitchen, that is, a huge fireplace in a room completely blackened with smoke, in which there is a table, some chairs, amphoras and a rustic rack with plates and cups. A large coarse wooden door gives light to it as well as access. On the same wall as this door, there are three more doors, giving access to three long narrow rooms, with whitewashed walls and a beaten earthen floor, as in the kitchen. In two of the rooms there are some light beds. The rooms look like little dormitories. The large number of hooks fixed in the walls testify that tools and probably agricultural products were hung there. They now serve as clothes-hooks for mantles and haversacks. The third large room (it is a corridor, rather than a room, because its length is out of proportion to its width) is empty. It must have been used also to shelter animals because there is a manger and rings on the wall, and on the floor are the typical holes dug by shod hooves. There is nothing in it at present.

Outside, close to this last room, there is a large rustic porch, consisting of a roof supported by coarse barked tree trunks covered with brushwood and slates. It is not really a porch, but a shed, because it is open on three sides: two are at least ten yards long, the third side, the narrow one, is about five yards long, not more.

In summer a vine stretches its branches from one trunk to another on the southern side. The vine is now bare and shows its skeleton branches; also a huge fig-tree is now bare, but in summer it must shade the large basin in the centre of the threshing floor, which was certainly used to water animals. Beside it there is a rough well, that is, a hole on ground level; it is encompassed by only one row of flat, white stones.

That is the house where Jesus will stay with His disciples in the place called «Clear Water ». It is surrounded by fields, or rather by meadows and vineyards, and about three hundred yards away (please do not take as articles of faith the measurements I give) I can see another house in the middle of fields. It looks nicer because there is a terraced roof, which this house has not got. Olive groves

and woods beyond the other house prevent one from seeing any farther.

Peter, his brother and John are working eagerly, sweeping the threshing floor and the rooms, sorting the beds and drawing water. Peter is bustling around the well to sort and reinforce the ropes and make it more practical and easy to draw water. Jesus' cousins instead are working with hammer and files at the locks and shutters, and James of Zebedee helps them sawing and using a hatchet like a shipyard worker.

Thomas is busying himself in the kitchen and seems an experienced cook by the way he controls fire and flames and because of his skill in cleaning the vegetables which handsome Judas condescended to bring from the nearby village. I understand that there is a village, a large or small one, because Judas says that they bake bread twice weekly and consequently there was no bread on that day.

Peter hears him and says: « We will make some cakes. There is flour over there. Quick, take your tunic off and knead it, and then I will cook them. I know how to do it. » I cannot help laughing when I see that the Iscariot stoops to mixing the flour, in his under-tunic, getting thoroughly covered with it. Jesus is not present. Also Simon, Bartholomew, Matthew and Philip are absent.

« Today is the worse day » replies Peter to the mumbling of Judas of Kerioth. « It will be easier tomorrow. And in spring everything will be just right… »

« In spring? Are we staying here forever? » asks Judas frightened.

« Why? Is this not a house? It does not rain in it. There is drinking water. And a fireplace. What else do you want? It suits me very well. Also because I do not smell the stench of Pharisees and company… »

« Peter, let us go and haul in the nets » says Andrew and drags his brother away before he and the Iscariot start quarrelling.

« That man does not like me » exclaims Judas.

« No, you can't say that. He is so frank with everybody. But he is good. It's you that is always discontented » replies Thomas, who, on the contrary, is always in high spirits.

« The reason is that I thought it was something different… »

« My Cousin does not prevent you from going to different things » says James of Alphaeus calmly. « I think that we all believed that it was a different thing to follow Him, because we were stupid. It is because we are stubborn and very proud. He never concealed the danger and fatigue in following Him. »

Judas grumbles between his teeth. The other Judas, Thaddeus, who is working at a kitchen shelf, which he wants to convert into a cupboard, replies to him: « You are wrong. Also according to our habit, you are wrong. Every Israelite must work. And we are working. Is work such a burden to you? I don't feel it, because since I have been with Him, all work is light. »

« I do not regret anything either. And I am happy to be just at home now » says James of Zebedee.

« We will do a lot, here!… » remarks Judas of Kerioth ironically.

« In short, what do you want? What do you expect? A satrap's court? I cannot bear you to criticise what my Cousin does. Is that clear? » bursts out Thaddeus.

« Be quiet, brother. Jesus does not approve of these disputes. Let us speak as little as possible and do as much as possible. It will be better for all concerned. On the other hand… if He is not successful in changing our hearts… can you possibly hope to do it by your words? » says James of Alphaeus.

« The heart that does not change is mine, isn't it? » asserts the Iscariot aggressively.

But James does not reply to him. He holds a nail between his lips and at the same time he nails some boards vigorously, making such a loud noise, that Judas' grumbling cannot be heard.

Some time goes by, then Isaac and Andrew come in together, the former carrying eggs and a basket of fresh sweet-smelling loaves, the latter with some fish in a fishing basket.

« Here » says Isaac. « The steward sends these and he wants to know if there is anything we need. That is the instruction that he got. »

« Do you see that we are not starving to death? » says Thomas to the Iscariot. He then says: « Andrew, give me the fish. How lovely it is! But how do you cook it?… I don't know how to do it. »

« I'll see to that » says Andrew. « I'm a fisherman » and in a comer he starts

gutting his fish, still alive.

« The Master is coming. He has made a tour of the village and of the country. You will see that people will be coming soon. He already cured a man whose eyes were diseased. I had already been all over the country and they were informed… »

« Of course! I… I! The shepherds do everything… We have given up a safe quiet life, at least I have, and we have done many things, but apparently we have done nothing… »

Isaac, astonished, looks at the Iscariot but… very wisely does not reply. The others do likewise… but they are boiling with rage.

« Peace to you all. » Jesus is at the entrance, smiling lovingly. The sunshine seems to increase in brightness at His arrival. « How clever of you! You are all at work! Can I help you, cousin? »

« No, have a rest. I have finished. »

« We are laden with foodstuffs. Everybody wanted to give us something. If all men had the kind hearts of the humble people! » says Jesus somewhat sad.

« Oh! My Master. May God bless You! » It is Peter who is coming in carrying a bundle of sticks on his shoulders and who from under his load thus greets Jesus.

« And may the Lord bless you too, Peter. You have been working hard! »

« And we will work even harder in our free time. We have a villa in the country! And we will make an Eden of it. In the meantime I have sorted the well, so that by night we can see where it is, and make sure that we don't lose our pitchers when drawing water. Then… see how clever Your cousins are? They have prepared all the things which are necessary for those who have to live in a place for a long time, and about which I, a fisherman, would not have known anything at all. Really clever. Also Thomas. He could work in Herod's kitchen. Also Judas is clever. He made lovely cakes… »

« But quite useless. There is bread now » replies Judas in a bad temper.

Peter looks at him and I am expecting a sharp reply, but Peter shakes his head, sorts the ashes and lays his cakes on them.

« Everything will soon be ready » says Thomas. And he laughs.

« Are You speaking today? » asks James of Zebedee.

« Yes, between the sixth and the ninth hour. Your companions said so. So let us eat at once. »

After some time John puts the bread on the table, arranges the seats, lays the cups and amphoras, while Thomas brings the boiled vegetables and the roasted fish.

Jesus is in the centre, He offers and blesses, hands the food out and they all eat with relish. They are still eating when some people appear on the threshing floor. Peter gets up and goes to the door: « What do you want? »

« The Rabbi. He is not speaking here? »

« Yes, He is. But He is eating now because He is a man, too. Sit over there and wait. » The little group go under the rustic shed.

« But it is getting cold and it will often rain. I think we ought to use that empty stable. I cleaned it thoroughly. The manger will be His seat… »

« Don't talk nonsense! The Rabbi is a rabbi » says Judas.

« What nonsense! If He was born in a stable, He can speak from a manger! »

« Peter is right. But, please, be friendly to one another » Jesus seems tired of repeating these words.

They finish eating and Jesus goes out at once to meet the little crowd.

« Wait, Master » Peter shouts after Him. « Your cousin has made a seat for You because the soil is damp under there. »

« It is not necessary. You know that I speak standing up. The people want to see Me and I want to see them. You should rather make some seats and light beds. Some sick people may come… and they will be needed. »

« You are always thinking of other people, my good Master! » says John, kissing His hand. Jesus goes towards the little crowd smiling somewhat sadly. All the disciples go with Him.

Peter, who is beside Jesus, makes Him bend down and whispers to Him: « The veiled woman is behind the wall. I have seen her. She has been there since this

morning. She has followed us from Bethany. Shall I send her away or leave her? »

« Leave her. I said so. »

« But, if she is a spy, as the Iscariot says? »

« She is not. Rely on what I tell you. Leave her alone and say nothing to the others. And respect her secret. »

« I did not say anything, because I thought it was better… »

« Peace to you, who are looking for the Word » begins Jesus. And He goes to the end of the shed with His back to the house. He speaks slowly to about twenty people sitting on the ground or leaning against the trunks, in the warmth of a faint November sunshine.

« Man falls into error when considering life and death and applying these two nouns. He calls "life" the period of time in which, born of his mother, he begins to breathe, to nourish himself, to move, to think, to act; and he calls "death" the moment when he ceases breathing, eating, moving, thinking, acting and he becomes cold insensitive remains, ready to go back into a bosom: a sepulcher. But it is not so. I want to make you understand "life", and point out to you the actions suitable to life.

Life is not existence. Existence is not life. Also this vine which is interwined around these columns, exists. But it does not possess the life of which I am speaking. Also that bleating sheep, tied to that far off tree, exists. But it does not have the life of which I am speaking. The life of which I am speaking does not begin with the existence of the body and does not cease with the ending of the flesh. The life to which I refer does not start in a mother's womb. It begins when a soul is created by the Thought of God to dwell in a body, it ends when sin kills it.

Man, at first, is but a seed that grows, a seed of flesh, instead of gluten or of marrow, like the seeds of cereals and of fruit. At first he is but an animal taking shape, the embryo of an animal like the one now swelling in the womb of that sheep. But the moment that this incorporeal part, which is also the most powerful in its subliming incorporeity, is infused into the human conception, then the animal embryo does not only exist as a beating heart, but it lives according to the Creating Thought, and becomes man, created in the image and likeness of God, the son of God, the future citizen of Heaven.

But that happens if life lasts. Man can exist having only the image of man, but no longer being man. That is, he is a sepulcher in which life putrifies. That is why I say: "Life does not begin with existence and does not cease with the ending of the flesh." Life begins before birth. Life, then, never ends, because the soul does not die, that is, it does not fall into nothingness. It dies to its destiny, which is the celestial destiny, but it survives its punishment. It dies to that blissful destiny, by dying to Grace. This life, hit by a canker which is the death of its destiny, lasts throughout centuries in damnation and torture. This life, if preserved as such, reaches the perfection of living, by becoming eternal, perfect, blissful like its Creator.

Have we any obligations to life? Yes, we have. It is a gift of God. Every gift of God is to be used and preserved carefully, because it is as holy as the Donor. Would you ill-use the gift of a king? No. It is handed down to the heirs, and to the heirs of the heirs, as a glory to the family. Why then ill-treat a gift of God? How is this divine gift to be used and preserved? How is this heavenly flower of the soul to be kept alive to preserve it for Heaven? How can you achieve "to live" above and beyond existence? Israel has clear laws on the matter and has only to comply with them. Israel has prophets and just people who set examples and explain how to observe the laws. Israel has now also its saints. Israel cannot, should not err. I see stained hearts and dead souls swarming everywhere. So, I say to you: do penance; open your souls to the Word; practise the immutable Law; give fresh blood to the worn out "life" which is languishing within you; if it is already dead, come to the true Life: to God. Bewail your sins. Shout: "Mercy!" But rise from the dead. Do not be dead people alive, so that in future you may not suffer eternally. I will speak to you only of the way to reach and preserve life. Another man said to you: "Do penance. Cleanse yourselves of the impure fire of lust, of the mud of sin." I say to you: My poor friends, let us study the Law together. Let us hear in it, once again, the fatherly voice of the true God. And then let us pray together the Eternal Father saying: "May Your mercy descend into our hearts."

It is now gloomy winter. But spring will come before long. A dead soul is more sad than a forest made bare by frost. But if humility, good will, penance and faith penetrate you, life will come back to you, like a forest in spring, and you will blossom to God, to bear the everlasting fruits of true life in future, in the future of centuries without end.

Come to Life! Cease existing only and begin “to live”. Death, then, will not be the “end”, but the beginning. The beginning of a never ending day, of a peaceful immeasurable joy. Death will be the triumph of what lived before the flesh, and the triumph of the flesh called to eternal resurrection, to take part in this Life that, in the name of the true God, I promise to all those who “want” that “life” for their souls, crushing under their feet sensuality and passions, to enjoy the freedom of the children of God.

Go. Every day, at this time, I will speak to you of the eternal truth. The Lord be with you. »

The crowd disperse slowly making comments. Jesus goes to the solitary house and it all ends

119. Jesus at the «Clear Water»: « I am the Lord Your God.»

27th February 1945.

« Here He comes » many shout.

« Mercy! I am ashamed! » says the guilty man who is about to run away.

« Where are you running, My son? Is there so much darkness in your heart that you hate the Light to the extent of having to flee before it? Have you sinned so much as to be afraid of Me, Who am Forgiveness? What sin can you have committed? Even if you had killed God you should not be afraid, if you were truly repentant. Do not weep! Or come: we will weep together.» Jesus, Who by lifting one hand had ordered the fleeing man to stop, now holds him tight to Himself, and then turns to those who are waiting and says:
« Just one moment. That I may comfort this heart. Then I will come to you.»

And He walks beyond the house and going round the corner He knocks against the veiled woman, who was standing there listening. Jesus stares at her for a moment. He walks ten more steps and stops.

« What have you done, son?»

The man falls on his knees. He is about fifty years old. His face is ravaged by many passions and a secret torture. He stretches his arms and shouts: « I killed my mother and brother... to have all my father's heritage and enjoy it with women... I have had no more peace... My food... blood! My sleep... nightmares... My pleasures... Ah! in the lap of women, in their lustful cries, I felt the cold body of my dead mother and I heard the death-rattle of my poisoned brother. Cursed be pleasure women, they are asps, medusae, unappeasable morays... my ruin! »

« Do not curse. I do not curse you...»

« Are You not cursing me?»

« No. I weep and I take your sin upon Me!... How heavy it is! It breaks My limbs. But I clasp it to consume it for you... and I give you forgiveness. Yes. I forgive you your big sin.» He lays His hands on the head of the sobbing man and prays: « Father, My Blood will be shed also for him. For the time being, here are My tears and My prayer. Father, forgive, because he is repentant. Your Son, to Whose judgement everything is left, wants it!...

He remains thus for a few minutes, He then bends, raises the man and says to him. « Your sin is forgiven. It is for you to expiate what is left of your crime, through a life of penance.»

« God has forgiven me. And my mother? My brother?»

« What Gods forgives, everybody forgives. Go and sin no more.» The man cries louder and kisses His hand. Jesus leaves him to let him weep. He goes back to the house. The veiled woman makes a gesture as if she wanted to go and meet Him, but she bends her head and does not move. Jesus passes in front of her without looking at her.

He is now in His place. He speaks: « A soul has gone back to the Lord. Blessed be His omnipotence that snatches from the demon's snares the souls He created and takes them back on to the way to Heaven. Why was that soul lost? Because it had lost sight of the Law. It is said in the Book that the Lord showed Himself on Sinai in all His fearful might, to say by means of it: “I am God. This is My will. And this is the lightning I hold ready for those who will rebel against the will of God.” And before speaking He ordered that none of the people should go up to contemplate Him Who is, and that also the priests should be purified before approaching the limit of God, that they might not be struck. Because it

was the time of justice and of trials. Heaven was closed, as if by a stone, on the mystery of Heaven and on the wrath of God, and only the swords of justice flashed from Heaven on the guilty children. But not now. Now the Just One has come to consume all justice and the time has come, when without lightning and without limitations, the Word of God speaks to man to give him Grace and Life.»

« The first word of the Father and Lord is this: "*I am the Lord Your God.*"

There is not one instant of the day in which this word is not uttered by the voice of God and is not written by His finger. Where?

Everywhere. It is repeated continuously by everything. By grass and stars, by water and fire, by wool and food, by light and darkness, by health and illness, by wealth and poverty. Everything says: "I am the Lord. You received that from Me. One thought of Mine gives it to you, another thought takes it away from you, there is no power of armies or of defence that can shield you from My will." It shouts in the voice of the wind, it sings in the murmur of water, it gives off scent in the sweet smell of flowers, it is engraved on mountain tops, and it whispers, speaks, calls, shouts in consciences: "I am the Lord your God."

Never forget that! Do not close your eyes, your ears, do not suffocate your consciences, so that you may not hear that word. In any case it stands and the moment will come when it will be written by the fiery finger of God on the walls of banqueting halls or on the waves of rough seas, on the smiling lips of a child, or on the pallor of a dying old man, on a sweet-smelling rose or on a fetid sepulchre. The moment will come when in the exhilaration of wine and pleasure, in the bustle of business, in the rest at night, during a lonely walk, it will raise its voice and say: "I am the Lord your God" and not the flesh that you kiss so avidly, and not the food that you gobble so greedily, and not the gold that you hoard so stingily, and not the bed in which you idle, and neither taciturnity, nor loneliness, nor sleep can silence it. "I am the Lord your God", the Companion Who will not abandon you, the Guest you cannot drive out. Are you good? Then the guest and companion is a good Friend. Are you wicked and guilty? Then the guest and companion becomes the angry King and gives no peace. But He does not leave you. Separation from God is granted only to damned souls. But the separation is their unappeasable and eternal torture.

"I am the Lord your God" and it adds "Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery." Oh! He really says that just now! And from what Egypt He is bringing you out, towards the promised land, which is not this place, but Heaven! The eternal Kingdom of the Lord, where there is no hunger or thirst, cold or death, but everything will exude joy and peace and every soul will be replete with peace and joy. He is now releasing you from real slavery. Here is the Redeemer. It is I. Every human ruler may die, and through his death slaves may be set free. But Satan does not die. He is eternal. He is the ruler who has fettered you in order to drag you wherever he wishes. You are sinners and sin is the chain by means of which Satan holds you. I have come to break the chain. I am coming in the name of the Father and because I wanted to come. The promise which has not been understood is therefore now being fulfilled: "I brought you out of Egypt and of slavery."

This is now being fulfilled spiritually. The Lord your God is bringing you out of the land of the idol who seduced the First Parents, He frees you from the slavery of sin, He clothes you once again with Grace and admits you to His Kingdom. I solemnly tell you that those who come to Me will be able to hear the Most High say to the blessed hearts, in a soft fatherly voice: "I am the Lord your God and I am drawing you to Me, free and happy."

Come. Turn your hearts and faces, your prayers and will to the Lord. The hour of Grace has come. »

Jesus has finished. He passes by blessing and He caresses an old woman and a swarthy smiling little girl.

« Cure me, Master. I am suffering so much!» says the man affected with gangrene.

« Your soul first. Do penance...»

« Baptise me as John did. I cannot go to him. I am not well. »

« Come. » Jesus goes down towards the river, which is on the other side of two very large meadows and is hidden by a wood. He takes His sandals off and so does the man who has dragged himself there on crutches. They go down to the river bank and Jesus, cupping His hands, pours the water on the head of the man, who is in the river up to half his shin.

« Take your bandages off, now. » Jesus tells him while going back up to the path.

The man obeys. His leg is healed. The crowd shout their astonishment.

« Also I!»

« Also I!»

« Baptise me, too!» shout many.

Jesus, Who is already half way along the path, turns round: « Tomorrow. Go now and be good. Peace be with you. »

It all ends and Jesus goes back to the house, to the dark kitchen although it is early afternoon.

The disciples gather round Him. Peter asks: « What was the matter with the man You took behind the house?»

« He needed to be purified. »

« But he did not come back and he was not there asking to be baptised. »

« He went to where I sent him. »

« Where?»

« To expiate, Peter. »

« In jail?»

« No. To do penance for the rest of his life. »

« Does one not get purified by water?»

« Also tears are water. »

« That is true. Now that You have worked a miracle, I wonder how many people will come!... They were already twice as many today...»

« Yes. If I had to do everything, I would not be able to. You will baptise. At first, one at a time, then two, three, then many. And I will preach and cure the sick people and the guilty ones. »

« Are we to baptise? Oh! I am not worthy! Dispense me, Lord, from that mission! I need to be baptised!» Peter is on his knees imploring.

But Jesus bends down and says: « You will be the very first one to baptise, as from tomorrow. »

« No, Lord! How can I do that if I am blacker than that chimney?» Jesus smiles at the sincere humility of His apostle on his knees against His own knees, on which he has joined his coarse big fisherman's hands. He then kisses Peter on his forehead, just below his rough grey curly hair: « There you are. I baptise you with a kiss. Are you happy?»

« I would commit another sin to have another kiss!»

« No. You must not mock at God by taking advantage of His gifts. »

« Will You not give a kiss also to me? I have sins, too. » says the Iscariot.

Jesus stares at him. His look, which changes so easily, turns from the brightness of joy that made it so clear while speaking to Peter, to a severe, and I would say, tired gloom, and He says:

« Yes... also to you. Come. I am not unfair to anybody. Be good, Judas. If you only wanted!... You are young. You have a whole lifetime to climb higher and higher, up to the perfection of holiness...» and He kisses him.

« Now, it is your turn, Simon, My friend. And yours, Matthew, My victory. And yours, wise Bartholomew. And yours, faithful Philip. And yours, cheerful Thomas. Come, Andrew, silently active. And you, James, of our first meeting. And you now, joy of your Master. And you, Judas, companion of my childhood and youth. And you, James, whose look and heart remind Me of the Just One. You have all had My kiss. But remember that great is My love, but also your good will is required. Tomorrow you will be taking one step forward in your lives as My disciples. And remember that every step forward is an honour and an obligation. »

« Master... one day You said to me, John, James and Andrew, that You would teach us how to pray. I think that if we prayed as You do, we would become worthy of doing the work that You want us to do. » says Peter.

« Also then I replied to you: “When you are sufficiently formed, I will teach you the sublime prayer. To leave you My prayer.” But even that prayer will be nothing if you say it only with your lips. For the time being, ascend to God with your souls and your will. Prayer is a gift God grants to man and that man

presents to God. »

« What? Are we not yet worthy of praying? The whole of Israel prays...» says the Iscariot.

« Yes, Judas. But from her deeds, you can see how Israel prays. I do not want to make traitors of you. Who prays with an external attitude, and internally is against good, is a traitor. »

« And when are You going to make us work miracles?» Judas asks again.

« We... miracles? Eternal mercy! And yet, we drink nothing but water! Miracles... us? Boy, are you crazy?» Peter is scandalised, frightened and is beside himself.

« He told us, in Judaea. Did You not?»

« Yes, it is true. I did. And you will work them. But as long as there is too much flesh in you, you will not work miracles. »

« We will fast. » says the Iscariot.

« It is of no use. By flesh I mean the corrupted passions, the triple craving and the train of vices that follow the treacherous triple craving... Like the children of a filthy bigamous union, the pride of the mind gives birth, through the greed for flesh and power, to all the evil that is in man and in the world. »

« For You we have left everything. » replies Judas.

« But not yourselves. »

« Must we die then? We would do it to be with You. At least I would...»

« No. I am not asking for your material death. I want animality and Satanism to die in you, and they do not die as long as the flesh is satisfied and falsehood, pride, anger, arrogance, gluttony, avarice, sloth are in you. »

« We are such faulty men near You, Who are so holy!» whispers Bartholomew.

« And He has always been so holy. We know. » states His cousin James.

« He knows what we are... Therefore we must not lose heart. We must just say: give us day by day strength to serve You. If we said: “We are without sin” we would be deceived and we would be deceivers. Of whom? Of ourselves who know what we are, even if we do not want to tell? Of God, Who cannot be deceived? But if we say: “We are weak and sinners. Help us with Your strength and forgiveness” God will not disappoint us and in His goodness and justice He will forgive us and cleanse us of the iniquity of our poor hearts. »

« May you be blessed, John. Because the Truth speaks through your lips which are scented with innocence and only kiss the adorable Love. » says Jesus standing up, and He draws to His heart His best-loved disciple, who had spoken from his dark corner.

120. Jesus at the «Clear Water»: « You shall have no gods in My Presence. »

28th February 1945.

« It is said: “You shall have no gods in My presence. You shall not make yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything in heaven or on the earth beneath or in the waters under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a strong and jealous God and I punish the father's faults in the sons, the grandsons, and the great-grandsons of those who hate Me, but I show kindness down to the thousandth generation of those who love Me and keep My commandments”». Jesus' voice resounds in the large room crowded with people; it is in fact raining and they have all taken shelter in it. In the first row there are four invalids, that is, a blind man led by a woman, a child covered with sores, a woman yellow with jaundice or malaria, and a man who has been carried there on a stretcher.

Jesus is speaking leaning against the empty manger. John and the two cousins, Matthew and Philip are near Him, while Judas, Peter, Bartholomew, James and Andrew are at the entrance door letting in those who arrive late. Thomas and Simon are moving amongst the people telling children to be quiet, collecting alms and listening to requests.

« You shall have no gods in My presence».

« You have heard how God is omnipresent with His eyes and His voice. Truly, we are always in His presence. Whether we are locked in a room or are amongst

the crowds in the Temple, we are in His presence. If we are concealed benefactors hiding our faces also from the people we help, or murderers who attack and kill wayfarers in a lonely gorge, we are always in His presence. A king in the middle of his court, a soldier on the battlefield, a Levite inside the Temple, a wise man bent over his books, a peasant in the furrows, a merchant at his desk, a mother watching over a cradle, a bride in her nuptial room, a virgin in the secrecy of her father's dwelling, a child studying at school, an old man lying down to die, they are all in His presence. They are all in His presence and also the actions of men are in His presence. All the actions of men! A dreadful word! And a comforting one! Dreadful if the actions are sinful, comforting if they are holy. To know that God sees us, prevents us from doing evil and encourages us to do good. God sees that I am doing the right thing. I know that He does not forget what He sees. I believe that He rewards good deeds. I am therefore certain that I shall be rewarded and I rest on that certainty. It will give me a happy life and a placid death, because both in life and in death my soul will be comforted by the bright light of God's friendship. That is the reasoning of a person who does good. But why do evil-doers not consider that idolatry is one of the forbidden things? Why do they not say: “God sees that whilst I simulate a holy cult, I worship a false god or false gods, to whom I have erected an altar unknown to men but known to God”?

Which gods, you may object, if even in the Temple there is no image of God? Which are the faces of these gods, if it was impossible for us to give a face to the true God? Yes, it is impossible to elaborate a face, because the Perfect and Most Pure One cannot be worthily represented by man. Only the spirit can catch a glimpse of the incorporeal and sublime beauty and can hear His voice and appreciate the caresses which He bestows upon a holy person worthy of such divine contact. But the sight, the hearing, the hand of man cannot see or hear, and therefore they cannot repeat with sound on a lyre, with a mallet and a chisel on marble, what the Lord is. Oh! endless happiness when you, souls of just people, will see God! The first glance will be the dawn of the blessedness which will be your companion for centuries without end. And yet what we cannot do for the true God, man does for false gods. And one erects an altar to woman; another to gold; another to power; another to science; another to military triumphs; one worships a mighty man, equal to himself by nature, but greater in arrogance or luck; another worships himself and says: “There is no one like me.” Such are the gods of those who are the people of God.

Do not be astonished at the heathens who worship animals, reptiles and stars. How many reptiles, how many animals, how many dead stars you worship in your hearts! Lips utter lies to flatter, to possess, to corrupt. Are those not the prayers of secret idolaters? Hearts brood over thoughts of vengeance, of illicit trades, of prostitution. Are those not the cults devoted to the impure gods of lust, greed, wickedness?

It is said: “You shall adore nothing but your true, one, eternal God.” It is said: “I am a strong jealous God.”

Strong: no other strength is greater than His. Man is free to act, Satan is free to tempt. But when God says: “Enough” man can no longer do wrong, Satan can no longer tempt. The latter is driven back to his hell, the former is checked in his misuse of evil doing, to which there is a limit, beyond which God does not allow anyone to go.

Jealous. Of what? Of which jealousy? Of the petty jealousy of petty men? No. The holy jealousy of God for His children. The just, loving jealousy. He created you. He loves you. He wants you. He knows what is harmful to you. He is aware of what is capable of separating you from Him. And He is jealous of what interposes between the Father and His children and diverts them from the only love which is health and peace: God. Understand that jealousy which is not mean, is not cruel, is not restrictive of freedom. It is infinite love, infinite goodness, unlimited freedom, which gives Itself to the limited creature, to draw it to Itself and in Itself forever, and associate it to Its infinity. A good father does not want to enjoy his wealth by himself. But he wants his children to enjoy it with him. After all he accumulated his riches more for his children than for himself. God acts likewise but He conveys to His love and desire the perfection which is in all His actions.

Do not disappoint the Lord. He promises the guilty fathers and the children of the guilty children punishment. And God always keeps His promises. But do not be disheartened, o children of man and of God. Listen to the other promise and rejoice: “I show kindness down to the thousandth generation of those who love Me and keep My commandments.” Down to the thousandth generation of good people. And to the thousandth fault of the poor children of man, who fall not out of wickedness but because of their thoughtlessness and Satan's snares. And His kindness is even greater. I tell you that He stretches His arms out towards you, if with penitent hearts and faces washed by tears you say: “Father, I have sinned. I know. I humble myself and I confess my sin to You. Forgive me. Your

forgiveness will be my strength to start 'living again' the true life.”

Do not be afraid. Before you committed sins out of weakness, He knew that you would sin. His Heart is closed only if you persist in your sin and want to sin, thus making of a certain sin or of many sins your gods of horror. Demolish every idol, make room for the True God. He will descend in His glory to consecrate your hearts, when He sees that He is the only one in you.

Give God's dwelling back to Him. His abode is not in the temples built with stones, but in the hearts of men. Wash its threshold, clear its interior from all useless or sinful decorations. Only God. He only. He is everything! In no way is inferior to Paradise the heart of a man in which God dwells, the heart of a man who sings his love to the divine Guest.

Of every heart make a Heaven. Start your cohabitation with the Most High. In your eternal future it will improve in power and joy. But even here it will exceed the trembling amazement of Abraham, Jacob and Moses. Because it will no longer be the dazzling, frightening meeting with the Mighty One, but the permanent life with Father and Friend Who descends to say: “It is a joy for Me to be amongst men. You make Me happy. Thank you, son.”»

The crowd, over a hundred people, break the spell after some time. Some become aware that they are weeping, some that they are smiling at the same hope of joy. At last the crowd seem to awake, they seem to whisper, to sigh vigorously, and finally utter a cry as of liberation: « May You be blessed! You are opening for us the way of peace!»

Jesus smiling replies: « Peace is with you, if from now on you follow good. »

He then goes towards the invalids. He touches with His hand the child, the blind man, the woman who is completely yellow, He bends over the paralytic and says: « I want it. »

The man looks at Him and then shouts: « There is warmth in my dead limbs!» and he stands up, as he is, until they pull a blanket from his little bed over him, and the mother lifts her child, who is no longer covered with sores, and the blind man winks at the first contact with light, and women shout: « Dina is no longer as yellow as buttercups. »

The place is in utter confusion. Some people shout, some bless, some push to see, some try to go out and tell the village. Jesus is assailed from all directions. Peter sees that they are almost crushing Him and he shouts: « Boys! They are suffocating the Master! Come and let us make room. » and with great efforts the twelve disciples elbow their way through the crowd, kicking also a few shins, and they free the Master and take Him out. « I will see to this tomorrow» he says. « You will stay at the door and the others at the other end of the room. Have they hurt You?»

They seemed to have gone mad. What manners!

« Leave them. They were happy... and so was I. Go to those who want to be baptised. I am going to the house. Judas, you and Simon will give alms to the poor. Give them everything. We have much more than is fair for the apostles of the Lord. Peter, go. Do not be afraid of doing too much. I will justify you with the Father, because I am ordering you to do it. Goodbye, friends. »

And Jesus, tired and wet with perspiration, goes into the house, while each of the disciples does his duty among the pilgrims.

121. Jesus at the «Clear Water»: « You shall not take My Name in vain. »

1st March 1945.

All the disciples are in utter confusion. They are so restless that they look like a beehive which has been upset. They speak and cast sidelong glances outside in all directions… Jesus is not there. At last they make up their minds about what is worrying them and Peter says to John: « Go and look for the Master. He is in the wood near the river. Tell Him to come at once or to let us know what we are to do. » John runs away.

The Iscariot says: « I don't understand the reason for so much excitement and unkindness. I would have gone and welcomed him with full honours… His visit is an honour for us. So… »

« I don't know. He may be different from his foster brother.. But… who lives with hyenas catches their smell and instinct. In any case, you would like to send that woman away… But mind what you do! The Master does not want, and I

have to protect her. If you touch her… I am not the Master… Just for your information. »

« Oh! Who is she after all?! Perhaps the beautiful Herodias? »

« Don't be facetious. »

« Don't blame me. You have kept a royal watch over her, like a queen… »

« The Master said to me: “Make sure she is not disturbed and respect her.” And that is what I am doing. »

« But who is she? Do you know? » asks Thomas.

« I don't. »

« Come on, tell us… You know… » insist many of them.

« I swear that I know nothing. The Master certainly knows. But I don't. »

« We must get John to ask Him. He tells him everything. »

« Why? What is special about John? Is your brother a god? »

« No, Judas. He is the best of us all. »

« You can save yourselves the trouble » says James of Alphaeus. « My brother saw her yesterday, when he was coming back from the river with the fish Andrew had given him, and he asked Jesus. And He replied: “She has no face. She is a soul seeking God. She is nothing else for Me and I want her to be so for every body.” And He said “I want” in such a way, that I would advise you not to insist. »

« I will go to her » says Judas Iscariot.

« Just try, if you can » says Peter, flushing like a cockerel.

« Are you going to play the spy and inform Jesus? »

« I leave that profession to those of the Temple. We, people of the lake, earn our bread working, not informing. Never be afraid of an accusation from Simon of Jonas. But don't provoke me and don't take the liberty of disobeying the Master, because I am here… »

« And who are you? A poor man like me. »

« Yes. Nay I am poorer, rougher, and more ignorant than you are. I know, but it does not worry me. I would worry if I were like you as far as my heart is concerned. But the Master gave me that task and I am fulfilling it. »

« Like me with regard to your heart? What is there in my heart that is so disgusting? Speak, accuse me, offend me… »

« For heaven's sake, stop it » burst out the Zealot and Bartholomew. « Stop it, Judas. Respect Peter's grey hair. »

« I respect everybody, but I want to know what there is in me… »

« I will serve you at once… Let me speak… There is pride, enough to fill this kitchen, there is falsehood and lust. »

« Me false? »

They all cut in and Judas is compelled to be quiet.

Simon says quietly to Peter: « Excuse me, my friend, if I say something to you. He has his faults, but you have some, too. And one is that you do not bear with young people. Why don't you take into account their age, their birth… many things? See, you are acting for Jesus' sake. But don't you realise that such arguments are tiring Him? I am not asking him (and he points at Judas) but I am begging you, a mature and honest man. He has so much trouble because of His enemies. Why should we increase His afflictions? There is so much hostility around Him. Why should we give rise to it also in His own nest? »

« It is true. Jesus is very sad and He has also lost weight » says Judas Thaddeus. « At night I can hear Him tossing and turning in His bed, and sighing. Some nights ago I got up and I saw Him crying while praying. I asked Him: “What is the matter?” And He embraced me and said: “Be friendly to Me. How toilsome it is to be the Redeemer!” »

« I also met Him in the wood near the river after He had evidently wept » says Philip. « And at my inquisitive glance He replied: “Do you know what makes Heaven different from the earth, apart from the difference of the lack of God's visible presence? It is the lack of love amongst men. It chokes Me like a halter. I have come here to scatter seeds for the little birds and be loved by creatures that love one another.” »

Judas Iscariot (he must be somewhat deranged) throws himself on the ground and cries like a boy.

At that moment Jesus comes in with John: « What is the matter? Why cry?… »

« It's my fault, Master. I made a mistake. I reproached Judas too harshly » says Peter frankly.

« No I… I am to be blamed. I am causing You trouble I am not good I disturb, I make people cross, I disobey, I am Peter is right. But help me to be good! Because I have something here, in my heart, that makes me do things that I would not like to do. It is stronger than I am… and I cause trouble to You, Master, to Whom I would like to give only joy… Believe me! It is true… »

« Of course, Judas. I have no doubt. You have come to Me with a sincere heart, with true enthusiasm. But you are young… Nobody knows you, you do not know yourself as well as I do. Get up and come here. Later we will speak all by ourselves. In the meantime let us speak of the matter for which you all sent for Me. What harm is there if also Manaen has come? Can a relative of Herod not thirst for the true God? Are you afraid for Me? No, do not be afraid. Have faith in My word. That man has come for an honest purpose. »

« Why did he not make himself known then? » ask the disciples.

« Exactly because he comes as a 'soul' and not as Herod's fosterbrother. He has kept silence because he thinks that the relationship with a king is nothing before the word of God… We shall respect his silence. »

« But if, instead, he has been sent by him?… »

« By whom? By Herod? No. Do not be afraid. »

« Who sends him then? How does he know about You? »

« Through my cousin John. Do you think that when in jail he did not speak of Me? Through Chuza… through the voice of the crowds… through the very hatred of the Pharisees… Also the leaves of trees and the air speak of Me, now. A stone has been thrown into the still water and a stick has struck the bronze. The waves are spreading out wider and wider conveying the revelation to far away waters and the sound entrusts it to space… The earth has learned to say: "Jesus" and will never stop mentioning it. Go and be kind to him as you are to anybody else. Go. I am staying here with Judas. »

The disciples go out.

Jesus looks at Judas who is still weeping and asks him: « Well? Have you nothing to tell Me? I know everything about you. But I want to hear it from you. Why are you weeping? And above all, why this derangement whereby you are always so dissatisfied? »

« Yes, Master! You have said it. I am jealous by nature. You certainly know. And I suffer seeing… seeing so many things. It makes me restless and… unfair. And I become bad whereas I would not like to… »

« Do not start weeping again! Of what are you jealous? Get accustomed to speaking with your true soul. You speak a lot, even too much. But how? With your instinct and your mind. You follow a difficult and twisted route to say what you want to say: I am talking of you, of your ego, because with regard to what you have to say of other people or to other people, you show no restraint or limitation. Neither do you show restraint or limitation to your flesh. It is your mad horse. You are like a charioteer to whom the race manager has given two mad horses. One is your sensuality, the other… shall I tell you what the other one is? Shall I? It is the error that you do not want to tame. You are a capable but reckless charioteer, you rely on your capability and you think it is enough. You want to be first… you do not want to waste time in changing at least one horse. On the contrary you spur them and flog them. You want to be "the winner". You are anxious to be applauded… Do you not realise that victory is certain when it is conquered by constant, patient and prudent work? Speak to your soul. I want your confession to originate from there. Or have I to tell you what there is within you? »

« I find that You are not fair or constant either, and I suffer because of that. »

« Why do you accuse Me? In what have I failed in your eyes? »

« When I wanted to take You to my friends, You refused saying: "I prefer to be with humble people." Then Simon and Lazarus told You that it was better to seek the protection of some mighty person and You agreed. You are partial to Peter, Simon, John… You… »

« What else? »

« Nothing else, Jesus. »

« Nonsense!… Bubbles on the foam of the waves. I feel sorry for you, because you are a poor wretch torturing yourself, whilst you could be rejoicing. Can you say that this place is luxurious? Can you deny that there was an urgent reason that compelled Me to accept it? If Zion were not such a harsh stepmother to its prophets, would I be here, hiding like one who is afraid of human justice and takes shelter in a sanctuary? »

« No. »

« Well, then? Can you say that I did not entrust you with missions as I did with the others? Can you say that I have been severe with you when you were wrong? You have not been sincere… The vineyards!… Oh! Your vineyards! What were the names of those vineyards? You were not sympathetic to those who were suffering or were redeeming themselves. You were not even respectful to Me. And the others noticed it… And yet only one voice always defended you: Mine. The others would be entitled to be jealous, because if there was one who was protected, that one was you. »

Judas weeps downhearted and moved.

« I am going. This is the hour when I belong to everybody. You stay here and meditate. »

« Forgive me, Master. I will have no peace until You have forgiven me. Don't be sad because of me. I am a bad boy… I love and I torture… With my mother… and with You. And I would do the same with my wife if I should get married… It would be better if I died!… »

« It would be better if you mended your ways. But you are forgiven. Goodbye. » Jesus goes out and closes the door.

Peter is outside: « Come, Master. It is already late. And there is a lot of people. It will soon be dark. And you have not had any food… That boy is the cause of everything. »

« That "boy" needs you all so that he will no longer be the cause of all these things. Try and remember that, Peter. If he were your son, would you pity him? … »

« H'm! I might and I might not. I would pity him… but… although he is a grown up man, I would teach him something, as if he were a naughty boy. If he were my son, he would not be like that… »

« That is enough. »

« Yes, it's enough, my Lord. There is Manaen. The one whose mantle is so dark red that it seems black. He gave me this for the poor and he asked me if he can stay and sleep here."

« What did you tell him? »

« The truth: "We have only beds for ourselves. Go to the village." »

Jesus does not say anything. But he leaves Peter in the lurch and goes towards John, to whom He says something. He then goes to His place and starts speaking.

« Peace be to you all and may light and holiness come to you with peace. It is said: "You shall not take My Name in vain."

When does one take it in vain? Only when one curses it? No. Also when one utters it without making oneself worthy of God. Can a son say: "I love and honour my father" if he does the very opposite to what his father wants from him? One does not love his father by saying: "father, father". One does not love God, by saying: "God, God".

In Israel where, as I explained to you the day before yesterday, there are so many idols in the secrecy of hearts, there is also a hypocritical praise to God, to which the deeds of the praisers do not correspond. There is also a trend in Israel: they find so many sins in exterior things and do not want to find them where they really are, in interior things. In Israel there is also a silly pride, an anti-human and anti-spiritual habit: the Name of our God uttered by pagan lips is considered swearing and the Gentiles are forbidden to go near the true God, because that is considered a sacrilege.

That was the situation so far. But it is no longer so…

The God of Israel is the same God Who created all men. Why prevent creatures from feeling the attraction of their Creator? Do you think that heathens do not feel something in the bottom of their hearts, something unsatisfied, that shouts, stirs, seeks? Whom? What? The unknown God. And do you think that if a pagan moves towards the altar of the unknown God, to the incorporeal altar which is the soul in which there is always the remembrance of its Creator, the soul which

expects to be possessed by the glory of God, like the Tabernacle erected by Moses according to the order given to him, the soul that weeps until such possession does not take place, do you think that God will reject the pagan's offer as one rejects a profanation? And do you consider a sin the action caused by the honest desire of a soul that aroused by celestial summons says: “I am coming” to God Who says to it: “Come”, whilst you consider holiness the corrupted cult of an Israelite who offers to the Temple what is left over from his pleasures, and goes into the presence of God and mentions the name of the Most Pure One, with body and soul polluted by countless foul sins?

No. I solemnly tell you that the perfect sacrilege is committed by the Israelite who with his impure soul takes the Name of the Lord in vain. His Name is taken in vain, when you are aware, and you are not fools, that you pronounce it in vain because of the state of your souls. Oh! I see the indignant face of God which disgusted turns elsewhere when a hypocrite calls Him or an unrepentant soul mentions Him! And I am terrified although I do not deserve the divine wrath.

I read in many of your hearts this thought: “Well, with the exception of children, no one can mention God's name, because in all men there is impurity and sin.” No. Do not say that. That Name is to be invoked by sinners. It is to be invoked by those who feel they are choked by Satan and want to free themselves from sin and from the Seducer.

It is said in Genesis that the Serpent tempted Eve when the Lord was not walking in Eden. If God had been in Eden, Satan could not have been there. If Eve had invoked God, Satan would have fled. Always have that thought in your hearts. And call the Lord with sincerity. That Name is salvation. Many of you wish to descend into the river to be purified. Purify your hearts, unceasingly, writing upon them, by means of love, the word: God. No false prayers. No habitual practices. But say that Name: God, with your hearts, your thoughts, your deeds, with your whole selves. Repeat it that you may not be alone. Repeat it to be supported. Repeat it to be forgiven.

Understand the meaning of the word of the God of Sinai: the name of God is taken “in vain” when saying “God” does not imply a change for the better. Then it is a sin. It is not taken “in vain”, when, like the beating of your hearts, every minute of your day, every honest deed, need, temptation, sorrow bring to your lips the filial word of love: “Come, my God!” Then, truly, you do not sin mentioning the holy Name of God.

Go. Peace be with you. »

There are no sick people. Jesus remains under the shed, where the shades of evening are falling, leaning against the wall, with folded arms. He is watching those who are going away riding their little donkeys, or are hurrying towards the river to be purified or are going to their villages across the fields.

The man wearing the very dark red mantle seems uncertain as to what to do. Jesus is watching him. The man eventually moves and goes towards his horse; he has, in fact, a beautiful white horse adorned with a red caparison dangling under the studded saddle.

« Man, wait for Me » says Jesus and He goes towards him. « It is getting dark. Have you a place where to sleep? Have you come from far? Are you alone? »

The man replies: « From very far… and I will go… I don't know…To the village, if I find… if not… to Jericho. I left my escort there, as I did not trust them. »

« No. I offer you My bed. It is already made. Have you any food?, »

« No, I have none. I was expecting to find a more hospitable place… »

« It lacks nothing. »

« Nothing. Not even hatred for Herod. Do You know who I am? »

« There is only one name for those who look for Me: brothers in the Name of God. Come. We will share our bread. You can put Your horse in that large room. I will sleep there and I will watch it for You… »

« No. I will never allow that. I will sleep there. I accept Your bread but nothing more. I will not put my unclean body where You rest Your holy one. »

« Do you think that I am holy? »

« I know You are holy. John, Chuza… Your deeds… Your words… The royal palace is resounding with them like a shell murmuring the noise of the sea. I used to go to John… then I lost him. But he had said to me: “One Who is greater than I am will take you and raise you.” It could be but You. I came when I found out where You were. »

They are by themselves under the shed. The disciples are speaking in low voices

near the kitchen and are casting sidelong glances at them.

The Zealot, who was the baptizer today, comes back from the river with the people who have been baptised last. Jesus blesses them and then says to Simon: « This man is the pilgrim who is seeking shelter in the name of God. And in the name of God we greet him as a friend. »

Simon bows and the man does likewise. They go into the large room and Manaen ties his horse to the manger. John, beckoned by Jesus, rushes in with some grass and a pail of water. Also Peter comes in with a small oil lamp, because it is already dark.

« This will do very nicely. May God reward you » says the gentleman and then between Jesus and Simon he enters the kitchen where a bundle of brushwood, which has just been lit, gives light.

It all ends.

122. Jesus at the «Clear Water»: « Honour Your Father and Your Mother. »

3rd March 1945.

Jesus is walking slowly up and down the bank of the river. It is very early in the morning, because the fog of a dreary winter day is still lying amongst the reeds along the river banks. There is nobody, as far as the eye can see, on either bank of the Jordan. There is only the low mist, the babbling of water against the reeds, the murmuring of the river, the water of which is rather muddy because of the rain of the previous days, the short, sad calls of a few birds, as they are wont when the love-season is over and birds pine away because of the season and of scarcity of food.

Jesus listens to them and He seems to be very interested in the call of a little bird, which with clock precision turns its little head northwards and chirps plaintively, then it turns its head southwards and repeats its inquiring chirp without any reply. At last the little bird seems to have received a reply from the other bank and it flies away, across the river, with a little cry of joy. Jesus makes a gesture as if to say: « Good!» and resumes walking.

« Am I disturbing You, Master? » asks John, who has come from the meadows.

« No. What do you want? »

« I wanted to tell You... I think it is a bit of information which may give You relief and I have come at once, also to seek Your advice. I was sweeping our large rooms when Judas Iscariot came in. He said to me: “I will help you.” I was amazed because he is never anxious to do such humble things even when he is told... but all I said was: “Oh! Thank you! I will be quicker and we will do a better job.” He began to sweep and we finished very quickly. He then said: “Let us go into the wood. It is always the older ones who bring in the wood. It is not fair. Let us go. I am not very good at it. But if you teach me...” And we went. And while I was there tying the faggots, he said to me: “John, I want to tell you something.” “Yes, do” I said. And I thought it might be a bit of criticism. Instead he said: “You and I are the youngest. We ought to be more united. You are almost afraid of me, and you are quite right, because I am not good. But believe me... I do not do it deliberately. Sometimes I feel the need of being bad. Perhaps, as I was the only son, I have been spoiled. And I would like to become good.

The older ones, I know, are not very fond of me. Jesus' cousins are annoyed because... well, I have not behaved well with them and also with their cousin. But you are good and patient. Be good to me. Imagine that I am your brother, a bad brother, whom you must love even if he is bad. Also the Master says that we must behave like that. When you see that I am not doing exactly the right thing, tell me. And then don't leave me always alone. When I go to the village, come with me. You will help me not to do wrong. Yesterday I suffered very much. Jesus spoke to me and I looked at Him. In my silly grudge I did not look at myself or at others. Yesterday I looked and I saw... They are quite right in saying that Jesus is suffering... and I feel that it is also my fault. I no longer want to be the cause of His pain. Come with me. Will you come? Will you help me to become better?”

That is what he said, and, I confess it, my heart was beating like the little heart of a sparrow caught by a boy. It was throbbing out of joy because I will be happy if he becomes good, and I am happy also for Your sake, and my heart was beating also out of fear, because... I would not like to become like Judas. Then I remembered what You told me the day You accepted Judas, and I replied: “Yes,

I will help you. But I must obey if I receive different orders...” I thought, I will now tell the Master, and if He agrees, I will go with him, if He does not agree, I will ask Him to order me not to leave the house.”

« Listen, John. I will let you go. But you must promise Me that if you feel that anything is upsetting you, you will come and tell Me. You have given Me a great joy, John. Here is Peter with his fish. Go, John. »

Jesus addresses Peter: « A good catch? »

« H'm. Not really. Very small fish... But everything helps. James is grumbling because an animal gnawed at the rope and he lost his net. I said to him: “Was it not entitled to eat, too? You should feel pity for the poor animal.” But James does not see it that way... » says Peter laughing.

« Exactly what I say of one who is a brother of yours. And what you are not capable of doing. »

« Are You talking of Judas? »

« Yes, I am. And he suffers for it. His intentions are good but his tendencies are perverse. But tell Me something, My experienced fisherman. If I wanted to go on a boat on the Jordan and reach the lake of Gennesaret, what should I do? Would I succeed? »

« Eh! It would be hard work! But you would succeed with small flat boats... A laborious task, You know. And a long one! It would be necessary to measure the depth continuously, to watch the banks, the shoals, the little floating woods, the current. A sail is of no use in such cases, on the contrary... But do You want to go back to the lake following the river? Don't forget that it is hard work to go against the stream. You need many people, otherwise... »

You are quite right. When a man is vicious, he must go against the stream to go back to the straight and narrow path and he cannot succeed by himself. Judas is exactly one of them. And you are not helping him. The poor fellow is going along all by himself, he knocks against the bottom, he runs into shoals, he gets entangled in the little floating woods, and is caught in the maelstroms. On the other hand, if he is measuring the depth, he cannot hold the rudder at the same time or use the oars. Why then should he be reproached if he does not proceed? You feel sorry for strangers, but not for him, although he is your companion. That is not fair. See over there, he and John are going to the village to get bread and vegetables. He asked, as a favour, not to go alone. And he asked John, because he is not a fool, and he knows what you older ones think of him. »

« And You have sent him? Supposing also John should get spoiled? »

« Who? My brother? Why should he get spoiled? » asks James who has just arrived with his net, which he has recovered in a bed of reeds.

« Because Judas is going with him. »

« Since when? »

« As from today, and I have allowed him to go. »

« Well, if You allow him... »

« And I advise you all to do the same. He is left by himself too much. Do not be only judges for him. He is not any worse than many. But he has been more spoiled, since his childhood. »

« Yes, it must be so. If his father had been Zebedee and his mother Salome, he would not be like that. My parents are good. But they do not forget that they have rights and duties over their children. »

« What you said is true. I will speak of that today. Let us go now. I see that the crowds are already moving across the meadows. »

« I don't know what we will have to do to live. There is no longer time to eat, to pray, to rest. . . and the crowd is getting larger and larger. » says Peter, half amazed and half annoyed.

« Do you mind? It is a sign that there are still people seeking God. »

« Yes, Master. But You suffer because of it. Yesterday You were also left without any food and last night You had only Your mantle to cover Yourself. If Your Mother knew! »

« She would bless God Who brings so many believers to Me. »

« And She would reproach me whom She begged to look after You. » concludes Peter.

Philip and Bartholomew are coming down towards them gesticulating. They see Jesus, they quicken their pace and say: « Oh! Master! What shall we do? There

is a real pilgrimage: invalids, people weeping and poor people without any means, who have come from far away. »

« We shall buy some bread. The rich people give alms. All we have to do is to make use of them. »

« The days are short. The shed is crowded with people camping there. The nights are damp and cold. »

« You are right, Philip. We shall squeeze into one of the big rooms. It can be done, and we will arrange the other two rooms for those who cannot reach their homes before night. »

« I see! Before long we will have to ask our guests permission to change our clothes. They will be so intrusive that they will compel us to run away. » grumbles Peter.

« You will see quite different flights, My dear Peter! What is the matter with that woman?» They are now on the threshing floor and Jesus sees a woman who is weeping.

« Who knows! She was here also yesterday and also yesterday she was weeping. When You were speaking to Manaen she moved to come and meet You, then she went away. She must live in the village or nearby, because she has come back. She does not look ill... »

« Peace be with you, woman. » says Jesus passing near her.

And she replies in a low voice: « And with You. » Nothing else.

There must be at least three hundred people. Under the shed there are lame, blind, dumb people, a man shuddering from head to foot, a young man obviously hydrocephalous, whose hand is held by a man. He does nothing but howl, slaver and shake his huge idiotic looking head.

« Is he perhaps that woman's son? » asks Jesus.

« I don't know. Simon looks after the pilgrims and he will know. They call the Zealot and ask him. But the man is not with the woman. She is by herself. She does nothing but weep and pray. A short while ago she asked me: “Does the Master cure also the hearts of people?”» explains the Zealot.

« Perhaps her husband is unfaithful to her. » remarks Peter.

While Jesus goes towards the sick people, Bartholomew and Matthew go to the river with many pilgrims for the purification rite. The woman weeps in her corner and does not stir.

Jesus does not deny a miracle to anybody. Beautiful is the cure of the dull-witted boy into whom Jesus breathes intelligence, holding his huge head between His long hands. They all gather round Him. Also the veiled woman, perhaps because there is a large crowd, dares to draw close and she stands near the weeping woman. Jesus says to the idiot: « I want the light of intelligence to be in you to make way to the light of God. Listen: say with Me: “Jesus.” Say it. I want it. »

The dull-witted young man, who before could only howl like an animal, mumbles with difficulty: « Jesus», or rather: « Jejus ».

Once again orders Jesus still holding the deformed head between His hands and dominating him with His eyes.

« Jes-us. »

« Again. »

« Jesus! » says at last the poor idiot, whose eyes are no longer expressionless and whose lips now smile in a different way.

« Man » says Jesus to his father. « You had faith! Your son is cured. Question him. The Name of Jesus is miraculous against diseases and passions. »

The man asks his son: « Who am I? »

And the boy: « My father. »

The man presses his son to his heart and states: « He was born like that. My wife died in childbirth and he had an obstruction in his brain and his speech. Now you see. Yes, I had faith. I come from Joppa. What must I do for You, Master? »

« Be good. And Your son, too. Nothing else. »

« And love You. Oh! Let us go and tell your grandmother. She convinced me to come. May she be blessed! »

The two go away happy. The only sign of the past misfortune is the huge head of the boy. His expression and speech are normal.

« But, was he cured by Your will or by the power of Your Name? » ask many.

« By the will of the Father, Who is always benign to His Son. But also My Name is salvation. You know: Jesus means Saviour. There is a salvation of the soul and a salvation of the body. Who pronounces the Name of Jesus with true faith is freed from disease and sin, because in every spiritual or physical disease there is the claw of Satan who creates physical diseases to drive people to rebellion and desperation through the pains of the flesh, and he creates moral or spiritual diseases to lead souls to damnation. »

« So, according to You, Beelzebub is not alien to all the afflictions of mankind. »

« No, he is not. Through him disease and death entered the world. And crime and corruption also entered the world through him. When you see anyone tortured by misfortune, you can be sure that he suffers on account of Satan. When you see one who is the cause of misfortune, you may conclude that he is an instrument of Satan. »

« But illness comes from God. »

« Illness is a disorder in the order. Because God created man wholesome and perfect. The disorder caused by Satan in the order given by God, has brought with it the illness of the flesh and its consequences, that is, death or sorrowful heredity. Man inherited from Adam and Eve the original sin. But not only that. And the stain has expanded wider and wider embracing the three branches of man: the flesh more and more vicious and consequently weak and diseased, the morals prouder and prouder and thus corrupted, the spirit more and more skeptical and thus more and more idolatrous. That is why it is necessary, as I did with the poor half-wit, to teach the Name that puts Satan to flight, engraving It on minds and hearts, placing It on one's ego as a seal of ownership. »

« But do You possess us? Who are You, that You think so much of Yourself? »

« I wish it were so! But it is not. If I possessed you, you would be already saved. And it would be My right. Because I am the Saviour and I should have people who have been saved. But I will save those who have faith in Me. »

« John... I come from John, he said to me: “Go to Him Who is preaching and baptising near Ephraim and Jericho. He has the power to forgive and to retain while I can only say to you: do penance to make your soul agile in following salvation”» says one who had been cured miraculously and before was going on crutches whereas now he moves about quickly.

« Does the Baptist not suffer through losing followers? » asks one. And the one who had spoken before replies: « Suffer? He says to everybody: « Go! Go! I am the star that is setting. He is the Star that is rising and is fixed eternally in its brightness. If you do not want to be left in darkness, go to Him before my wick goes out...”»

« The Pharisees don't say that! They are full of bitter hatred because You draw the crowds to You. Did You know? »

« I know » replies Jesus briefly.

They start a dispute on the rights and wrongs of the behaviour of the Pharisees. But Jesus cuts it short saying: « Do not criticise so sharply that no reply is possible. »

Bartholomew and Matthew come with those who have been baptised.

Jesus starts speaking.

« Peace be to you all. »

« Since you come here in the morning and it is more comfortable for you to leave half way through the day, I have decided to speak to you of God in the morning. I have also thought of giving hospitality to the pilgrims who cannot go back to their homes before night. I am a pilgrim Myself and I possess the bare necessaries given to Me by a compassionate friend. John has even less than I have. But wholesome people, or not seriously ill, go to John, such as cripples, blind or dumb people. But not dying people or affected by high temperature as they come to Me. They go to him for a baptism of penance. You come to Me also to be cured in your bodies. The Law says: “Love your neighbour as you love yourself.” I think and say: how would I be showing love to My brothers, if I closed My heart to their needs, also to their physical needs? And I conclude: I will give them what I was given. Holding out My hand to rich people, I will ask for bread for the poor, depriving Myself of My bed I will receive in it who is tired and suffering.

We are all brothers. And you do not give proof of your love by means of words but by deeds. Who closes his heart to his fellowman, has a heart like Cain. Who

has no love, is a rebel against the command of God. We are all brothers. And yet I see, and you also see, that there is hatred and disagreement within a family, where the same blood and flesh corroborate the brotherhood which comes to us from Adam. Brothers are against brothers, children against their parents, and parents are hostile to each other.

But in order not to be always wicked brothers, and in future adulterous husband and wife, it is necessary to learn from an early age to respect the family, which is the smallest and the greatest organization in the world. The smallest as compared to the organization of a town, of a region, of a country, of a continent. But the greatest because it is the oldest; because it was established by God, when the concept of fatherland, of country did not yet exist, but the family nucleus was already alive and active, a source to race and races, a small kingdom in which man is king, woman queen and the children subjects. Can a kingdom last if it is divided and there is enmity among its inhabitants? It cannot. And truly a family will not last if it lacks obedience, respect, economy, good will, activity, love.

“Honour your father and mother” says the Decalogue. How are they to be honoured? Why are they to be honoured?

They are honoured by true obedience, by correct love, by loving respect, by a reverential fear that does not bar confidence, but at the same time does not make us treat our elders as if we were servants and underlings. They are to be honoured because after God, a father and mother are the donors of life and of all the material necessities of life, they are the first teachers and the first friends of the young being born on the earth.

We say: “May God bless you” or “Thank you” when someone picks up for us something we have dropped or gives us a piece of bread. Shall we not say, with love: “May God bless you” or “Thank you” to those who break their backs working in order to feed us, weaving our clothes and keeping them clean, who rise from their beds to watch our sleep, who deprive themselves of their rest to cure us, and make a bed for us of their laps, when we are most tired and sorrowful?

They are our teachers. A teacher is feared and respected. But a teacher takes us when we already know what is indispensable to support and feed ourselves and say the essential things, and he leaves us when we are still to be taught the most difficult lesson in life, that is, “to live”. It is our father and mother who prepare us for school first, and then for life.

They are our friends. But which friend can be more friendly than a father? And which more friendly than a mother? Can you be terrified of them? Can you say: “I have been betrayed by him or by her?” And yet there is the foolish boy or the even more foolish girl, who make friends with strangers and close their hearts to their father and mother and they spoil their minds and hearts with unwise if not guilty friendships, which are the cause of paternal and maternal tears, that like drops of molten lead burn their parents' hearts. Those tears, however, I tell you, do not fall on the dust or into oblivion. God picks them up and counts them. The anguish of a downtrodden parent will receive a prize from the Lord. But the behaviour of a son who tortures his parents will not be forgotten either, even if the father and mother, in their sorrowful love, implore from God mercy on their guilty son.

It is said: “Honour your father and mother, if you want to have a long life on the earth.” And I add: “And forever in Heaven.” A short life here would be too light a punishment for those who wrong their parents! Life to come is not an idle story, and in life to come there will be a prize or a punishment according to how we lived. Who wrongs a parent, offends God, because He orders us to love our parents, and who does not love them, commits a sin. Thus, rather than his material life, he loses the true life of which I spoke to you, and goes to his death, nay he is already dead, because his soul is deprived of the grace of God, he is already a criminal because he offends the most holy love after the love for God, he has in himself the germ of future adulteries, because from a bad son he will become an unfaithful husband, he already possesses the incentive of social depravation, because from a bad son originates the future thief, the fierce violent killer, the cold blooded usurer, the cynical hedonist, the disgusting betrayer of his fatherland, of his friends, of his children, of his wife, of everybody. Can you hold in high esteem and trust a man who has been capable of betraying the love of a mother and mocking at the grey hair of a father?

But listen a little further: to the duty of children corresponds a similar duty of parents. Cursed be the guilty son! But cursed be also the guilty parent. Do not cause your children to criticise you and imitate you in doing wrong. Get them to love you on account of the love you give them with justice and mercy. God is Mercy. Let parents, who are second only to God, be mercy. Be an example and consolation to your children. Be their peace and guide. Be the first love of your children. A mother is always the first image of the bride we would like to have.

A father is for his young daughters the image of the husband they dream of. Behave in such a way that your sons and daughters may wisely choose their wives and husbands, thinking of their father and mother and seeking in their partners the sincere virtues of their parents.

If I were to speak until I treated the whole subject fully, a whole day and night would not suffice. So, for your sake, I will curtail My speech. May the Eternal Spirit tell you the rest. I spread the seed and move on. But in good people the seed will take root and bear fruit. Go. Peace be with you. »

Those who have to leave, go away quickly. Those who are staying, go into the third big room and eat their bread or the bread given to them by the disciples in the name of God. Boards and straw have been placed on rustic trestles so that the pilgrims can sleep there.

The veiled woman walks away with quick steps, the other one who was crying before and cried all the time that Jesus spoke, roams about, undecided as to what to do, then makes up her mind and goes away.

Jesus goes into the kitchen to take His food. But He has just started eating when they knock at the door.

Andrew, who is the nearest to it, gets up and goes out into the yard. He speaks and then comes back in: “Master, a woman, the one who was weeping, wants You. She says that she has to go away and must speak to You. »

« If we go on like this, when and how is the Master going to get some food? » exclaims Peter.

« You should have told her to come later. » says Philip.

« Be quiet. I will eat after. Go on eating. »

Jesus goes out. The woman is out there.

« Master... one word... You said... Oh! Come behind the house! It's painful to tell my sorrow! »

Jesus pleases her without saying anything. Only when He is behind the house He asks: « What do you want from Me? »

« Master... I heard You before, when You were speaking amongst us... and then I heard You when You were preaching. You seem to have spoken just for me. You said that in every physical or moral disease there is Satan... I have a son whose heart is ill. I wish he heard You when You were speaking of parents! He is my torture. Bad companions have led him astray and he is exactly as You said... a thief... at home for the time being, but... he is quarrelsome, overbearing... young as he is, he is ruining himself through lust and orgies. My husband wants to throw him out. I... I am his mother and I am dying broken-hearted. See how my breast is panting. It's my heart that is broken because of the pain. I have been wishing to speak to You as from yesterday because. . . I hope in You, my God. But I did not dare to speak. It is so painful for a mother having to say: I have a cruel son! » The woman is weeping, bent and grieved, in front of Jesus.

« Do not weep any more. He will be cured of his illness. »

« Yes, he would, if he could hear You. But he does not want to hear You. Oh! he will never be cured! »

« Have you faith in Me for him? Do you want in his place? »

« Why ask me? I have come from High Perea to beg You on his behalf... »

« Then go. When you reach your home, your son will come to meet you and will be repentant. »

« But how? »

« How? Do you think that God cannot do what I ask for? Your son is there. I am here. But God is everywhere. I say to God: “Father, have mercy on this mother.” And the call of God will resound like thunder in your son's heart. Go, woman. One day I will pass through the villages of your country and you, a proud mother of your son, will come with him to meet Me. And when he will cry on your knees, asking you to forgive him and will tell you of the mysterious struggle from which he emerged with a new soul and will ask you how it happened, say to him: “It is through Jesus that you have returned to an honest life.” Speak to him of Me. If you came to Me, it means that you know. Let him know and make him think of Me that he may have the strength of salvation. Goodbye. Peace to the mother who had faith, to the returning son, to the happy father, to the united family. Go! »

The woman goes toward the village and it all ends.

123. Jesus at the «Clear Water»: « You Shall Not Fornicate. »

4th March 1945.

Jesus says to me:

« Be patient, My dear soul, with regard to the double work. This is a period of endurance. You know how tired I was in My last days?! You see it. When walking I lean on John, on Peter, on Simon, also on Judas... Yes. And although miracles emanated from Me, even by simple contact with My clothes, I was not able to change that heart! Let Me lean on you, little John, to repeat the words which I spoke in the last days to those stubborn dull-minded people who heard the announcement of My torture without being affected by it. And let the Master preach for hours in the sad plain of the Clear Water. And I shall bless you twice: for your fatigue and for your pity. I count your efforts, I gather your tears. For your efforts on behalf of your brothers you will be rewarded as those who wear themselves out to make God known to men. The tears shed for My suffering during the last week will be rewarded with Jesus' kiss. Write and may you be blessed. »

Jesus is standing on a kind of platform made with boards in one of the large rooms, the last one, and is speaking in a very loud voice, near the door, so that He may be heard by those in the room and also by those in the shed or on the threshing floor, which is flooded by the rain. The people standing there in their large dark coarse mantles, which are proof against water, look like so many lay brothers. The weakest people are in the room, the women under the shed, the strongest, mainly men, are in the yard, in the rain.

Peter, barefooted and wearing only his short tunic and with a piece of cloth on his head, comes and goes, and is always in a good humour even if he has to paddle in water and take unexpected showers. John, Andrew and James are with him. They are cautiously transferring from the other room sick people and are guiding or supporting blind or lame people.

Jesus is patiently waiting for them all to be settled. He is only sorry that the four disciples are wet like sponges dipped into a pail of water.

« It is nothing! We are like pitched wood. Don't worry. We are getting baptised again and the baptiser is God Himself. » replies Peter to Jesus' commiserations.

At last they are all settled and Peter thinks he can go and put on a dry tunic. And he goes away with the other three.

But when he comes back again to the Master, he sees the large grey mantle of the veiled woman appear round the corner of the shed and he goes towards her without considering that to do so he must cross the yard diagonally in a heavy shower of rain which is getting heavier and heavier, while the water of the pools splashes up to his knees. He takes her by the elbow, without displacing her mantle, and pulls her towards the wall of the large room, out of the rain. He then places himself beside her, as stern and still as a sentry.

Jesus sees him and He smiles bending His head to conceal the brightness of His smile. He starts speaking.

« Those amongst you, who have been coming to Me regularly, must not say that I do not speak orderly, and that I skip some of the ten commandments. You hear. I see. You listen. I apply My speech to the pains and the sores that I see in you. I am the Doctor. A doctor calls first on those who are more seriously ill, on those who are closer to death. He then visits those who are not so dangerously ill. I do the same. »

« Today I say to you: “Do not fornicate.”

« Do not look round endeavouring to read the word “lustful” on somebody's face. Love one another. Would you love anyone who read that word on your face? No, you would not. Well, then, do not try to read it in the worried eyes of your neighbour or on his forehead that blushes and bows to the ground. And then... Oh! tell Me, especially you men. Which of you has not tasted this bread made with ashes and excrement, which is sexual satisfaction? And is lust only what carries you for one hour between the arms of a prostitute? Is lust not also the desecrated union with your wife, desecrated because it is ratified vice as it is reciprocal sensual satisfaction, which, however, evades its consequences?

Marriage means procreation and its act means and must be fecundation. Otherwise it is immoral. You must not make a brothel of your nuptial beds. And that is what they become if they are soiled by lust and are not consecrated by

maternity. The earth does not reject the seed. It receives it and makes a plant of it. The seed does not escape from the furrow after being laid there. But it takes root at once and it strives to grow and bear fruit, that is the vegetable creature born of the union between soil and seed. Man is the seed, woman is the soil, the fruit is the son. It is sinful to refuse to bear fruit and scatter strength in vice. It is prostitution performed on the nuptial bed, and in no way differs from the other prostitution, on the contrary it is aggravated by disobedience to the commandment that says: “Be one flesh and multiply by bearing children.”

Therefore, women deliberately barren, legal and honest wives in the eyes of the world, but not in the eyes of God, you can see that you may be considered prostitutes and you fornicate just the same even if only with your husbands, because you do not seek maternity but too often you are only after pleasure. And do you not consider that pleasure is a poison that contaminates every mouth that tastes it? It burns with a fire that seems to satisfy, instead it falls out of the fireplace and devours, more and more insatiable, leaving a sour taste of ash on the tongue as well as disgust, nausea and contempt both of oneself and of the partner in pleasure, because when a conscience revives, and it does revive between two heats, one can but feel such contempt of oneself, being lowered below the level of beasts.

“You shall not fornicate” it is said. A great deal of the carnal actions of men are fornications. And I do not take into consideration the inconceivable obsessive union which Leviticus condemns with the following words: “Man: you must not lie with a man as with a woman” and “You must not lie with any animal, you would thereby become unclean. And woman will do likewise and will not offer herself to an animal, because it would be a foul thing.” But after mentioning the duty of husband and wife in marriage, which is no longer holy when it becomes barren through malice, I am going to speak of the true and proper fornication between man and woman performed out of reciprocal vice or for compensation in money or in gifts.

The human body is a magnificent temple that contains an altar. God should be on the altar. But God is not where there is corruption. Therefore an impure body has a desecrated altar without God. Like a drunken person who wallows in mire and in the regurgitations of his own drunkenness, man lowers himself in the brutality of fornication and becomes worse than the most impure worm and beast.

Tell Me, if among you there is anyone who has perverted himself to the extent of dealing with his body as one deals in fodder or animals at the market, which benefit did he gain? Take your hearts in your hands, examine them, question them, listen to them, note their wounds, their pangs and then tell Me: was the fruit so sweet as to deserve such pain to a heart that was born pure and that you have compelled to live in an impure body, and to beat to give life and heat to lust, and to be worn out by vice? Tell Me: are you so perverted that you do not sob secretly, hearing the voice of a child calling: “mummy”, or thinking of your mothers, you women of pleasure who have run away from home or have been driven out of them, so that the rotten fruit may not contaminate with its oozing rottenness the other good ones? Thinking of your mothers who probably died broken-hearted, having to say: “I gave birth to disgrace?”

“Do you not feel your hearts shudder with shame, when you meet an old solemn looking man because of his white hair and you consider that you have soiled your fathers' heads with handfuls of mud and have exposed them to the scorn of their native country?

Do you not feel your entrails writhe with regret when you see a happy wife or an innocent virgin and you have to say: “I have given up all that and I will never be like that again!? »

Do you not realise how miserable you are when you are thirsty for the kiss of a child and you dare not say: “Give me it” because you have killed lives at their birth, you have rejected them as boring burdens and as a useless hindrance, detached from the tree that had borne them, and thrown out to make dung, and now those little lives shout at you: “murderers!”?

But, above all, are you not terrified of the Judge Who created you and is waiting for you to ask you: “What have you done of yourself? Did I, perhaps, give you life for that? How dare you come to My presence, you nest swarming with worms and putrefaction? You have had everything of what was your god: pleasure. Go to the place of eternal malediction.”

Who is weeping? Nobody? Are you saying: nobody? And yet My soul is going to meet another soul that is weeping. Why is it going to meet her? To anathematize her because she is a prostitute? No. Because I feel sorry for her soul. I feel repulsion for all her filthy body, sweaty with wanton exertion. But her soul!

Oh! Father! Father! Also for this soul I have taken flesh and I left Heaven to be her Redeemer and the Redeemer of many souls like hers! Why should I not pick up this stray sheep and take her to the fold, clean her, unite her to the flock, give her pastures and a love as perfect as only Mine can be, so different from the love that so far she called love, but instead was hatred, such a pitiful, complete, sweet love that she may no longer regret the past or may regret it only to say: “Too many days have I lost away from You, eternal Beauty. Who will give me back the time I lost? How can I enjoy in the short time which is left to me, what I would have enjoyed if I had always been pure?

And yet, o soul oppressed by all the lust of the world, do not weep. Listen: you are a filthy rag. But you can become a flower once again. You are a dunghill. But you can become a flower-bed. You are an impure animal. But you can become an angel. Once you were an angel. And you used to dance on the flowery meadows, a rose amongst the roses, as fresh as they were, sweet-smelling with virginity. And you happily sang your childish songs, and then you would run to your mother, to your father and say to them: “You are my love.” And the invisible guardian who is at the side of each creature would smile at your blue-white soul... And then? Why? Why did you tear off your wings, those of a little innocent being? Why did you tread on the hearts of your father and mother to run after other unreliable hearts? Why did you compel your pure voice to utter false sensual words? Why did you break the stem of the rose and desecrate yourself?

Repent, daughter of God. Repentance invigorates, purifies and elevates. Can man not forgive you? Not even your father could forgive you? But God can. Because the bounty of God is not to be compared to human goodness and His mercy is infinitely greater than human misery. Honor yourself by making your soul honorable through an honest life. Justify yourself with God committing no more sins against your soul. Obtain from God a new name. That is what matters. You are vicious. Become honest. Become the sacrifice and the martyr of your repentance. You knew how to make a martyr of your heart to give pleasure to your flesh. Now make a martyr of your flesh to give eternal peace to your heart.

Go. You may all go away. Each with his burden and his thoughts, and meditate. God awaits everybody and rejects none of those who repent. May God grant you His light that you may know your souls. Go. »

Many go away towards the village. Some go into the large room. Jesus goes towards the sick people and cures them.

A group of men are talking in low voices in a comer: they are gesticulating and getting excited in discussing their various opinions. Some accuse Christ, some defend Him, some exhort both parties to a riper judgement. At the end, the most bitter ones, probably because they are fewer than the other two groups, take a middle course. They go to Peter, who is carrying away with Simon three stretchers of people cured miraculously, as they are now useless, and they assail him overbearingly in the large room which has become the guest-room for pilgrims. They say to him: « Man of Galilee, listen to us. »

Peter turns round and looks at them as if they were rare animals. He does not speak, but the expression of his face is wonderful. Simon casts a glance at the five furious men and then goes out, leaving them all in the lurch.

One of the five resumes speaking: « I am Samuel, the scribe; this is Sadoc, another scribe; and this is Eleazar, a well known and mighty Judaean; and this is Callascebona, the famous elder; and, finally, this is Nahum. Do you understand? Nahum! the tone of his voice is really bombastic.

Peter bows lightly at each name, but at the last one his head stops half way and with the greatest indifference he says: « I don't know. Never heard of it. And... I don't understand anything. »

« You rough fisherman! Bear in mind that he is Annas' trustee! »

« I don't know Annas; or rather I know many women whose name is Anna. There is a swarm of them also in Capernaum. But I don't know of which one he is the trustee.. »

« He? Am I being addressed as “he”? »

What do you want me to say to you? Ass or bird? When I went to school the teacher taught me to say “he” when speaking of a man, and, if I am not mistaken, you are a man. »

The man becomes infuriated, as if he were tortured by the words. The other man, who spoke first, explains: « Annas is Caiaphas' father-in-law... »

« Ah!... I see!!! Well? »

« I am telling you that we are indignant! »

« At what? At the weather? I am indignant too. I have changed my clothes three times and I have no more dry ones. »

« Don't be silly! »

« Silly? It's the truth. If you are not indignant at the weather, at what then? With the Romans? »

« With your Master! With the false prophet! »

« Hey! Dear Samuel! Be careful because if I wake up I am like the lake. From dead calm I become stormy in a moment. So watch how you speak... »

Also the sons of Zebedee and of Alphaeus have come in together with the Iscariot and Simon and they gather round Peter who shouts louder and louder.

« You shall not touch with your plebeian hands the great men of Zion! »

« Oh! The handsome young gentlemen! And you shall not touch my Master otherwise you will be flying into the well at once and then you will really get purified, both internally and externally. »

« I wish to draw the attention of the doctors of the Temple to the fact that this house is a private one, » says Simon calmly. And the Iscariot corroborates the situation saying: « And I can guarantee that the Master has always had the greatest respect for other people's houses, and above all for the House of the Lord. Have the same respect for His. »

« Be quiet, you sly worm. »

« Sly in what? You are disgusting and I came where there is no disgust. And God grant I have not been completely corrupted by being with you! »

« Summing up: what do you want? » asks James of Alphaeus sharply.

« And who are you? »

« I am James of Alphaeus, and Alphaeus of James, and James of Matan, and Matan of Eleazar, and if you wish so, I will mention all my ancestors up to king David from whom I descend. And I am a cousin of the Messiah. So I ask you to speak to me, since I am of the royal family and a Judaean, if your arrogance feels disgust in speaking to an honest Israelite who knows God better than Gamaliel and Caiaphas. So, speak up. »

« Your Master and relative gets prostitutes to follow Him. That veiled woman is one of them. I saw her while she was selling some gold. And I recognised her. She is Shammai's lover and has run away from him. Which is a disgrace to him. »

« To whom? To Shammai the rabbi? In that case she must be an old crock. And thus out of danger... » remarks the Iscariot teasingly.

« Be quiet, you fool! To Shammai of Elchi, Herod's favourite. »

« Well now! It means that she is no longer particularly fond of the favorite. She has to go to bed with him. Not you. Why worry then? » Judas Iscariot is superlatively ironical.

« Man, do you not think that you are dishonouring yourself by playing the spy? » asks Judas of Alphaeus. « And do you not consider that he dishonors himself who lowers himself to commit a sin, not he who endeavours to save a sinner? Why is my Master and brother dishonoured, if, when speaking, His voice reaches also the ears profaned by the slaver of lustful people in Zion? »

« His voice? Ah! Ah! Your Master and cousin is thirty years old and He is a greater hypocrite than the others. And you all sleep soundly at night... »

« You vile reptile. Get out of here or I will strangle you, » shouts Peter, and James and John echo his words, while Simon simply says: « Shame on you! Your hypocrisy is so great that it regurgitates and overflows and you slaver like a snail on a pure flower. Go out and become a man, because now you are but slaver. I recognise you, Samuel. Your heart is always the same. May God forgive you. Go away from my presence. »

While the Iscariot and James of Alphaeus are holding Peter, who is seething with anger, Judas Thaddeus, who more than ever is now like his Cousin, having the same blue flashing look and stately expression, says in a thundering voice: « He dishonours himself who dishonours an innocent person. God gave us sight and speech to accomplish holy deeds. A slanderer misuses and degrades them, employing them for evil deeds. I will not soil myself by a rude deed offensive to your white hair. But I will remind you that wicked people hate an upright man and a fool vents his spleen without considering that he betrays himself. Who lives in darkness mistakes a branch in bloom for a reptile. But who lives in light sees things as they are, and if they are denigrated, he defends them for justice' sake. We live in light. We are the chaste, beautiful generation of the children of

light, and our Leader is the Holy One Who knows neither woman nor sin. We follow Him and defend Him from His enemies, Whom He has taught us not to hate but to pray for. Old as you are, you may learn from a young man, who has become ripe because Wisdom is his teacher, not to be so quick in speaking and not good at all in doing good. Go. And inform those who sent you that God rests on His glory in this poor dwelling, not in the desecrated house which is on mount Moriah. Goodbye. »

The five men dare not reply and they go away.

The disciples discuss whether they should tell Jesus Who is still with the people He has cured. They decide it is better to inform Him. They go to meet Him, they call Him and they tell Him.

Jesus smiles peacefully and replies: « Thank you for defending Me. . . but what can you do? One gives what one has. »

« However, they are not entirely wrong. We have eyes to see and many people do see. She is always out there, like a dog. It does You no good. » say many of the disciples.

« Leave her alone. She will not be the stone that will strike My head. And if she is saved... it is well worth being criticised for such a joy! »

It all ends on that sweet reply.

124. The « Veiled Woman» at the «Clear Water».

5th March 1945.

It is such an awful day that there is not even one pilgrim. It is raining in torrents and the threshing floor is a pool on which dry leaves are floating. I wonder where all the leaves have come from, some have been blown by the wind, which howls and shakes doors and windows. The kitchen, which is gloomier than ever, because to keep the rain out it is necessary to close the door, is full of smoke, which the wind blows back down the chimney and causes the disciples to cough and their eyes to water.

« Solomon was right » states Peter. « Three things drive a man out of his house: a quarrelsome wife… and I left mine at Capernaum to quarrel with her brothers-in-law, a smoky fireplace and a leaky roof. We have the last two things. But I will see to this chimney tomorrow. I will go up on the roof and you, James, John and Andrew, will come with me. We will raise the chimney and cover its top with slates. »

« And where are you going to find the slates? » asks Thomas.

« We will take them off the shed. If it rains there, it will not be a disaster. But in here… Are you sorry that your dishes will no longer be decorated with sooty drops? »

« Most certainly not! I wish you could do that! See what a sight I am. It rains on my head when I am here near the fire. »

« You look like an Egyptian monster » says John laughing.

Thomas, in fact, has queer black smutty commas on his chubby good-natured face. Always merry as he is, he is the first to laugh and also Jesus laughs, because, just when he is speaking, another sooty drop falls on his nose, blackening its point.

« Since you are a weather expert, what do you think of it? Will it last long like this? » the Iscariot, who has changed completely during the last few days, asks Peter.

« I will tell you in a minute. I am going to play the star-gazer » replies Peter, who goes to the door, opens it a little and puts his head and hand out. He then states: « A low southern wind. Heat and thick fog… H'm! There is little… » Peter becomes quiet, he comes back in slowly, sets the door ajar, and casts sidelong glances.

« What is the matter? » ask three or four of the disciples.

But Peter beckons them to be quiet. He looks round. He then whispers: « That woman is here. She drank some water of the well and took one of the faggots left in the yard. It is wet and will not burn… She is going away. I will go after her. I want to see… » He goes out cautiously.

« But where does she live, if she is always here? » asks Thomas.

« And she is here in this weather! » says Matthew.

« She certainly goes to the village, because the day before yesterday she was also buying bread there » says Bartholomew.

« She is really determined in wearing her veil! » remarks James of Alphaeus.

« Or she has a very good reason for it » concludes Thomas.

« But will she really be the one referred to by that Jew yesterday? » asks John. « They are always such liars! »

Jesus has kept quiet all the time, as if He were deaf. They all look at Him, fully aware that He knows. But He is working with a sharp knife at a piece of soft wood which He slowly turns into a very useful large fork to take vegetables out of boiling water. And when He finishes it, He offers His work to Thomas who has devoted himself entirely to cooking.

« You are really clever, Master. But… will You tell us who she is? »

« A soul. To Me you are all “souls”. Nothing else. Men, women, old people, children: souls, and nothing but souls. Children are white souls, young boys blue souls, young people pink souls, just people gold souls, sinners are pitched souls. But only souls. And I smile at the white souls because I seem to be smiling at angels; and I rest among the blue and pink flowers of good young people; and I rejoice at the precious souls of the just; and I toil and suffer, to make the souls of sinners precious and splendid. Faces?… Bodies?… They are nothing. I know you and recognize you because of your souls. »

« And what kind of a soul is she? » asks Thomas.

« A soul less curious than the souls of My friends, because she is not inquisitive, does not ask questions, comes and goes without a word or a look. »

« I thought she was a whore or a leper. But I changed my mind because… Master, if I tell You something, will You not reproach me? » asks the Iscariot who goes and sits on the ground near Jesus' knees; he has changed completely, he is humble, kind and even more handsome in his modest mien than when he behaves as the pompous and haughty Judas.

« I will not reproach you. Tell Me. »

« I know where she lives. I followed her one evening… pretending I was going out to get some water, because I noticed that she always comes to the well when it is dark… One morning I found a silver hair-pin on the ground… just near the rim of the well… and I realized that she had lost it. Well, she lives in a little wooden hut in the forest. Perhaps it is used by peasants. But it is half rotten. And she put some faggots on it as a roof. Perhaps that is why she wanted that faggot. It is a den. I don't know how she can live in it. It would hardly suffice for a big dog or a small donkey. It was moonlight and I could see it clearly. It is almost buried in blackberry bushes, it is empty inside and there is no door. That's why I changed my mind and I realized that she is not a prostitute. »

« You should not have done that. But, tell Me the truth: did you do anything else? »

« No, Master. I would have liked to see her, because I have noticed her since Jericho and I seem to recognize her light step with which she walks rapidly wherever she wishes. Also her figure must be supple and… beautiful. Of course, one can easily see that, notwithstanding all her clothes… But I did not dare spy upon her while she was going to lie down on the ground. Perhaps she took her veil off. But I respected her… »

Jesus stares at him, then He says: « And you suffered for that. But you have told the truth. And I am telling you that I am pleased with you. The next time it will not cost you so much to be good. It is the first step that matters. Well done Judas! » and Jesus caresses him.

Peter comes back in. « Master! That woman is crazy! Do You know where she is? Almost on the river bank, in a little wooden hut under a thicket. Perhaps once it was used by fishermen or woodcutters… Who knows? I would never have thought that a poor woman could live in such a damp place, buried in a ditch under a heap of bushes. I said to her: “Speak and tell me the truth. Are you a leper?” She replied in a whisper: “No.” “Swear it.” I said. And she said: “I swear it.” “Be careful, if you are and you do not say so and you come near our house and I find out that you are not clean, I will have you stoned. But if you are persecuted, if you are a thief or a murderer, and you are staying here because you are afraid of us, do not be afraid of any harm. But come out of there. Don't you see that you are lying in water? Are you hungry? Are you cold? You are shivering. I am an old man, you can see that. I am not courting you. I am old and honest. So listen to me.” That's what I said. But she would not come. We will find her dead because she is lying in the water. »

Jesus is pensive. He looks at the twelve faces which are staring at Him. He then asks: « What do you think we should do? »

« Master, what You decide! »

« No. I want you to decide. It is a matter in which also your reputation is involved. And I must not do violence to your right to defend it. »

« In the name of mercy I say that we cannot leave her there » says Simon.

And Bartholomew: « I would say that we should put her in the big room for today. Don't the pilgrims go there? So she can go there, too. »

« She is a creature like anybody else, after all » remarks Andrew.

« In any case, there is no one coming today, so… » points out Matthew.

« I suggest that we should give her hospitality for today, and tomorrow we will tell the steward. He is a good man » says Judas Thaddeus.

« You are right! Good! And he has many empty stables, too. A stable is still a royal palace as compared to that small sunken dingy! » exclaims Peter.

« Go and tell her then » says Thomas encouragingly.

« The younger ones have not yet spoken » points out Jesus.

« As far as I am concerned, I am happy with what You do » says His cousin James. And the other James and his brother say together: « We, too. »

« I am only worried if by sheer bad luck a Pharisee should happen to come here » says Philip.

« Oh! Even if we lived up in the clouds, do you think they would not accuse us? They do not accuse God because He is far away. But if they could have Him near themselves, as Abraham, Jacob and Moses had, they would reproach Him… According to them, who is faultless? » says Judas Iscariot.

« Well, then, go and tell her to take shelter in the big room. Peter, go with Simon and Bartholomew. You are elderly and she will not feel too uneasy with you. And tell her that we will give her some warm food and a dry dress. That is the one that Isaac left. See, everything can be useful. Also a woman's dress given to a man… »

The younger ones laugh because there must have been some funny story with regard to the dress in question.

The three elder ones go out… and they come back shortly afterwards.

« It took some doing… but at the end she came. We swore to her that we will never disturb her. I will now take her some straw and the dress. Give me the vegetables and some bread. She has not even got anything to eat today. In fact… who would go about in this deluge? » And good Peter goes out with his gifts.

« And now there is an order for everybody: under no circumstance one may go into the room. Tomorrow we will do the necessary. You must become accustomed to doing good for the sake of good, without any curiosity or desire to get entertainment out of it, or anything else. See? You were complaining today that we would not have done anything useful. We have loved our neighbor. Could we have done anything greater? If she is an unhappy woman, and she certainly is, can our help not give her much greater relief, warmth and protection than the little food, the poor dress, the sound roof we have given her? If she is a guilty woman, a sinner, a creature seeking God, will our love not be the most beautiful lesson, the most powerful word, the clearest indication to lead her on to the path of God? »

Peter comes in very quietly and listens to his Master.

« See, My friends. Israel has many teachers, and they speak all the time… But souls remain as they were. Why? Because the souls hear the words of their teachers but they see also their deeds. And their deeds destroy their words. And the souls remain where they were, if they do not even go backwards. But when a teacher does what he says and in all his actions he behaves like a saint, also when he only performs a material action, such as giving bread, a dress, a lodging to a suffering neighbor, he gets souls to proceed and reach God, because his very actions say to his brothers: “God exists and God is here.” Oh! Love! I solemnly tell you that he who loves saves himself and others. »

« What You say is true, Master. That woman said to me: “Blessed be the Savior and He Who sent Him, and you all with Him” and though I am a poor man she wanted to kiss my feet and she was weeping behind her thick veil… Who knows!… Let us hope that no night-bird will arrive from Jerusalem… Otherwise, who will save us? »

« Our conscience will save us from the judgement of our Father. That is enough

» says Jesus. And He sits at the table after blessing and offering the food.

It all ends.

125. Jesus at the «Clear Water»: « Observe Holy Days. »

6th March 1945.

The weather is not so dreadful although it is still raining, and people can come to the Master.

Jesus is listening, on one side, to two or three people, who have great things to tell Him and then reach their places looking much calmer. He blesses also a little boy whose little legs are badly fractured and whom no doctor would cure. They all, in fact, said: « It is useless, they are fractured high up, near the spine. » His mother is talking, weeping as she explains: .He was running with his little sister in the village street. A Herodian came at full speed on his wagon and ran him over. I thought he was dead. But it is worse. See. I am keeping him on this board... because there is nothing else to be done. And he suffers, because the bone pierces his flesh. And later, when it will no longer pierce him, he will suffer because he will be compelled to lie on his back.

« Is it very painful? » Jesus pitifully asks the weeping child.

« Yes, it is. »

« Where? »

« Here... and here » and with his little hesitant hand he touches his kidneys and his back. « The board is hard and I want to move, I... » and he cries desperately.

« Shall I take you in My arms? Will you come? I will take you up there, and you will see all the people when I am speaking.. »

« Yes... » his “yes” is full of keen desire. The poor little thing stretches out his arms imploringly.

« Come then. »

« But he cannot, Master, it is impossible! It hurts him too much... I cannot even move him to wash him. »

« I will not hurt him. »

« The doctor...»

« The doctor is the doctor, I am I. Why have you come? »

« Because You are the Messiah » replies the woman, who goes pale, then blushes, moved by hope and despair at the same time.

« Well, then? Come, My dear little one. And Jesus passes one arm under the motionless legs, and the other one under his shoulders and takes the child in His arms and asks him: Am I hurting you? No? Well, say goodbye to your mummy and let us go. »

And He goes with His load through the crowd that opens out to let Him pass. He goes to the end of the room, He climbs on to the kind of platform which they built for Him, so that He may be seen by everybody, also by those in the yard, He asks for a stool and He sits down, He adjusts the child on His knees and asks him: « Do you like this? Now, be good and listen » and He starts speaking, gesticulating with one hand only, His right one, because He is holding the child with His left one. The little fellow looks at the people and is very happy to see something, he smiles at his mother I whose heart is palpitating with hope at the other end of the room, and he plays with the cord of Jesus' tunic and with His soft fair beard and with a lock of His long hair.

« It is said: “Do an honest work and devote the seventh day to the Lord and to your soul.” That is the commandment of the Sabbatical rest.

Man is not greater than God. And yet God created the universe in six days and He rested on the seventh. Why then does man take the liberty of not imitating the Father and breaking His commandment? Is it a foolish commandment? No. It is truly a beneficial commandment to the body, to morals and to the spirit.

A tired body needs rest, like every other being in creation. An ox, which has worked in the field, rests, and we let it rest, so that we may not lose it. Likewise, the donkey that carries us and the sheep that gives birth to a little lamb and gives us milk, need a rest. Also the soil of the field rests, and we let it rest, so that during the months that it is deprived of seed, it may be nourished and become

saturated with the salts that are contained in rain or emerge from the earth. Also animals and plants, which obey the eternal laws of wise reproduction, rest well, also without our consent. Why then does man not want to imitate the Creator, Who rested on the seventh day, whereas inferior beings, both vegetable and animal, which only received an instinctive order, know how to comply with it and obey it?

It is a moral commandment, besides being a physical one. Man for six days belongs to everybody and everything. Like a thread in a loom he moves up and down, without being ever able to say: “Now I am going to attend to myself and to my dear ones. I am a father and today I belong to my children, I am a husband and today I will devote myself to my wife, I am a brother and I will rejoice with my brothers, I am a son and I will look after my old parents.”

It its a spiritual commandment. Work is holy. Love is holier. God is Most Holy. So we must remember to devote at least one day out of seven to our good and holy Father, Who gave us life and keeps us alive. Why should we have less respect for Him than for our fathers, our children, brothers, wives and our bodies? Let the day of the Lord be His. Oh! It is pleasant to take shelter in a loving home in the evening, after a day's work! It is pleasant to come back to it after a journey! Why then not take shelter in the house of the Father after six days' work? Why should we not be like the son who comes back after a six day journey and says: “Here I am, I want to spend my day of rest with you”?

But now, listen. I said: “Do an honest job.”

You know that our Law orders us to love our neighbour. Honest work forms part of our love for our neighbour. An honest working person does not steal in business, does not defraud a workman of his pay, does not exploit him guiltily, he remembers that a servant and a workman are made of body and soul like himself, and he does not treat them like lifeless pieces of stone which it is lawful to break or strike with one's foot or an iron rod. Who does not do that, does not love his neighbour and therefore commits a sin in the eyes of God. His earnings are cursed, even if he offers part of them as alms to the Temple.

Oh! What a false offer! And how can anyone dare place it at the foot of the altar when it drips the tears and blood of an exploited subordinate or its name is “theft”, that is, betrayal of one's neighbour, because a thief is the betrayer of his neighbour? Believe Me, one does not keep a holy day unless one makes use of it to examine and improve oneself and make amends for the sins committed during the previous six days.

That is the observance of holy days, not the merely exterior observance, which does not change one jot of your way of thinking. God wants living deeds, not sham deeds. A false respect for His Law is a mere sham. And a mere sham is the false observance of the Sabbath, that is a rest taken to show obedience to the commandment in the eyes of men, when the hours of idleness are spent in vice, in lust, in orgy, in planning how to exploit and damage one's neighbour in the oncoming week. The observance of the Sabbath is a sham, when the material rest is not coupled with an inner, spiritual, sanctifying examination of oneself, with the humble avowal of one's misery, with the firm determination to improve oneself during the oncoming week.

You may say: “And if one falls into sin again?” What would you say of a child, who, having fallen once, should not wish to take another step, that he may not fall again? That he is foolish. That he must not be ashamed if his steps are uncertain, because we were all like that when we were little ones, and our fathers did not stop loving us because of that. Who does not remember the profusion of maternal kisses and paternal caresses we received every time we fell?

The most sweet Father, Who is in Heaven, does the same. He bends over His little one who is weeping on the ground and says to him: “Do not weep. I will raise you. Next time you will be more careful. Come into My arms now. Here all your troubles will cease and you will go away strengthened, cured and happy.” That is what our Father, Who is in Heaven, says. And that is what I say to you. If you could have faith in the Father, you would succeed in everything. A faith, mind you, like the faith of a child. A child believes that everything is possible. He does not ask whether and how something may happen. He does not measure the depth of things. He believes in those who inspire confidence to him and does what they tell him. Be like children with the Most High. How He loves those stray angels which are the beauty of the earth! In the same way He loves the souls that become as simple, good and pure as a child.

Do you wish to see the faith of a child to learn to have faith? Look. You all feel sorry for the little one whom I am clasping to My chest and who, contrary to what doctors and his mother said, has not cried while sitting in My lap. See? For a long time he has done nothing but cry day and night without getting any rest, instead here he has not cried and has fallen asleep placidly against My heart. I asked him: “Do you want to come in My arms?” and he replied: “Yes”, without

considering his miserable state, the probable pain he might feel, as a result of being moved. He saw love on My face, he said: "Yes" and he came. And he felt no pain. He was happy to be up here, and see things, after being confined to that flat board, he enjoyed lying on the soft warmth of a body and not on the hard wood, he smiled, he played and he fell asleep still holding a lock of My hair in his tiny hand. I will now wake him with a kiss… » and Jesus kisses the brown hair of the child who wakes up smiling.

« What is your name? »

« John. »

« Listen, John. Do you want to walk? Do you wish to go to your mummy and say to her: "The Messiah blesses you on account of your faith"? »

« Yes » replies the little one clapping his hands. He then asks: « Will You make me go? On the meadows? No more the ugly hard board? No more the doctors who hurt me? »

« No more, never again. »

« Ah! How I love You! » and he throws his arms round Jesus' neck and kisses Him, and to kiss Him better, with a jump he kneels on Jesus' knees and a hail of kisses descends on the forehead, the eyes, the cheeks of Jesus.

The child, who had been paralysed up to this point, in his joy, has not even realised that he has been able to move. But the shouting of his mother and of the crowd, rouses him and he turns round surprised. The large innocent eyes of his thin face look around inquiringly. Still on his knees, with his right arm round Jesus' neck, he asks Him confidentially – pointing at the crowd in tumult and at his mother, who from the other end is calling him, joining his name to Jesus' at the same time: « John! Jesus! »

« Why are the people and my mother shouting? What is the matter with them? Are You Jesus? »

« Yes, I am. The people are shouting because they are happy that you can walk. Goodbye, little John (Jesus kisses and blesses him). Go to your mummy and be good. »

The child, sure of himself, comes off Jesus' knees, runs to his mother, flings his arms round her neck and says: « Jesus blesses You. Why are you crying, then? »

When the crowd has calmed down a little, Jesus says in a thundering voice: « Behave like little John, you who commit sin and hurt yourselves. Have faith in the love of God. Peace be with you. »

And while the shouts of the acclaiming crowd are mingled with the happy tears of the mother, Jesus leaves the room, escorted by his disciples, and it all ends.

126. Jesus at the «Clear Water»: « You Shall Not Kill. » Death of Doras.

10th March 1945.

Jesus says:
« It is said: "You shall not kill." To which of the two groups of commandments does this one belong? Are you saying: "To the second"? Are you sure? I will ask you another question: is it a sin which offends God or the man who has been struck? You say: "The man who has been struck"? Are you sure also of that? And another question: is it only a sin of homicide? By killing a person does one commit but this one sin? You say: "Only this one"? Does no one doubt it? Give Me your answers in a loud voice. Let one speak on behalf of everybody. I will wait. » And Jesus bends to caress a little girl who has come near Him and looks at Him enraptured, forgetting to nibble at the apple that her mother gave her to keep her quiet.

A stately old man stands up and says: « Listen, Master. I am an old synagogue leader and I have been asked to speak on behalf of everybody. And I am going to speak. I think, we all think, that we have replied according to justice and according to what we have been taught. My certainty is based on the Law concerning homicide and blows. But You know why we have come: to be taught, as we know that You are Wisdom and Truth. If, therefore, I am wrong, enlighten my darkness, that the old servant may go to his King clad in light. And similarly, enlighten also these people who belong to my flock and have come with their shepherd to drink at the source of Life and before sitting down, he bows with the greatest respect. »

« Who are you, father? »

« Cleopas, of Emmaus, Your servant. »

« Not Mine: of Him Who sent Me, because the Father is to be given all priority and all love in Heaven, on the earth and in hearts. And the first to give Him this honour is His Word, Who, on the faultless table takes and offers the hearts of good people, as the priest does with the bread of the proposition. But listen, Cleopas, that you may go to God enlightened as is your holy desire.

When judging a fault, it is necessary to take into consideration the circumstances that precede, prepare, justify and explain the fault. A man who has committed murder, before presenting himself to God to ask forgiveness, must ask himself: "Whom did I strike? What did I strike? Where, with what means, why, how, when did I strike?"

"Whom did I strike?"

A man. I say: a man. I do not consider whether he is rich or poor, free or a slave. As far as I am concerned, there are neither slaves nor mighty ones. There are only men, created by One God, therefore, they are all equal. In fact, also the most powerful king on the earth is dust before the majesty of God. And in His eyes, as well as in Mine, there is only one slavery: sin, and therefore a slavery under Satan. The old Law discriminates between free men and slaves, and subtilises between killing with one blow and killing when the person struck survives for a day or two and likewise, whether a pregnant woman is killed by blows or only the fruit of her womb dies. But that was said when the light of perfection was still far away. Now it is amongst you and says: "Who kills his fellow creature commits a sin." And he sins not only against man, but also against God.

What is man? Man is the sovereign creature whom God created to be the king of creation and He created him in His image and likeness, giving him His likeness according to the spirit, and His image by drawing his perfect image from His perfect thought.

Look at the air, at the earth, at the seas. Can you see an animal or a plant, however beautiful it may be, which is equal to man? Animals run, eat, drink, sleep, procreate, work, sing, fly, creep, climb. But they do not speak. Man can also run and jump and is so fast that he seems a fish; he can creep and looks like a reptile; he climbs like a monkey; he can sing like a bird. He can procreate and reproduce. And, besides, he can speak.

Do not say: "Every animal has its language." True, one moos, another bleats, another brays, another chirps, another warbles, but the last bull will bellow exactly the same as the first one, and so sheep will bleat until the end of the world, and donkeys will always bray like the first one, and sparrows will always chirp, whilst the lark and the nightingale will sing their songs: the former to the sun, the latter to a starry night, also on the last day of the world, exactly as they greeted the first sun and the first night. Man, instead, having not only a voice and a tongue, but also a nervous system, the centre of which is the brain, the seat of intelligence, is capable of perceiving new sensations, meditating on them and giving them names.

Adam called dog his friend and gave the name of lion to the animal that seems most like it because of its mane round its short-bearded face. He called sheep the lamb that greeted him mildly and gave the name of bird to the beautiful flower of feathers that flies like a butterfly but sings a sweet song that a butterfly cannot sing. And later, throughout centuries, the children of Adam created new names, as and when they "became acquainted" with the works of God in His creatures, or, through the divine spark which is in man, they not only procreated children, but they also created things which were useful or harmful to their children, according to whether they were with God or against God. Those who create and do good things are with God. Those who create wicked things, harmful to their neighbours, are against God. God avenges His children tortured by man's wickedness.

Man is thus the favored creature of God. Even if he is now guilty, he is still the dearest creature to Him. That is witnessed by the fact the He sent His own Word, not an angel, not an archangel, not a cherub, not a seraph, but His own Word, clad with human flesh, to save man. He did not deem that flesh unworthy to make Him liable to suffer and expiate, Who being a Most Pure Spirit Himself, could not have suffered and expiated the sin of man.

The Father said to Me: "You shall become man: the Man. I made one. He was as perfect as everything I make. He was destined to a peaceful life, a most peaceful final sleep, a happy awakening and a most happy eternal life in My celestial Paradise. But You know that nothing contaminated may enter our Paradise, because there I-We, One and Trine God, have Our throne. Only holiness is allowed to stand before it. I am He Who I am. My divine nature, Our mysterious being can be known only to those who are without sin. Now man, in Adam and through Adam, is foul. Go. Cleanse him. I want it. From now on You shall be

the Man. The First-Born. Because You will be the first to enter here with mortal flesh deprived of sin, with a soul deprived of the original sin. Those who have preceded You on the earth and those who will come after You, will receive life through Your death of a Redeemer. Only one who was born can die." I was born and I will die.

Man is the favoured creature of God. Now tell Me: if a father has many children, but one is his darling, the apple of his eye, and that one is killed, will that father not suffer more than he would have suffered if another son had been killed? That should not happen because a father should be just to all his children. But it happens because man is not perfect. God can do so with justice because man is the only creature, amongst all created things, who has a spiritual soul in common with his Creator Father, an undeniable sign of his divine paternity.

If one kills the son of a father, does one offend only the son? No. One offends also the father. One offends the son in his flesh and the father in his heart. Both are wounded. By killing a man, does one offend only the man? No. Also God. Man in his flesh, God in His right. Because life and death are to be given and taken by Him only. To kill is to do violence to God and to man. To kill is to enter God's domain. To kill. is to go against the commandment of love. Who kills does not love God, because he dissipates one of His works: a man. Who kills does not love his neighbour, because he takes away from his neighbour what a murderer wants for himself: life.

I have thus replied to the first two questions.

"Where did I strike?"

One can strike in the street, in the house of the person assaulted, or by alluring the victim to one's own home. One can strike either one or another organ causing a more severe pain, or committing two homicides in one, by striking a woman whose womb is bearing its fruit.

One may strike in the street unintentionally. An animal that gets out of our hands may kill a passer-by. In which case there is no premeditation. But if a man, armed with a dagger and wearing refined dissembling clothes, goes to the house of his enemy – and often an enemy is a person whose only fault is to be better – invites him to his own house under the pretext of honouring him, and then cuts his throat and throws him into a well, then there is premeditation and his guilt is complete in malice, ferocity and violence.

If I kill a mother and her child, then God will ask me to account for two deaths. Because the womb that gives birth to a man according to the commandment of God is sacred and sacred is the young life that grows within it, to whom God has given a soul.

"By which means did I strike?"

In vain one says: "I did not intend to strike" if he went armed with an accurate arm. In a fit of anger, also one's hand may become a weapon, or a stone picked off the ground, or a branch taken from a tree. But who inspects his dagger or an axe, with cold determination, and sharpens it if he thinks that it is not sharp enough, then conceals it safely on his body so that, although it is not seen, it may be easily grasped, and being thus ready goes to his enemy, cannot certainly say: "I did not intend to strike." Who prepares a poison picking poisonous herbs and fruits, makes a powder or drink with them which he then offers to the victim as spices or as cyder, cannot certainly say: "I did not want to kill."

And now listen, you women, tacit unpunished murderesses of so many lives. It is also murder to detach a fruit that is growing in a womb, because it is of a guilty seed, or because it is an embryo which is not wanted, being a useless burden to your bodies and your wealth. There is only one way not to have that burden: by being chaste. Do not join homicide to lust, violence to disobedience, and do not think that God does not see, simply because man does not see. God sees everything and remembers everything. You ought to remember that, too."

"Why did I strike?"

Oh! for how many reasons! The sudden mental turmoil which causes in you a violent emotion, such as finding your nuptial bed polluted, or a thief at home, or a dirty fellow intent on doing violence to your young daughter, the cold premeditated planning to get rid of a dangerous witness, of someone who encumbers your way, or of someone at whose position or purse you aim; those are some of the many reasons. And if God can still forgive who in a painful derangement becomes a murderer, He will not forgive who becomes such through lust for power or for men's esteem.

Always behave properly and you will fear nobody's eye or word. Be happy with what you possess, and you will not aspire to other people's property, to the extent of becoming murderers in order to have what belongs to your neighbour.

"How did I strike?"

Being pitiless also after the first impulsive outburst? Sometimes man cannot control himself. Because Satan throws him into evil as a slinger hurls a stone. But what would you say of a stone, which, after reaching its target, should fly back by itself to the sling, to be hurled again and strike once more? You would say: “It is possessed of a magic hellish power. And such is man, when after the first blow he strikes a second, a third, a tenth time, with unbridled ferocity. Because wrath abates and reason takes over after the first outburst, if it is an outburst caused by a justifiable reason. Whereas ferocity increases the more the victim is struck by a genuine murderer, that is, by a satan, who does not feel and cannot feel pity for a brother because, being satan, he is hatred personified.

“When did I strike?”

During the first outburst? After it had subsided? Pretending I had forgiven whereas my grudge grew more and more? Did I perhaps wait for years before striking, to cause double pain by killing the father through his children? You can see that by killing one offends the first and second group of commandments. Because you unduly claim the right of God and you oppress your neighbour. It is therefore a sin against God and against your neighbour. You do not only commit a sin of homicide. But you commit a sin of wrath, of violence, of pride, of disobedience, of sacrilege, and sometimes, if you kill to steal a position or a purse, of greed. I will only mention this now, and I will explain it to you in greater detail some other day, one does not commit homicide only by means of a weapon or poison. But also by slander. Meditate on that.

I also say to you: the master, who striking a slave, does it cunningly, so that he may not die in his hands, is twice guilty. A slave is not money of his master: he is a soul of his God. And cursed be forever who treats him worse than a bull. »

Jesus' eyes sparkle with majesty and His voice thunders. They all look at Him amazed, because before He was speaking quietly.

« May he be cursed. The New Law repeals that hardness which was still justice when in the people of Israel there were no hypocrites who pretend to be saints and sharpen their wits only to take advantage of the Law of God or elude it. But now that Israel is overflowing with such vipers, for whom all caprices are lawful when it suits them, the miserable mighty ones whom God looks at with hatred and disgust, I say: it is no longer so.

Slaves fall in the fields or at the millstones. They fall with fractured bones and with nerves laid bare by scourges. They accuse them of false crimes, so that they may strike them and thus justify their diabolical sadism. They even make use of God's miracles, as an accusation, to have the right to strike them. Neither God's power nor a slave's holiness convert their wicked souls. They cannot be converted. Good will not enter a soul glutted with evil. But God sees and says: “It is enough.”

There are too many Cains who kill the Abels. And what do you think, you foul sepulchres, whose outsides are whitewashed and covered with the words of the Law, and in whose insides Satan dominates as a king and the most cunning satanism flourishes, what do you think? That only Abel was Adam's son and that God looks benignantly only at those who are not slaves of man, and that He refuses the only offer that a slave can make: his honesty seasoned with tears? No, I solemnly tell you that every just man is an Abel, even if he is laden with fetters, even if he is dying on the furrows, or bleeding because of your scourging, and that all the unjust people are Cains, who out of pride, not out of true veneration, give to God what is contaminated with their sins and stained with blood.

Desecrators of miracles! Desecrators of men, murderers, impious people! Out! Away from My sight! Enough! I say: enough. And I can say that, because I am the divine Word Who translates the Divine Thought. Away! »

Jesus, standing on the rough platform, is so imposing as to be frightening. With His right arm stretched out towards the door, His eyes like two blue flames, He seems to be striking by lightning the sinners present. The little girl at His feet starts crying and runs to her mother. The disciples look at one another amazed and they look to see to whom the diatribe is addressed. Also the crowd turn round and look inquisitively.

At last the mystery is clarified. At the other end of the room, outside the door, half hidden behind a group of tall country men, Doras appears. He looks thinner, yellower, more wrinkled, with his big nose and protruding chin. A servant helps him to move because he seems to be semi-paralysed. No one had seen him there, in the middle of the yard. He dares to speak in his clucking voice:

« Are You speaking to me? Is it for me? »

« Yes, for you. Go out of My house. »

« I am going out. But I will soon have a reckoning with You, don't worry. »

« Soon? At once. The God of Sinai, as I told you, is waiting for YOU. »

« And You too, baleful fellow, because You are the cause of my infirmity and of the noxious animals in my land. I will see You again. And it will be a joy for me. »

« Yes. And you will not be wishing to see Me. Because I will be your judge. »

« Ah! Ah! curs...» He gropes, he mumbles and falls.

« He is dead! » shouts his servant. « The master is dead! May You be blessed, Messiah, our avenger! »

« Not I, but God, the eternal Lord. Let no one be contaminated. Only the servant is to see to his master. And be kind to his body. And you all, his servants, be good. Do not rejoice, out of bitter hatred, because he has been struck, so that you may not deserve to be condemned. May God and just Jonah be always your friends, and I with them. Goodbye. »

« But did he die by Your request? » asks Peter.

« No. But the Father came into Me... It is a mystery that you cannot understand. It is enough for you to know that it is not right to strike God. He avenges Himself by Himself. »

« Then, could You not tell the Father to let all those who hate You die? »

« Be quiet! You do not understand what your mentality is! I am Mercy and not Revenge. »

The old man, the head of the synagogue, comes near and says:

« Master, You have answered all my questions and light is in me. May You be blessed. Come to my synagogue. Do not refuse an old man Your word. »

« I will come. Go in peace. The Lord is with you. »

While the crowds go away very slowly, it all ends.

127. Jesus at the «Clear Water»: « Do Not Put the Lord Your God to the Test. » The Three Disciples of the Baptist.

11th March 1945.

It is a very clear winter day: sunshine, wind and a clear sky, all blue, without the least trace of a cloud. It is early morning. A light veil of frost, or rather of almost frozen dew, is like diamond dust on the ground and on the grass.

Three men are coming towards the house. They are walking with the certainty of people who know where they are going. They see John who is crossing the yard, laden with pails of water drawn from the well. They call him.

John turns round, lays the buckets on the ground and says: « You are here? Welcome! The Master will be happy to see you. Come, before the crowds arrive. So many people come now!… » They are the three shepherd disciples of John the Baptist. Simeon, John and Matthias follow the apostle happily.

« Master, there are three friends here. Look » says John going into the kitchen where a big fire of brushwood is burning merrily, spreading a pleasant smell of wood and burnt laurel.

« Oh! Peace to you, My friends. What made you come to Me? A misfortune of the Baptist? »

« No, Master. We came here with his permission. He sends You his greetings and asks You to recommend to God the lion chased by the archers. He does not delude himself about his destiny. But he is free for the time being. And he is happy because he knows that You have many followers. Also many who before were with him. Master… we would like to come with You, too, but… we do not want to leave him now that he is persecuted. You will understand us… » says Simeon.

« On the contrary, I bless you for that. The Baptist deserves respect and love. »

« Yes. You are right. The Baptist is a great man, and he is standing out like a giant more and more. He is like the agave, which, when it is about to die, forms the great candelabrum with the septiform flower and blazes and perfumes. That is what he is like. And he always says: “I would only like to see Him once again…” He wishes to see You. We have picked up that cry of his soul, and without telling him, we have brought it to You. He is the “Penitent” and the “Abstinent” Prophet. And he is pining away with the holy longing to see You

and hear You. I am Tobias, or Matthias. But I think that the archangel given to Tobit did not differ from him. He is full of wisdom. »

« It is not said that I shall not see him… But is that the only reason why you have come? It is troublesome to travel in this weather. Today is a clear day. But up to three days ago, there was so much rain on the roads! »

« No, we have not come only for that. Some days ago, Doras, the Pharisee, came to us to be purified. But the Baptist refused him the rite saying: "Water will not penetrate where there is such a thick crust of sin. Only One can forgive you, the Messiah." He then replied: "I will go to Him. I want to be cured and I think that this disease is due to His spell." The Baptist then chased him away as he would have chased Satan. When going away, he met John, whom he knew since the time John used to go to Jonah, to whom he was somehow related, and he said to him: "I am going. They all go. Also Manaen has been there and even… I say prostitutes, (but he used a dirtier word) go to Him. The Clear Water is full of deceived people. Now if He cures me and withdraws His anathema from my land, which armies of moles, worms and cricket-moles are digging up like war machines, eating the seed and gnawing away at the roots of fruit trees and vines, and nothing can destroy them, I will become His friend. Otherwise… woe to Him!" We replied to him: "Are you going there in that frame of mind?" He replied: "Who believes in that devil? In any case, He can form an alliance with me as He does with prostitutes." We decided to come and tell You, so that You know how to deal with Doras. »

« It is already all done. »

« Already done? Of course. He has wagons and horses, we have only our legs. When did he come? »

« Yesterday. »

« And what happened? »

« This: if you prefer to busy yourselves with Doras, You may go to his house in Jerusalem and mourn him. They are preparing him for his sepulcher. »

« Dead?! »

« Dead. Here. But do not let us speak of him. »

« Yes, Master… But… tell us one thing. Is it true what he said of Manaen? »

« Yes. Are you sorry? »

« Oh! It is our joy! We have spoken so much to him of You at Machaerus! And what does an apostle want but that his Master be loved? That is what John wants, and we with him. »

« You are right, Matthias. Wisdom is with you. »

« And… I don't believe it. But we have just met her… She came also to us looking for You, before the Feast of the Tabernacles. And we said to her: "What you are looking for is not here. But He will soon be in Jerusalem for the Tabernacles…" We told her that because the Baptist had said to us: "See that sinner, she is a crust of filth, but inside she has a flame which is to be stoked. It will become so strong that it will break out through the crust and will bum everything. The filth will fall off and only the blaze will be left." That is what he said. But, is it true that she sleeps here, as two mighty Scribes came to tell us? »

« No. She is in one of the steward's stables, more than a mile from here. »

« Hellish tongues! Have you heard that? And they!… »

« Let them say. Good people do not believe their words, they believe in My deeds. »

« Also John says so. Some days ago, some of his disciples said to him in our presence: "Rabbi, He, Who was with you on the other side of the Jordan and to Whom you bore witness, now baptizes. And they all go to Him. You will be left without followers." And John replied: "Blessed my ears that hear this news! You do not realize what joy you are giving me. You must know that man cannot take anything unless it is given to him by Heaven. You can witness that I said: 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before Him to prepare His way.' A just man does not take a name which does not belong to him, and even if people wish to praise him by saying: 'You are the one', that is, the Saint, he will say: 'Truly not, I am his servant'. And he is very happy just the same, because he thinks: 'I must be a little like Him, if people mistake me for Him.' And what does one who loves want, but to be like the person he loves? Only the bride gets pleasure from the bridegroom. A best man could not get it, because it would be immoral and a theft. But the friend of the groom, who is near him and listens to his words full of nuptial joy, feels such a great joy that it is almost like the delight that makes happy the virgin who married his friend and who foretastes the honey of the nuptial words. That is my joy and it is complete. What else

does the friend of the groom do, after serving his friend for months and after leading the bride to his house? He withdraws and disappears. So will I! One only remains: the groom with the bride: Man with mankind. Oh! what deep words!

He must grow greater, I must grow smaller. He Who comes from Heaven is above all the others. Patriarchs and Prophets disappear at His coming, because He is like the sun that illuminates everything with such a bright light, that stars and planets, deprived of light, are brightened by it, and those, the light of which is not extinguished, are outshone by its extreme brightness. It happens thus, because He comes from Heaven, whereas the Patriarchs and Prophets will go to Heaven, but they do not come from Heaven. Who comes from Heaven is above all the others. And He announces what He has seen and heard. But none of those who do not aim at Heaven and therefore deny God can accept His witness. Who accepts the witness of Him Who descended from Heaven, seals, by his belief, that God is true, and not an idle story without any truth, and he perceives the Truth, because his soul craves for It. Because He, Whom God sent, speaks words of God, because God gives Him the Spirit without reserve, and the Spirit says: 'Here I am. Take Me, because I want to be with You, Who are the delight of our love'. Because the Father loves the Son immeasurably and has placed all things in His hands. Therefore who believes in the Son, has eternal life. But who refuses to believe in the Son will not see Life. And the wrath of God will stay in him and on him." That is what he said. I engraved his words on my memory that I might repeat them to You » says Matthias.

« And I praise you and thank you for them. The last Prophet in Israel is not He Who descends from Heaven, but, as he was blessed with divine gifts since he was in the womb of his mother – you do not know, but I am telling you – it is he who is nearest to Heaven. »

« What? Oh! Tell us. When speaking of himself, he says: "I am the sinner." » Both the shepherds and the disciples are anxious to know.

« When My Mother was carrying Me, when She was pregnant of Me-God, as She is the Humble and Loving One, She went to serve John's mother, who was Her cousin on Her mother's side, and was pregnant in her old age. The Baptist already had a soul, as he was in his seventh month. And the germ of man, closed in his mother's womb, leapt with joy on hearing the voice of the Spouse of God. A precursor also in that, he preceded all the redeemed souls, because Grace was communicated from womb to womb and penetrating, it cancelled the Original Sin from the soul of the child. I therefore say that on the earth there are three who possess Wisdom, as there are in Heaven Three Who are Wisdom: the Word, His Mother, the Precursor on the earth; the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit in Heaven. »

« Our souls are thoroughly amazed, almost like when we were told: "The Messiah is born…" Because You were the Abyss of Mercy and our John is the abyss of humility. »

« And My Mother is the abyss of purity, of grace, of charity, of obedience, of humility, and of every other virtue which comes from God and which God grants to His saints. »

« Master » says James of Zebedee. « There is a lot of people. »

« Let us go. You may come, too. »

The crowd is a very large one.

« Peace be with you » says Jesus. He is smiling and very rarely is His smile so bright. People whisper and nod to Him. There is a great deal of curiosity.

It is said: « "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."

This commandment is forgotten too often. We put God to the test when we want to impose our will on Him. We put God to the test when we rashly act against the rules of the Law, which is holy and perfect and in its spiritual side, the principal one, it deals with and takes care also of the flesh that God created. We put God to the test, when, after being forgiven by Him, we revert to our sins. We put God to the test when, after receiving help from Him, we turn to our own ways and damage the help which had been granted for our own good and to remind us of God. God is neither to be mocked at nor derided. But that happens too often.

Yesterday you saw what punishment awaits those who deride God. The Eternal God, Who is full of compassion for those who are repentant, is most severe with unrepentant souls, who under no circumstances will amend themselves. You come to Me to hear the word of God. You come to receive miracles. You come to be forgiven. And the Father gives you His word, His miracles and His forgiveness. And I do not regret that I descended from Heaven, because I can give you miracles and forgiveness and I can make you understand God.

That man was struck down, like Nadab and Abihu, by the fire of divine wrath. But you must refrain from judging him. What happened, a new miracle, should only make you meditate on how one must behave to have God as a friend. He wanted the penitential water but without a supernatural spirit. He wanted it for a human spirit. As a magic means to cure his illness and free him from his calamity. All he was aiming at was his body and his harvest. Not his poor soul, which was of no value to him. His only values were life and money.

I say: a heart is where its treasure is, and a treasure is where the heart is. The treasure is therefore in the heart. In his heart he had a thirst for life and for a lot of money. How was he to get it? By any means. Also by crime. And so, was his request for baptism not deriding God and putting Him to the test? Sincere repentance for his long sinful life would have sufficed to obtain for him a holy death and what was fair to have on the earth. But he was unrepentant. As he never loved anyone but himself, he went so far as not to love even himself. Because hatred kills also the animal selfish love of man for himself. Tears of sincere repentance should have been his lustral water. And may that be true for all of you who are listening to Me. Because there is no one without sin, and you all therefore need that water. Springing from your hearts, it descends upon you and washes you, it cleanses what is polluted, it raises what is prostrated, it instills new life into those who have been bled by sin.

That man was anxious only about the trifles of the earth. But there is only one misery that should make man pensive. And that is the eternal misery of losing God. He did not fail to make the ritual offers. But he did not offer God the sacrifice of his spirit, that is, he did not stop sinning, he did not do penance and ask forgiveness by means of good deeds. Hypocritical offers made by means of riches unlawfully acquired are similar to requests made to God to become an accomplice of the evil actions of man. Can that ever happen? Is that not mocking at God? God rejects him who says: “I offer sacrifices” but is anxious to continue to sin. Can a corporeal fast be of any avail when the soul does not abstain from sin? May the death of the man who died here make you meditate on the conditions which are necessary to be loved by God. Now in his sumptuous abode his relatives and the hired female mourners are mourning over his corpse which will shortly be taken to its sepulcher. Oh! A true mourning and a true corpse! Nothing more than a corpse! Nothing but disheartened mourning. Because the soul which was already dead will be forever separated from those whom he loved out of blood relationship or similarity in mentality. Even if the same dwelling place will unite them forever, they will be divided by the hatred that reigns there. Then death is “true” separation. It would be better if a man, when he has killed his soul, mourned over himself, rather than be mourned by other people, and thus, through the tears of a contrite and humble heart, he gave life back to his soul, through God's forgiveness. Go. Without hatred or comment. With nothing but humility. As I have spoken of him out of justice, without hatred. Life and death teach us how to live well and die a happy death, and conquer life without death. Peace be with You. »

There are no sick people, no miracles, and Peter says to the three disciples of the Baptist: « I am sorry for you. »

« Oh! It is not necessary. We believe without seeing. We had the miracle of His birth and it made us believe. And now we have His word to corroborate our faith. We only ask to serve it until we are in Heaven, like our brother Jonah. »

It all ends.

128. Jesus at the «Clear Water»: « You Shall Not Covet Your Neighbour's Wife. »

12th March 1945.

Jesus passes through the middle of a very large crowd and they call Him from all directions. Some show their wounds, some mention their misfortunes, some simply say: « Have mercy on me », some show Him their little children and ask Him to bless them. The clear calm day has brought a great many people.

When Jesus is almost in His place, a plaintive cry is heard from the little path that leads to the river: « Son of David, have mercy on an unhappy man! »

Jesus looks in that direction and so do the crowd and His disciples. But a box-thicket conceals the pleading man.

« Who are you? Come out. »

« I cannot. I am not clean. I must go to the priest to be expelled from the world. I have sinned and leprosy has infected my body. I hope in You. »

« A leper! A leper! Anathema! Let us stone him! » shout the crowd in a turmoil.

Jesus with a gesture commands silence and calm. « He is not more unclean than anyone in sin. In the eyes of God an unrepentant sinner is more unclean than a repentant leper. If you are capable of believing, come with Me. »

The disciples and some curious people follow Jesus. The others crane their necks and remain where they are.

Jesus goes beyond the house and the little path, towards the box-thicket. He then stops and commands: « Show yourself. »

A young man, a little older than a teenager, appears. His face, which is still handsome and fresh looking, is lightly veiled by a very thin moustache and beard. His eyes are red with weeping.

He is hailed by a group of women all covered in veils, who were previously weeping in the yard of the house when Jesus passed by and are now crying even louder owing to the threats of the crowd. « Oh son! » shouts a woman collapsing on to the arms of another woman, probably a relative or a friend, I am not sure.

Jesus proceeds alone towards the unhappy fellow. « You are very young. How did you become a leper? »

The young man lowers his eyes, blushes, mumbles but ventures no more. Jesus repeats His question. The young man says something more clearly, but only a few words are caught: « … my father… I went… we sinned… not only I… »

« Your mother is over there, hoping and weeping. God in Heavens knows. I am here and I know. But I need your humiliation, so that I may have mercy on you. Speak up. »

« Speak, son. Have mercy on the womb that carried you » wails the mother who has dragged herself to where Jesus is standing and now, on her knees, is sub-consciously holding the hem of Jesus' tunic in one hand, while she is stretching the other one towards her son, shedding scalding tears.

Jesus lays His hand on her head. « Speak up » He says once again.

« I am her first born and I help my father in his trade. He sent me to Jericho many times to see his customers and… and one… had a beautiful young wife… I liked her. I went farther than I should have done… She liked me… We pined for each other… and we sinned during the absence of her husband… I do not know what happened, because she was healthy. Yes. Not only I was healthy and wanted her… she was healthy, too, and she wanted me. I don't know whether… she wanted other men, beside me, and got infected… She soon withered and now she is already amongst the tombs, buried alive… And I… and I… Mother! You have seen it. It is a little spot, but they say that it is leprosy and I will die of it. When?… No life… no home no mother! Oh! mother! I can see you but I cannot kiss you! Today they are coming to rip my clothes and expel me from home… from the village… I am worse than dead. And I will not even have my mother to mourn over my corpse… »

The young man is weeping. His mother looks like a tree violently shaken by the wind, she is sobbing so convulsively. People comment with contrasting feelings.

Jesus is sad. He says: « And when you were committing sin, did you not think of your mother? Were you so insane as not to remember that you had a mother on the earth and a God in Heaven? And if no leprosy had appeared on you, would you ever have realised that you had offended God and your neighbour? What have you done with your soul? And with your youth? »

« I was tempted… »

« Are you a little baby that you do not know that that fruit was cursed? You deserve to die without mercy. »

« Oh! Mercy! Only You can… »

« Not I. God. And if you swear now that you will not sin again. »

« I swear it. Save me, Lord. Within a few hours I will be condemned. Mother!… Help me with your tears… Oh! Mother! »

The woman has no voice left. She grasps Jesus' legs and looks up with eyes dilated with pain. Her face has the tragic expression of a person who is drowning and knows that he is holding on to the last support that may save him.

Jesus looks at her. He smiles pitifully: « Get up, mother. Your son is cured. But for your sake, not for his. »

The woman cannot yet believe it. She feels that he cannot have been cured, being so far away, and shakes her head in denial, sobbing continuously.

« Man: remove your tunic from your chest. That is where you had the spot. So that your mother may be comforted. »

The young man lowers his tunic and appears nude in the eyes of everybody. His skin is the smooth clean skin of a strong young man.

« Look, mother » says Jesus, and He bends to raise the woman. His gesture serves also to hold her back, whilst her motherly love and the sight of the miracle would urge her towards her son, without waiting until he is purified. As she realises that it is impossible for her to go where her motherly loves urges her, she relaxes on Jesus' chest and kisses Him in a true joyful rapture. She weeps, smiles, kisses, blesses… and Jesus caresses her compassionately. He then says to the young man: « Go to the priest. And remember that God cured you for your mother's sake and that you may be just in future. Go. »

The young man goes away after blessing the Saviour and, at a distance he is followed by his mother and the other women who were with her. The crowds sing hosannas.

Jesus goes back to His place.

« Also that young man had forgotten that there is a God Who commands honest morals. He had forgotten that it is forbidden to make for oneself gods which are not God. He had forgotten to keep the Sabbath as I taught you. He had forgotten a loving respect for his mother. He had forgotten that it is forbidden to fornicate, to steal, to be false, to covet his neighbour's wife, to kill himself and his soul, to commit adultery. He had forgotten everything. You have seen how he was stricken.

“You shall not covet your neighbour's wife” is linked to “You shall not commit adultery.” Lust always precedes deeds. Man is too weak to be able to crave for something without consuming his desire. And, what is exceedingly sad, man is not capable of behaving in the same way with regard to his honest desires. In evil man wishes and then fulfills his wish. In good he wishes and then stops, if he does not retreat.

Since sinful desires are widely spread like couch grass which spreads by itself, I will repeat to you all, what I said to him: are you little babies who do not know that that temptation is poisonous and is to be avoided? “I was tempted.” The old excuse! But since it is also an old example, man ought to remember its consequences and thus say: “No.” Our history does not lack examples of chaste people who persevered as such notwithstanding all the allurements of sex and the threats of violent people. Is temptation evil? It is not. It is the work of the Evil One. But who overcomes it, turns it into glory.

A husband who makes love with other women, is a murderer of his wife, of his children and! of himself. Who enters his neighbour's abode to commit adultery is a thief, and one of the most cowardly. Like a cuckoo, he enjoys somebody else's nest, without any expense. Who deceives the good faith of a friend, is a forger, because he simulates a friendship which in fact he does not have. Who behaves thus, dishonours himself and his parents. Thus, can God be with him?

I worked the miracle for that poor mother. But I feel such disgust for lewdness, that it upsets Me. You shouted out of fear and horror for leprosy. My soul shouted out of disgust for lewdness. I am surrounded by all possible miseries and I am the Saviour of them all. But I prefer to touch a corpse, a just man whose putrified flesh has been honest and who is in peace with his soul, rather than go near anyone who smells of lust. I am the Saviour, but I am the Innocent One. That should be remembered by all those who come here or speak of Me, imputing to My person their own passions.

I realise that you would like something else from Me. But I cannot. The ruin of a youth, hardly formed and already demolished by lewdness, has upset Me more than if I had touched Death. Let us go to the sick people. Since I cannot be the Word, owing to the nausea that chokes Me, I shall be the Health of those who hope in Me. Peace be with you. »

Jesus, in fact, is very pale, as if He were suffering. He smiles again only when He bends over sick children or the invalids lying in their stretchers. Then He is Himself once again. Particularly when He puts His finger into the mouth of a little dumb boy, about ten years old, and makes him say: « Jesus » and then « Mummy ».

People walk away very slowly.

Jesus stays and walks in the sunshine, which floods the yard, until the Iscariot goes up to Him and says: « Master, my mind is not at rest… »

« Why, Judas? »

« Because of those people in Jerusalem… I know them. Let me go there for a few days. I am not asking You to send me there by myself. On the contrary,

please do not allow that. Send Simon and John with me. They were so good to me in our first journey in Judaea. One dampens my zeal, the other purifies my very thoughts. You cannot believe what John means to me! He is dew on my ardour and oil on my agitated water… Believe me. »

« I know. You must not be surprised, therefore, if I am so fond of him. He is My peace. But you, too, if you are always good, will be My consolation. If you make use of the gifts of God, of which you have many, in doing good, as you have been doing for some days, you will become a true apostle. »

« And will You love me as You love John? »

« I love you just the same, Judas. Only I will love you without any anxiety or sorrow. »

« Oh! Master, how good You are! »

« You may go to Jerusalem. But it will be to no avail. But I do not want to disappoint your desire to help Me. I will tell Simon and John at once. Let us go. You see how your Jesus suffers for certain sins? I am like one who has lifted a weight which was too heavy. Never give Me such pain. Never again… »

« No, Master, I love You. You know… But I am weak… »

« Love fortifies. »

They go into the house and it all ends.

And it is better so, because I feel ill: morally. And you know the reason. Physically – either because it is Passion time, or because I have written too much, I do not know exactly why – in this terrible period I often have a temperature and I suffer from pains in my lungs, spine and abdomen. I think that Compito(l) is still affecting me. I am suffering the consequences of all the dampness and lack of sunshine in that dear village.

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(1) Compito is the village to which the author was evacuated during the war.

129. Jesus at the «Clear Water». He Cures the Mad Roman and Speaks to the Romans.

13th March 1945.

Today Jesus is with the nine remaining disciples, as the other three have left for Jerusalem. Thomas, who is always cheerful, is therefore engaged both with his vegetables and with other more spiritual tasks, while Peter, Philip, Bartholomew and Matthew look after the pilgrims, and the others go to the river to baptize. A real baptism of penance, owing to the bitterly cold wind!

Jesus is still in His comer in the kitchen, while Thomas bustles about, but is very quiet so as to leave the Master in peace, when Andrew comes in and says: « Master, there is a very sick man, who I think should be cured at once because… They say that he is insane, because they are not Israelites. We would say that he is possessed. He howls, bawls and writhes. Come and see him Yourself. »

« I am coming at once. Where is he? »

« He is still in the field. Can You hear that howling? It's him. It sounds like a beast, but it's him. He must be rich because he is accompanied by a well dressed man and he was taken out of a magnificent wagon by many servants. He must be a heathen because he curses the gods of Olympus. »

« Let us go. »

« I am coming to see him, too » says Thomas, who is more curious to see than worried about his vegetables.

They go out and instead of going towards the river, they turn their steps towards the fields, which separate this farmstead (as we would call it) from the steward's house.

Some sheep browsing in a meadow become frightened and scatter in all directions. The shepherds and a dog – it is the second dog which has appeared in my visions – endeavor in vain to gather them together. In the middle of the meadow there is a man who is bound fast, but nevertheless he jumps like a madman and utters frightful cries, which increase more and more as Jesus draws near.

Peter, Philip, Matthew and Nathanael are standing nearby, perplexed. There are also some other people there, all men, because the women are afraid.

« You have come, Master? See what a fury he is! » says Peter.

« It will soon be over. »

« But… he is a heathen, You know? »

« And what does that matter? »

« Eh!… because of his soul!… »

Jesus smiles slightly and proceeds. He reaches the group around the madman, who is becoming more and more agitated.

A man, clearly a Roman by his dress and his clean-shaven face, comes away from the group and greets:

« Hail, Master. Your fame reached me. You are greater than Hippocrates in curing and greater than Aesculapius' simulacrum in working miracles for sick people. I know. That is why I have come. My brother, see him? Insane because of some mysterious disease. No doctor understands it. I went with him to Aesculapius' temple. But he came out worse than before. At Ptolomais I have a relative, who sent me a message by a galley. It said that there is One here Who cures everybody. And I came. What a dreadful journey! »

« It deserves a reward. »

« But, mind. We are not even proselytes. We are Romans, faithful to our gods. You call us heathens. We come from Sybaris, but we are now at Cyprus. »

« It is true. You are heathens. »

« So… there is nothing for us? Your Olympus rejects ours or is rejected. »

« My God, One and Trine reigns, one and alone. »

« I have come in vain » says the disappointed Roman.

« Why? »

« Because I belong to another god. »

« Souls are created by One God Only. »

« Soul?… »

« A soul. The divine thing that is created by God for every man. A companion in lifetime, it survives after lifetime. »

« And where is it? »

« In the depth of one's ego. But, although as a divine thing it is inside the most sacred sanctuary we can say of her – and I say her and not it, because she is not a thing, but a true being worthy of full respect -we can say that she is not contained but contains. »

« By Jove! Are You a philosopher? »

« I am Reason united to God. »

« What You said made me think that You were… »

« And what is philosophy, when it is true and honest, but an elevation of human reason towards the infinite Wisdom and Power, that is towards God? »

« God! God!… I have that poor wreck there who upsets me. But I am almost forgetting his state to listen to You, Divine One. »

« I am not divine as you understand the term. You call divine who is superior to man. I say that that word is to be given only to him who is from God. »

« Who is God? Who has ever seen Him? »

« It has been written: "Hail, You who formed us! When I describe human perfection, the harmony of our body, I celebrate your glory." It was said: "Your bounty shines in the distribution of your gifts to all those who live, so that every man might have what is necessary. And your wisdom is revealed by your gifts, and your power by the fulfillment of your will." Do you recognize these words? »

« If Minerva assists me… they are of Galen. But how do You know them? I am dumbfounded!… »

Jesus smiles and replies: « Come to the true God and His divine spirit will indoctrinate you in the "true wisdom and piety, which is to know yourself and worship the Truth." »

« But that is Galen again! Now I am certain. Besides being a doctor and a magician, You are also a philosopher. Why don't You come to Rome? »

« I am neither a doctor, nor a magician, nor a philosopher, as you say. But I am the Witness of God on the earth. Bring Me the invalid. »

They drag him there, while he howls and writhes.

« See? You say that he is insane and that no doctor can cure him. It is true. No doctor: because he is not insane. But one of the infernal gods, I say so for you, a heathen, has entered him. »

« But he does not have the python spirit. On the contrary, he only tells false things. »

« We call him “demon”, not python. There is a speaking one and a dumb one. One that deceives by means of seemingly true reasons, and one that is only mental derangement. The former is more complete and dangerous. Your brother is possessed by the latter. But now he will get rid of it. »

« How? »

« He will tell you himself. » Jesus orders: « Leave the man! Go back to your abyss. »

« I am going. My power is too weak against You. You expel me and gag me. Why do You always beat us?… » The spirit has spoken through the lips of the man, who then collapses exhausted.

« He is cured. Release him without any fear. »

« Cured? Are You sure? But… I adore You! » The Roman is about to prostrate himself.

But Jesus does not allow him. « Raise your spirit. God is in Heaven. Worship Him and go towards Him. Goodbye. »

« No. Not so. At least accept something. Allow me to treat You like Aesculapius' priests. Allow me to hear You speak… Allow me to speak of You in my fatherland… »

« Do so. And come with your brother. »

His brother is looking around himself, amazed, and he asks: « Where am I? This is not Cintium! Where is the sea? »

« You were… » Jesus commands silence with a gesture and says: « You were suffering from a high temperature and they brought you to a different climate. You are now better. Come. »

They all go; but they are not all equally moved, because in the large room some admire, others criticise the recovery of the heathen. Jesus goes to His place, with the Romans in the very front of the crowd.

« I hope you do not mind if I quote a passage of the Kings. It is said that when the king of Syria was about to declare war on Israel, there was a great honorable man at his court, a leper, whose name was Naaman. A young girl of Israel, who had been captured by the Syrians and had become his slave, said to him: “If my lord went to the prophet who is in Samaria, he would certainly cure him of his leprosy.” Upon hearing that, Naaman asked the king's leave and followed the girl's advice. But the king of Israel was greatly irritated and said: “Am I perhaps God that the king of Syria should send invalids to me? This is a trap to make war against us.” But when the prophet Elisha was informed of the incident, he said: “Let the leper come to me and I will cure him and he will know that there is a prophet is Israel.” So Naaman went to Elisha. But Elisha did not receive him. He only sent word to him: “Wash yourself seven times in the Jordan and you will be cleansed.” Naaman got angry, because he thought he had gone such a long way for nothing and indignant as he was he was about to leave. But his servants said to him: “He only asked you to wash yourself seven times, and even if he had ordered you to do much more, you should have done it, because he is the prophet.” Naaman then surrendered. He went, washed himself and was cured. Overjoyed he went back to the servant of God and said to him: “Now I know the truth: there is no other God on the whole earth. There is only the God of Israel.” And since Elisha would not accept any gift, Naaman asked him to be allowed to take as much soil as would enable him to make sacrifices to the true God on soil of Israel.

I know that you do not all approve of what I have done. I also know that I am not obliged to justify Myself with you. But since I love you with true love, I want you to understand My gesture and learn by it, so that all feelings of criticism and scandal may vanish from your souls.

We have here two subjects of a pagan country. One of them was ill and they were told by a relative, certainly through the words of an Israelite: “If you went to the Messiah of Israel, he would cure the sick man.” And they have come to

Me from very far. Their confidence was greater than Naaman's, because they knew nothing of Israel and the Messiah, whereas the Syrian, being of a nearby country and in continuous touch with the slaves of Israel, already knew that God is in Israel. The true God. Is it not right therefore that a pagan may now go back to his fatherland and say: "There is truly a man of God in Israel and they worship the true God in Israel"?

I did not say: "Wash yourself seven times." But I spoke of God and their souls, two things with which they were unacquainted and which bring the seven gifts, like inexhaustable sources. Because the plants of faith, hope, charity, justice, temperance, strength, prudence grow where there is the concept of God and of the spirit, and a desire to reach them. Such virtues are unknown to those who from their gods can only copy common human passions, increased in licentiousness, as pertaining to alleged supreme beings. They are now going back to their country. But rather than the joy of having been granted their request, there is the joy of being able to say: "We know that we are not brutes, and that beyond this life there is a future. We know that the true God is Bounty and He therefore loves us, too, and He helps us to persuade us to go to Him."

And do you think that they are the only ones to ignore the truth?

A short while ago one of My disciples thought that I could not cure the sick man because he had a pagan soul. What is a soul? From Whom does it come? A soul is the spiritual essence of man. It is the being, created of a perfect age, which invests, accompanies, vivifies the whole life of the flesh and continues to live when the flesh no longer exists, because it is immortal like Him Who created it: God. As there is only One God, there is no such thing as souls of pagans or of non pagans created by different gods. There is only one Power that creates souls: and that is the Power of the Creator, of our one, only, powerful, holy, good God, with no other passion but love, perfect charity, a completely spiritual charity, which I call also a completely moral charity, in order to be understood by these Romans. Because the concept of spirit is not understood by these little children who know nothing of the holy words.

Do you think that I have come only for Israel?

I am the One Who will gather all races under one pastoral staff, the Heavenly one. And I solemnly tell you that the time will soon come when many heathens will say: "Let us have that much that will enable us to consummate sacrifices to the true God, to the one and trine God in our pagan land." I am the Word of that true God. They are now going. They are more convinced than if I had crushed them with disdain. They have perceived God in the miracle and in My words and they will tell when they go back.

Further, I ask you: was it not fair to reward so much faith? Although disconcerted by the opinion of doctors, and disappointed by useless visits to temples, they still had faith to come to the Unknown One, to the great Unknown One in the world, the One Derided and Mocked at and Calumniated by Israel and say to Him: "I believe You can." The first chrism to the new mentality is granted to them because they believed. I did not cure them so much of a disease as I did of their wrong faith, because I placed a chalice near their lips and the more they drink of it the thirstier they will become: the thirst for the knowledge of the true God.

I have finished. I say to you people of Israel: have the same faith as they had. »

The Roman draws near with his cured brother: « Well… I no longer dare say: by Jove. But on my honor as a Roman citizen I swear to You that I shall thirst after what You said! But now I must go. Who will give me more to drink? »

« Your spirit, the soul that you now know you have, until the day when a messenger of Mine will come to you. »

« Not You? »

« No… Not I. But I shall not be absent, although I am not present. And just in a little more than two years' time I will present you with a gift which is greater than the recovery of your brother so dear to you. Goodbye, both of you. Persevere in sentiments of faith. »

« Hail, Master. May the true God save You. » The two Romans go away and they can be heard calling the servants with the wagon.

« And they did not even know that they had a soul! » exclaims an old man.

« Yes, father. And they accepted My word better than many is Israel. Now, since they have given such rich alms, let us help the poor people of God with a double and treble measure. And let the poor pray for those benefactors, who are poorer than they are, that they may achieve the true and only wealth, which is to know God. »

The veiled woman is weeping under her veil, which prevents one from seeing

her tears, but not from hearing her sobs.

« That woman is weeping » says Peter. « Perhaps she has no money left. Shall we give her some? »

« She is not crying for that. But go and say to her: “Fatherlands pass away. Heaven remains. It belongs to those who have faith. God is Bounty and He therefore loves also sinners. And he helps you to persuade you to go to Him.” Go. Tell her that and then let her weep. It is poison coming out of her. »

Peter goes towards the woman who has already started walking towards the fields. He speaks to her and then comes back. « She started crying louder » he says. « I thought I was going to comfort her… » and he looks at Jesus.

« She is, in fact, relieved. Also joy makes people weep. »

« H'm… Who knows! Well, I will be happy when I see her face. Will I see it? »

« On Doomsday. »

« Divine Mercy! But I will be dead then! And what shall I care to know that? I shall be looking at the Eternal Father then! »

« Start doing that now. It is the only useful thing. »

« Yes… but… Master, who is she? »

They all laugh.

« If you ask that question again, we will go away at once, so you will forget her. »

« No, Master. However, it is enough if You stay… »

Jesus smiles. « That woman » He says, « is the remains of a meal and an early fruit. »

« What do You mean? I do not understand. »

But Jesus leaves him and goes towards the village.

« He is going to Zacharias'. His wife is dying » explains Andrew. « He sent me to tell the Master. »

« You make me angry! You know everything, you do everything and you never tell me anything. You are worse than a fish. » Peter vents his disappointment on his brother.

« Brother, don't get angry. You speak also in my place. Let us go and haul our nets. Come. »

Some go to the right, some to the left and it all ends.

130. Jesus at the «Clear Water»: « You Shall Not Bear False Witness. »

13th March 1945.

« How many people! » exclaims Matthew.

And Peter replies: « Look! There are also some Galileans... Ah! Ah! Let us go and tell the Master. They are three honored bandits! »

« They are after me, perhaps. They pester me even here... »

« No, Matthew. A shark will not eat a little fish. It wants a man, a noble prey. And if it cannot really find one, it will gorge a big fish. But you, I and the others, are tiny little fish... trifles. »

« Are you referring to the Master? » asks Matthew.

« Of course! Can't you see how they are looking in every direction? They are like wild beasts scenting the trail of a gazelle. »

« I am going to tell Him... »

« Wait! Let us tell Alphaeus' sons. He is too good. A wasted goodness if swallowed by those mouths. »

« You are right. »

The two go to the river and call James and Judas. « Come here. »

« There are some queer types... Good for the gallows. They have certainly come

to annoy the Master. »

« Let us go. Where is He? »

« He is still in the kitchen. Let us be quick, because if He finds out He will object. »

« Yes. And He is wrong. »

« I say that, too. »

They go back to the threshing floor. The group, described as “Galilean”, are speaking condescendingly to other people. Judas of Alphaeus goes near them, as if by chance. And he hears: « ... words are to be supported by facts. »

« And they are! Also yesterday He cured a Roman who was possessed! »

« Horrible! He cured a pagan! What a scandal! Have you heard that, Eli? »

« All faults are in Him: He is friendly with excisemen and prostitutes, and is in touch with heathens and... »

« And He endures scandalmongers, which is also a fault, and the gravest, in my eyes. But since He does not know and does not want to defend Himself, speak to me about it. I am His brother and I am older than He is, and this is another brother, the oldest. Speak. »

« Uh. »

« Why are you getting angry? Do you think that we are speaking ill of the Messiah? Oh! We have come from very far because of His fame. We were also telling these people... »

« Liar! You are so disgusting that I am turning my back on you. »

And Judas of Alphaeus, probably because he feels that his love for his enemies is in danger, goes away.

« Isn't what we said true? Everybody here can tell... »

But not one of the everybody, that is of those to whom the Galileans were speaking, utters a word. They do not wish to lie and they dare not give them the lie. So they remain silent.

« We do not even know what He is like... » says the Galilean Eli. « You did not insult Him in my house, did you? » asks Matthew ironically. « Or has a disease made you lose your memory? »

The “Galilean” covers himself with his mantle and goes away with the others without replying.

« Coward, » shouts Peter after him.

« They were telling us dreadful things about Him... » explains a man. « But we have seen His deeds. On the other hand we know what they, the Pharisees, are like. Whom should we believe then? The Good One, Who is really good, or the wicked ones, who say they are good, whereas they are a calamity? I know that since I have been coming here, I have changed so much, that I do not recognise myself any more. I was violent and hard on my wife and children, I had no respect for my neighbours, instead now... Everybody at the village says: “Azariah is no longer himself.” So? Has anyone ever heard that a demon makes people good? For whom does he work then? For our holiness? Oh! He is a strange demon indeed if he works for the Lord! »

« You are right, man. And may God protect you because you understand, see and work properly. Carry on like that and you will be a true disciple of the blessed Messiah. You will be a joy for Him Who wants your good and bears everything to lead you to it. Be scandalised only at true evil. But when you see that He works in the name of God do not be scandalised, and do not believe those who would like to persuade you of scandals, even if you see Him doing new things. These are new times. They have come like a flower, which has come up after its roots have been working for centuries. Had He not been preceded by centuries of expectation, we could not have understood His Word. But centuries of obedience to the Law of Sinai have given us the minimum preparation which enables us to inhale all the incense and the new times, a divine flower that the Bounty has granted us to see, and thus purify and fortify ourselves and spray ourselves with the scent of holiness like altars. New times have new systems, which are not contrary to the Law, but are infused with mercy and charity because He is the Mercy and the Love which descended from Heaven. » James of Alphaeus waves his hand to the people and goes towards the house.

« You do speak well! » says Peter amazed. « I never know what to say. I can only say: “Be good. Love Him, listen to Him and believe Him.” I don't really

know how He can be satisfied with me! »

« And yet He is very satisfied, » replies James of Alphaeus.

« Do you really mean that or are you saying so out of kindness? »

« It is true. Also yesterday He was telling me, »

« Was He? In that case I am happier today than I was on the day they brought me my bride. But... where did you learn to speak so well? »

« On His Mother's knees and beside Him. What lessons! What words! Only He can speak better than she. But what she lacks in power, she gains in kindness... and penetrates your heart. Oh! Her lessons! Have you ever seen a piece of cloth the corner of which touches a scented oil? It slowly absorbs the scent but not the oil and even if the oil is removed, the scent is still there to say: “I was there.” She is like that. With Her wisdom and grace She imbued us, coarse pieces of cloth which later life washed, and Her perfume is within us. »

« Why does He not make Her come? He said He was going to! We would become good, we would not be such blockheads... at least I would not. And also these people... In Her presence they would be good, also those wicked persons who come now and again... »

« Do you think so? I don't. We would improve and also the humble people. But the mighty and the wicked ones!... Oh! Simon of Jonas! Don't ascribe your honest feelings to other people! You would be disappointed... Here He is coming. Don't let us say anything. »

Jesus comes out of the kitchen holding the hand of a little boy, who toddles along with Him, eating a piece of bread seasoned with olive oil. Jesus adapts His stride to the little legs of His friend. « I made a conquest! » He says happily. « This four year old man, whose name is Asriel, told Me that he wants to be a disciple and wants to learn everything: to preach, to cure sick children, to make the vine shoots bear bunches of grapes also in December and then he wants to climb up a mountain and shout to the whole world: “Come, the Messiah is here!” Is that right Asriel? »

The smiling child replies: « Yes » and continues eating his piece of bread.

« You are hardly capable of eating! » Thomas teases him. « You are not even capable of saying who the Messiah is. »

« He is Jesus of Nazareth. »

« And what does “Messiah” mean? »

« It means... it means: the Man Who was sent to be good and to make us all good. »

« And what does He do to make us good? And since you are a little rascal, what will you do? »

« I will love Him. And I will do everything. And He will do everything, because I love Him. If you do that, you will become good, too. »

« And you have had your lesson, Thomas. You have the commandment: “Love Me and you will do everything, because I will love you if you love Me; and love will work everything in you. »

« The Holy Spirit has spoken. Come, Asriel. Let us go and preach. » Jesus is so happy when He is with a child, that I would like to take all the children to Him and make Him known to all the children. Instead there are so many who do not even know Him by name!

He passes in front of the veiled woman and before reaching her He says to the child: Say to that woman: « Peace be with you. »

« Why? »

« Because she is like you when you fall and hurt yourself. And she is weeping. But if you tell her that, it will pass. »

« Peace be with you, woman. Don't cry. The Messiah told me. If you love Him, He will love you and cure you, » shouts the child while Jesus drags him away without stopping. Asriel has the stuff missionaries are made of. Even if for the time being his sermons are somewhat... untimely and he says more than he was asked to say.

« Peace to you all. »

« It is said: “You shall not bear false witness.”

What is there more nauseating than a liar? Can we not say that he joins cruelty to impurity? Of course, we can. A liar, I am talking of a liar in grave matters, is cruel. He kills a reputation with his tongue. So he does not differ from a

murderer. Nay: he is more than a murderer. A murderer kills only the body. A liar kills also a good name, the memory of a man. He is, therefore, twice a murderer. He is an unpunished murderer because he does not shed blood, but he injures the reputation both of the person calumniated and of the whole family. And I will not take into consideration the case of the person who brings about the death of his neighbour by swearing false witness. The coal of Gehenna is already piled upon such person. I am only talking of those who make false insinuations by telling lies and stir up other people against an innocent person. Why do they do that? Either out of hatred, without any reason, or out of greed to get what another man possesses, or out of fear.

Hatred. Only a friend of Satan hates. A good person does not hate. Never. For no reason whatsoever. Even if he is scorned and damaged, he forgives. He never hates. Hatred is the witness that a lost soul bears of itself and is the best witness in favor of an innocent man. Because hatred is the revolt of evil against good. Who is good does not need to be forgiven.

Greed. He has what I have not got. I want what he has. But only by disparaging him I can obtain his position. And I am going to do it. Will I be lying? What does it matter? Will I be stealing? What does it matter? Will I ruin a whole family? What does it matter?" Of the many questions that the shrewd liar asks himself, he forgets, he wants to forget one question. This one: "And if I should be found out?" He does not ask himself such question, because a prey to pride and greed, he is like one whose eyes are closed. He does not see the danger. He is also like a drunk man. He is intoxicated with a satanic wine and does not consider that God is stronger than Satan and takes vengeance of the calumniated man. The liar has given himself to Falsehood and foolishly relies on its protection.

Fear. Many a time man slanders to excuse himself. It is the most common form of falsehood. Evil has been done. We are afraid it might be found out as our deed. Then, using and abusing the esteem in which we are still held by other people, we upset the situation, and we saddle someone else, of whose honesty only we are afraid, with the evil deed we accomplished. We also do it, because at times our neighbour has been the unintentional witness of our evil action, and we want to be secure from his eventual witness. So we accuse him to make him unpopular and thus, if he should speak, no one may believe him.

Behave properly! And you will never need such falsehood. Do you not consider, when you lie, what a heavy burden you take upon yourselves? It is made of subjection to the evil spirit, of perpetual fear of being found out, and of the necessity of remembering the lie, also after years, in all the circumstances and details in which it was told, without contradicting oneself. The labor of a galley-slave! If it only helped to gain Heaven! Instead it serves only to prepare a place in hell!

Be frank. How lovely are the lips of a man who does not know falsehood! He may be poor, coarse, unknown? He is, is he? But he is still a king. Because he is sincere. And sincerity is more regal than gold and diadems, and elevates one above the crowds more than a throne, and procures a greater court of good people than a monarch has. Intimacy with a sincere man gives safety and comfort. Whereas friendship with an insincere person, or even to be near such a person, causes a feeling of uneasiness. Since the truth soon comes to light in a thousand ways, why does he who lies not consider that afterwards he will always be suspected? How can one believe what he says?

Even if he speaks the truth, and who hears him wants to believe him, there is always a doubt: "Is he lying also now?" You may ask: "Where is the false witness?" Every lie is a false witness. Not only legal ones.

Be simple, like God and a child. Be truthful every moment of your lives. Do you want to be considered good? Be truly so. Even if a scandalmonger should wish to speak evil of you, one hundred good people will say: "No. It is not true. He is good. His deeds speak of him."

In one of the sapiential books it is said: "A scoundrel, a vicious man, he goes with a leer on his lips... Deceit in his heart, always scheming evil, he sows dissension... There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that His soul abhors: a haughty look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that weaves wicked plots, feet that hurry to do evil, a false witness who lies with every breath, a man who sows dissension among brothers... His own lips are to blame when the wicked man is entrapped. A false witness is nothing but deceit. Lips that tell the truth abide firm forever, the tongue that lies lasts only for a moment. The words of a backbiter sound simple, but they pierce man's heart. The enemy brooding over treason is known by his speech. Do not trust him when he whispers, because he carries seven evils in his heart. He deceitfully conceals his hatred, but his wickedness will be disclosed... The man who digs a pit falls into it, the stone comes back on him that rolls it."

The sin of falsehood is as old as the world and the thought of the wise man concerning it is unchanged, unchanged is also the judgement of God on those who lie. I say: have only one language. May your “yes” be always “yes” and your “no” be always “no”, also before mighty ones and tyrants. And you will receive great reward in Heaven for it. I say to you: be spontaneous like a child who by instinct goes towards him whom he perceives to be good without seeking anything but goodness. And he says what his own goodness makes him think, without considering whether he says too much and whether he may be reproached for it. »

« Go in peace. And may the Truth become your friend. »

Little Asriel, who has been sitting all the time at Jesus' feet, looking up at Him like a little bird that listens to the song of its father, makes a loving gesture: he rubs his little face against Jesus' knees and says to Him: « You and I are friends because You are good and I love You. Now I will say that too » and forcing his voice to make himself heard from one end to the other of the large room, gesticulating as he saw Jesus doing, he says: « Listen, everybody. I know where the people go who do not tell lies and love Jesus of Nazareth. They climb up Jacob's ladder. Up, up, up... together with the angels and they stop when they find the Lord, » and he smiles happily, displaying his little teeth.

Jesus caresses him and goes among the crowd. He takes the little one back to his mother and says: « Thank you, woman, for giving Me your child. »

« He has bothered You... »

« No. He has given Me love. He is a little one of the Lord and may the Lord be always with him and with you. Goodbye. »

It all ends.

131. Jesus at the «Clear Water»: « You Shall Not Covet What Belongs to Your Neighbour. »

14th March 1945.

Jesus is speaking...

« God gives everybody what is necessary. That is the truth. What is necessary to man? Pomp? A large number of servants? Countless fields? Banquets lasting from sunset to dawn? No. All that is necessary to man is a roof, a loaf, a garment. The indispensable to live.

Look around yourselves. Who are the happiest and the healthiest? Who enjoys a healthy tranquil old age? Fast living people? No. Those who live and work honestly and wish honest things. They are not poisoned by lust and thus they are strong. They are not intoxicated by orgies and are thus agile. They are not consumed by the poison of jealousy and are thus cheerful. Who instead craves to possess more and more, kills his own peace and has no joy, grows old precociously, consumed by envy and abuses.

I could link the commandment: “You shall not steal” to the other one: “You shall not covet what belongs to your neighbour.” In fact an immoderate longing urges one to steal. The step between the two is a very short one. Is every desire an unlawful one? I do not mean that. The father of a family who works in the fields or in a workshop and wishes to gain what is necessary to secure food for his family, most certainly does not commit a sin. On the contrary he fulfills his duty of a father. Who instead craves only to enjoy more and takes possession of what belongs to other people to have a better time, commits a sin.

Envy! What is to covet other people's property but avarice and envy? My dear children, envy separates man from God and unites him to Satan. Do you not remember that Lucifer was the first one to covet what did not belong to him? He was the most beautiful of the archangels and enjoyed the vision of God. He should have been happy with that. He envied God, wanted to be God and became a demon. The first demon. Another instance: Adam and Eve had been given everything, they enjoyed the earthly paradise and God's friendship, blessed with the gifts of grace which God had granted them. They should have been satisfied with that. They envied God's knowledge of good and evil and were driven out of Eden and became disliked by God. The first sinners. A third instance: Cain envied Abel's friendship with the Lord. And he became the first killer. Mary, the sister of Aaron and Moses, envied her brother and became the

first leper in the history of Israel. I could lead you step by step through the whole history of the people of God, and you would see that immoderate longing made men sinners and brought the country calamity. Because the sins of the individuals accumulate and bring disasters to the country, exactly as grains of sand, piling up throughout centuries, cause landslides which overwhelm villages and their inhabitants.

I have often cited little children as an instance, because they are simple and trustful. Today I say to you: imitate birds in their freedom from desires. Look. It is now winter. There is little food in the orchards. Do they worry about hoarding it in summer? No, they do not. They trust in the Lord. They know that they will always be able to catch for their little crops a small worm, a little grain, a crumb, a small spider, a little fly floating on water. They know that there will always be a warm chimney-top or a flock of wool to shelter them in winter, and they know as well that when the time comes when they will need hay for their nests and more food for their little ones, there will be sweet-smelling hay in the fields and juicy food in the orchards and in the furrows, and the air and the soil will be rich in insects. And they slowly sing: “Thank You, Creator, for what You give us and will give us”, and they are ready to sing hosannas at the top of their voices when they will enjoy the company of their mates during the mating season and they see their offspring multiply.

Is there a happier creature than a bird? And what is its intelligence as compared to the intelligence of man? A chip of silica compared with a mountain. But it teaches you a lesson. I solemnly tell you that who lives without any impure desires possesses the joy of a bird. He trusts in God, feels that God is his Father. He smiles at the rising day and at the falling night, because he knows that the sun is his friend and night his nourishment. He looks at men without malice and is not afraid of their vengeance, because he does not harm them in any way. He is not afraid for his health or his sleep, because he knows that an honest life prevents diseases and grants a peaceful rest. And finally he is not afraid of death, because he knows that, since he always acted well, God can but smile at him. Also a king dies. And a rich man dies. A sceptre will not avert death, neither can money buy immortality. As before the King of kings and the Lord of lords crowns and money are ridiculous things, a life lived according to the Law is the only thing of value!

What are those men at the end of the room saying? Do not be afraid of speaking. »

« We were saying: of what sin is Antipas guilty? Of theft or adultery »

« I would like you to look at your own hearts, and not at other people. But I will reply to you that he is guilty of idolatry, because he worships the flesh more than God, and he is guilty of adultery, theft, unlawful desires, and he will soon be guilty of homicide. »

« Will he be saved by You, the Saviour? »

« I will save those who are repentant and return to God. The unrepentant shall have no redemption. »

« You said that he is a thief. What did he steal? »

« His brother's wife. A theft is not only of money. It is also theft to take a man's reputation, to seduce a virgin, to take a wife away from her husband, as it is theft to steal a neighbour's ox or his plants. A theft, aggravated by lust or false witness, is aggravated by adultery, fornication or falsehood. »

« And what sin does a woman, who prostitutes herself, commit? »

« If she is married, a sin of adultery and theft with regard to her husband. If she is not married, a sin of impurity and of theft with regard to herself. »

« To herself? But she gives what belongs to her!! »

« No. Our body was created by God to be the temple of the soul, which is the temple of God. It must, therefore, be kept honest, otherwise the soul will be robbed of God's friendship and of eternal life. »

« A prostitute then can only be of Satan? »

« Every sin is prostitution with Satan. A sinner, like a hired woman, gives himself to Satan for unlawful love, hoping to make a foul profit. Prostitution is a grave, a very grave sin which makes man like unclean animals. But do you think that any other capital sin is not so grave? What shall I say of idolatry? Of homicide? And yet God forgave the Israelites after the golden calf. He forgave David after his sin, which was a twofold one. God forgives who is repentant. Let repentance be proportioned to the number and gravity of sins, and I tell you that who is more repentant, will be more forgiven. Because repentance is a kind of love. Of active love. Who repents, says to God by his repentance: “I cannot bear Your wrath, because I love You and I want to be loved.” And God loves who

loves Him. I therefore say: the more one loves, the more one is loved. Who loves completely, is completely forgiven. And that is the truth.

Go. But before I must let you know that at the gate of the village there is a widow, with many children, who are starving to death. She has been driven out of her house because of debts. And she may still "thank" the landlord, because he only drove her out. I have used your alms to buy bread for them. But they need a shelter. Mercy is the most acceptable sacrifice to the Lord. Be good and in His name I give you assurance of a reward. »

The people whisper, consult with one another, discuss.

Jesus in the meantime cures a man who is almost blind and listens to a little old woman who has come from Doco to beg Him to go to her daughter-in-law who is ill. A long woeful story, which I, exhausted as I am today, will not write.

And, fortunately, it all comes to an end, because I am definitely not fit to go on, as I have been suffering from a heart attack these last three hours and it has dazzled also my sight.

132. Jesus at the «Clear Water». Closure.

17th March 1945.

« My children in the Lord, the Feast of Purification is now at hand, and I, the Light of the world, am sending you prepared with the minimum necessities to celebrate it properly. It is the first light of the feast from which you will light all the others. Because he who should pretend to light many lamps without having the means to light the first one, would be quite foolish. And even more foolish would be he who pretended to start his own sanctification from the most arduous things, neglecting what is the basis of the immutable building of perfection: the Decalogue.

We read in the Book of Maccabees that Judas with his men, after reconquering the Temple and the City with the protection of the Lord, destroyed the altars and the temples of the foreign gods and purified the Temple. He then erected another altar, and with flints he lit a fire, offered sacrifices, burnt the incense, placed the lights and laid the loaves of the proposition and then, they all prostrated themselves and begged the Lord not to let them sin any more and if, owing to their weakness, they should fall into sin again, to be treated with divine mercy. And that happened on the twenty-fifth of the month of Chislev.

Let us consider and apply the narrative to ourselves, because every word in the history of Israel, the chosen people, has a spiritual meaning. Life is always a lesson. The life of Israel is a teaching not only for our earthly days, but also for the conquest of the eternal days.

"They destroyed the altars and the pagan temples."

That is the first operation. The one I told you to carry out when I mentioned the individual gods that take the place of the true God: the idolatries of sensuality, of gold, of pride, the capital vices that lead to the desecration and death of the soul and of the body and to the punishment of God. I did not crush you under the numberless formulae which now oppress the believers and are a bulwark against the true Law, which is oppressed and concealed by heaps of exterior prohibitions, which by their very oppression cause the believers to lose sight of the unswerving clear holy voice of the Lord Who says: "Do not curse. Do not idolise. Do not desecrate the festivals. Do not dishonour your parents. Do not kill. Do not fornicate. Do not steal. Do not lie. Do not covet other people's belongings. Do not covet your neighbour's wife." Ten prohibitions. Not one more. And they are the ten columns of the temple of the soul. Above them shines the gold of the holiest precept: "Love your God. Love your neighbour." It is the coronation of the temple. It is the protection of its foundations. It is the glory of its builder.

Without love one could not keep the ten rules and the columns would fall, all of them or some, and the temple would crash, all of it or part. But it would always be a ruin and no longer suitable to receive the Most Holy. Do what I told you, knock down the three lusts. Be sincere in giving a name to your vices, as God is sincere in saying to you: "Do not do this or that." It is useless subtilising forms. Who loves something more than he loves God, whatever that love may be, is an idolater. Who invokes God professing himself His servant and then does not obey Him, is a rebel. Who out of greed works on the Sabbath is a distrustful presumptious desecrator. Who refuses help to his parents, advancing pretexts, even if he says that they are works given to God, is one who is hated by God, Who put fathers and mothers as His image on the earth. Who kills is always a

murderer. Who fornicates is always lustful. Who steals is always a thief. Who lies is always vile. Who covets what is not his, is always a greedy loathsome glutton. Who desecrates a nuptial bed is always filthy.

It is so. And I remind you that after the erection of the golden calf, there came the wrath of the Lord; after Solomon's idolatry there was the schism that divided and weakened Israel; and our present misfortunes of spirit, fate and nationality came after Hellenism was accepted, nay, introduced and welcomed by unworthy Judaeans under Antiochus Epiphanes. I remind you that Nadab and Abihu, false servants of God, were struck by Jehovah. Remember that the manna was not holy on Sabbaths. Remember Cam and Absalom. And I recall the sin of David against Uriah and the sin of Absalom against Amnon. I recall the end of Absalom and Amnon, the fate of Heliodorus, a thief, and of Simon and Menelaus. I remind you of the ignoble end of the two false elders who had borne false witness against Susanna. And I could continue with instances without finding an end to them. But let us go back to the Maccabees.

“And they purified the Temple.”

It is not enough to say: “I destroy.” It is necessary to say: “I purify.” I told you how a man is purified: by humble and sincere repentance. There is no sin that God will not forgive if the sinner is really repentant. Have faith in the Divine Bounty. If you were able to understand what that Bounty is, even if all the sins of the world were upon you, you would not flee from God, on the contrary you would run to His feet, because only the Most Good One can forgive what man does not forgive.

“And they erected another altar.”

Oh! Do not try to deceive the Lord. Do not be false in your behaviour. Do not mix God and Mammon. You would have an empty altar: God's. Because it is useless to erect a new altar if there are still remains of the other one. Either God or the idol. Make your choice.

“And they lit the fire with flint and tinder.”

The flint is the firm will to belong to God. The tinder is the desire to cancel in God's heart even the memory of your sin during the rest of your lives. Then the fire is lit: love. Because the son who by means of an honourable life endeavours to console the parent he had offended, does love his father, as he wants him to be happy on account of his son, who before was the cause of his tears and is now his joy.

Now, at this point, you may offer sacrifices, bum incense, lay the lights and the loaves. The sacrifices will be acceptable to God, and the prayers agreeable, the altar will really be lit up, rich in the food of your daily offers. You may pray saying: “Be our Protector”, because He will be your friend. But His mercy did not wait for you to ask for it. It anticipated your desire. And He sent Mercy to say to you: “Do have hope. I am telling you: God forgives you. Come to the Lord.”

There is an altar already amongst you: the new altar. Streams of light and forgiveness flow from it. Like oil they spread, cure, reinvigorate. Believe the Word that comes from it. Weep with Me over your sins. Like a Levite who conducts a chorus, I will direct your voices to God, and your wailing, if united to My voice, will not be rejected. I lower Myself with you, the Brother of men according to the flesh, the Son of the Father according to the spirit, and I say for you and with you: “From this deep abyss, where I-Mankind have fallen, I cry to You, Lord. Listen to the voice of him who looks at himself and sighs, and do not close Your ears to my words. O God, I am horrified at seeing myself. I am horrible in my own eyes! And what shall I be in Your eyes? Do not look at my faults, o Lord, otherwise I will not be able to withstand Your presence, but have mercy on me. Because You said: 'I am Mercy'. And I believe in Your word. My soul, wounded and depressed, confides in You, in Your promises, and from dawn till dusk, from my youth till my old age I will hope in You.”

Although guilty of homicide and adultery and reproved by God, David was forgiven after he cried to the Lord: “Have mercy on me, not out of respect for me, but for the glory of Your mercy which is infinite. And in Your mercy wipe away my sin. There is no water that can wash my heart unless it is taken from the deep water of Your holy goodness. Wash me of my injustice with it and purify me of my foulness. I do not deny that I sinned. Nay, I confess my crime, my sin is constantly in my mind like an accusing witness. I offended man in my neighbour and in myself, but I am particularly sorry that I sinned against You. And may this tell You that I acknowledge that You are just in Your words and I am afraid of Your judgement which triumphs over all human power. But consider, o Eternal God, that I was born guilty and that she who conceived me was a sinner, and that You have loved me so much as to reveal and give me Your wisdom as my teacher that I might understand the mysteries of Your sublime truth. And if You have done so much, shall I fear You? No. I do not fear You.

Sprinkle me with the bitterness of sorrow and I shall be purified. Wash me with tears and I shall become like mountain snow. Let me hear Your voice, and Your humiliated servant will rejoice, because Your voice is joy and happiness, even when it reproaches. Turn Your face to my sins, and Your eyes will cancel my iniquity. The heart You gave me was desecrated by Satan and by my human weakness. Create a clean heart in me, and destroy what is corrupted in the viscera of Your servant, so that an upright spirit only may reign in him. Do not banish me from Your presence and do not deprive me of Your friendship, because only Your salvation is the joy of my soul and Your sovereign spirit is the consolation of a humiliated heart. May I be Your messenger among men and say to them: 'See how good the Lord is. Walk in His ways and you will be blessed, as I am, I the abortion of man who am becoming a son of God through His grace which is restored in me'. And the sinner will return to You. Blood and flesh are boiling and howling in me. Save me from them, o Lord, salvation of my soul, and I will sing Your praise. I did not know. But now I have understood. You do not want a sacrifice of rams, but the holocaust of a broken heart. A crushed and broken heart is more pleasing to You than rams, because You created us for Yourself and You want us to remember that and to give back to You what is Yours. Be benign to me in Your great goodness and rebuild my Jerusalem and Yours: a purified and forgiven soul on which sacrifice, oblation and holocaust may be offered for sins, thanksgiving and praise. And may every new day of mine be an offering of holiness consumed upon Your altar to ascend to You with the scent of my love."

Come! Let us go to the Lord. I in front, you behind. Let us go to the wholesome water, to the holy pastures, to the land of God. Forget the past. Smile at the future. Do not worry about the mire, look at the stars. Do not say: "I am darkness"; say: "God is Light." I have come to announce peace to you, to give the Good News to the meek, to cure those whose hearts are crushed by too many things, to preach freedom to all the slaves, and first of all to the slaves of Mammon, to free prisoners from lust.

I tell you: the year of grace has come. Do not weep, if you are sad because you know that you are sinners, do not weep, exiles of the Kingdom of God. I will replace your ashes with gold, and your tears with oil. I will put the best clothes on you to introduce you to the Lord and say to Him: "Here are the sheep You set Me to look for. I visited and gathered them, I counted them, I looked for the ones which had gone astray and I have brought them to You, protecting them from rain and fog. I have taken them amongst all the peoples, I have gathered them from every region to lead them to the Land which is not on the earth, which You prepared for them, Holy Father, to take them up to the heavenly tops of your fertile mountains, where everything is light and beauty, along the streams of celestial bliss where the spirits You love are sated with You. I also looked for the wounded ones, I cured the ones which were injured, I restored the weak ones, I did not neglect even one. And I carried on My shoulders, like a loving joke, the one which had almost been torn to pieces and devoured by the wolves of sensuality and I lay her at Your feet, benign holy Father, because she can no longer walk, neither does she know Your words, she is a poor soul chased by remorse and men, she is a mourning trembling soul, she is like a heavy wave that breaks on the coast. She comes forward with her desire, but the knowledge of herself drives her back… Open Your bosom to her, Loving Father, so that this lost creature may find peace in it. Say to her: 'Come!' Say to her: 'You are Mine'. She belonged to the whole world, but she loathes it and is afraid of it. She says: 'Every master is a filthy bravo'. Let her say: 'This King of mine has given me the joy of being caught!' She does not know what love is. But if You receive her, she will learn that this celestial love is the nuptial love of God and the human spirit, and like a bird freed from the cage of cruel people, she will climb higher and higher, up to You, to Heaven, to joy and glory, singing: 'I have found Whom I sought. My heart has no further desire. I rest and rejoice in You, eternal Lord, blessed forever!' ."

Go. Celebrate the Feast of Purification with a new spirit. And may the light of God shine within You. »

The conclusion of Jesus' speech has been overwhelming. His eyes were shining in His bright face and His smile and voice were of a gentleness never known before.

The people are almost fascinated and they do not move until He repeats: « Go. Peace be with you. » The pilgrims then start to leave speaking among themselves.

The veiled woman walks away quickly, as usual, with her lightly swaying agile step. She seems to have wings as the wind swells her mantle round her shoulders.

« I will now see whether she is from Israeli » says Peter.

« Why? »

« Because if she remains here, it means…»

« …that she is a poor woman without a house of her own. Nothing more, remember that, Peter. » Jesus walks towards the village.

« Yes, Master, I will remember. And what shall we do now that they will all be staying at home for the Feast? »

« Our women will be lighting the lamps in our place. »

« I am sorry… It is the first year that I do not see them being lit in my house, or that I do not light them myself. »

« You are a big baby. We will light the lamps, too. So you will not be in a sulk any longer. And you will be the very one to light them. »

« Me? Not I, Lord. You are the Head of our family. It's for You to light them. »

« I am a lamp which is always lit… and I would like you all to be such, as well. I am the eternal Purification, Peter. Do you know that I was born on the twenty-fifth of Chislev? »

« I wonder how many lamps? » asks Peter full of admiration.

« It was impossible to count them… All the stars in the sky…»

« No! Did they not celebrate Your birthday at Nazareth? »

« I was not born in Nazareth, but in a stable in Bethlehem. I see that John knows how to be quiet. John is very obedient. »

« And he is not curious, whereas I am very much so! Will You tell Your poor Simon all about it? Otherwise how can I speak about You? Many times people ask me questions, and I never know what to say… The others are clever, I mean Your brothers and Simon, Bartholomew and Judas of Simon. Yes, also Thomas is good at speaking… he sounds like a crier at the market… selling goods. But he can speak… Matthew… well, it's no problem for him! He makes use of his old skill at the customs bench to fleece people and compel them to say: "You are right." But I!… poor Simon of Jonas! What did the fish teach you? And the lake? Two things… but they are of no use: the fish to be silent and persevering. They persevered in escaping from the net and I persevered in keeping them in it. The lake taught me to be brave and vigilant. And what about the boat? It taught me to slog away without sparing any of my muscles and to stand up even when the lake was rough and one might fall. To watch the pole-star, to hold the rudder with a firm hand, to be strong, brave, constant, careful, that is what my poor life taught me…»

Jesus lays a hand on his shoulder and shakes him looking at him with loving admiration, a true admiration of such sincerity and says to him: « Do you not think that is a lot, Simon Peter? You have what is necessary to be My "stone". Nothing to be added, nothing to be taken away. You will be the eternal navigator, Simon. And you will say to who comes after you: "Watch the pole-star, that is, Jesus. A firm hand on the rudder, strength, courage, firmness, carefulness, hard work without sparing oneself, an eye on everything, capability of standing up also on rough seas…" With regard to being silent… well… the fish did not teach you that! »

« With regard to what I should be able to say, I am more mute than fish. The other words?… Also magpies can chatter as well as I do… But tell me, my Master? Will You give a son also to me? We are old… But You said that the Baptist's mother was old… Now you said: "And you will say to him who comes after you…" Who comes after a man but his son? » Peter's face expresses prayer and hope.

« No, Peter. And do not be upset about it. You look just like your lake when the sun is hidden by a cloud. From bright it becomes dull. No, My dear Peter. You will not have one, but a thousand, ten thousand sons, and in every country… Do you not remember what I said to you: "You will be a fisher of men"? »

« Oh!… Yes… but… A child who called me "father" would be so kind! »

« You will have so many that you will not be able to count them. And you will give them eternal life. And you will find them in Heaven and will bring them to Me saying: "Here are the children of Your Peter and I want them to be where I am", and I will say to you: "Yes, Peter. It will be done as you wish. Because you have done everything for Me and I will do everything for you." » Jesus is most kind in making such promises.

Peter swallows saliva while weeping over the dying hope of an earthly paternity and at the same time shedding joyful tears at the rapture announced to him. « Oh! Lord! » he says. « But to give eternal life it is necessary to persuade souls to be good. And we are back to the same point: I am not good at speaking. »

« When the time comes, you will be able to speak better than Gamaliel. »

« I want to believe You… But, You work the miracle, because if I have to do it by myself…»

Jesus smiles at him gently and says: « Today I am entirely yours. Let us go through the village. We will go and see the widow. I have a secret offer. A ring to be sold. Do you know how I got it? A stone fell near My feet, while I was praying under this willow tree. A little parcel was tied to the stone with a tiny strip of parchment. Inside the little parcel there was the ring and on the parchment one word: “Charity”. »

« Let me see? Oh? beautiful! A woman's ring. What a tiny finger! But how heavy it is!…»

« Now you will sell it. I am not capable. The hotel-keeper buys gold. I will wait for you near the baker's. Go, Peter. »

« But… I don't know what to do. I… gold… I know nothing about gold! »

« Just think that it is bread for people who are hungry, and do your best. Goodbye. »

And Peter turns to the right, while Jesus, more slowly, goes to the left, towards the village, which appears in the distance from behind a thicket on the other side of the steward's house.

133. Jesus Leaves the «Clear Water » and Goes towards Bethany.

18th March 1945.

There are no pilgrims at the Clear Water. It is a strange sensation to see the place without any people stopping there for the night or taking their meals on the threshing-floor or under the shed. Everything is clean and tidy today, without any of the traces that crowds usually leave.

The disciples spend their time in manual work, some make wickerwork fish traps, some dig out the ground to make drains for the rain water and thus prevent it from stagnating on the threshing-floor. Jesus is standing in the middle of a meadow crumbling bread for some sparrows. There is not a soul as far as the eye can see, notwithstanding the clear day.

Andrew, who is coming back from an errand, goes towards Jesus and says: « Peace to You, Master. »

« And to you, Andrew. Come here with Me for a moment. You can stay here near these little birds. You are like them. See? When they know that who goes near them loves them, they are no longer afraid. See how confident, safe and happy they are. Before they were almost near My feet. Now that you are here they are on the look-out… But look… There is a bolder sparrow which is coming forwards. It has realized that there is no danger. And the others are following it. See how they eat to their fill? Is it not the same with us, the children of the Father? He sates us with His love. And when we are sure that we are loved and are asked to be His friends, why should we be afraid of Him or of ourselves? His friendship must make us bold also with men. Believe Me, only a criminal must be afraid of his fellow creature. Not a just man like you. »

Andrew blushes but does not say anything.

Jesus draws him to Himself and smiling says to him: « You and Simon should be put into one crucible to be melted and formed again. You would then be both perfect. And yet… If I told you that although you are so different now, you will be perfectly identical to Peter at the end of your mission, would you believe Me? »

« If You say so, it must be certain. I will not even ask how that may happen. Because everything You say is true. And I will be happy to be like my brother Simon, because he is just and makes You happy. Simon is clever! And I am so happy that he is clever. He is also brave and strong. But also the others! … »

« And are you not? »

« Oh! I… You are the only one who can be satisfied with me… »

« And I am the only one to realize that you work noiselessly but more deeply than the others. Because amongst the twelve disciples, there are some who make as much noise as the work they do. There are some who make much more noise than the work they do, and there are some who do nothing but work. A humble, active, ignored work… The others may think that they do nothing. But He Who sees, knows. There are such differences because you are not yet perfect. And there will always be such differences amongst future disciples, also amongst

those who will come after you, until the angel will thunder: “Time no longer exists.” There will always be ministers of Christ who are equally able to work and to draw upon themselves the eyes of the world: they are the masters. And unfortunately there will be also those who are nothing but noise and exterior gestures, false shepherds with a histrionic attitude… Priests? No, they are mimers. Nothing else. Gestures do not make the priest, neither does the cassock. Neither worldly knowledge nor mighty worldly relations make the priest. It is his soul. So great a soul as to crush the flesh. My priest is completely spiritual… That is how I dream him. That is what My holy priests will be like. The spirit has neither the voice nor the attitude of the stage player. It is insubstantial because it is spiritual and therefore it cannot wear pepla or masks. It is what it is: spirit, fire, light, love. It speaks to the spirits. It speaks with the chastity of eyes, of gestures, of words, of deeds. Man looks. And he sees a fellow-creature. But what does he see above and beyond the flesh? Something that makes him slow down his hurried steps, that makes him meditate and conclude: “This man, who is like me, has only the appearance of man. He has the soul of an angel.” If he is a misbeliever, he concludes: “Because of him I believe that there is a God and a Heaven.” And if he is lustful, he says: “This Fellow creature of mine has heavenly eyes. I will restrain my sensuality so that I may not desecrate them.” And if he is a miser, he decides: “Because of the instance of this man who is not attached to riches, I will stop being a miser.” And if he is a man quick to anger or a cruel fellow, in front of a gentle person, he will become more quiet and calm. That is what a holy priest will be able to do. And, believe Me, amongst the holy priests there will always be some ready to die for the love of God and of their neighbor, and they will do it so quietly, after practising perfection throughout their lives also very quietly, that the world will not even notice them. But if the whole world does not become utter lewdness and idolatry, it will be through those heroes of silence and loyal activity. And their smiles will be like yours: pure and timid. Because there will always be some Andrews. They will exist through the grace of God and for the fortune of the world! »

« I did not think I deserved such words… I had done nothing to provoke them… »

« You helped Me to attract a heart to God. And it is the second one that you have led towards the Light. »

« Oh! Why did she speak! She had promised… »

« No one has spoken. But I know. When your tired companions rest, there are three sleepless people at the Clear Water. The apostle of the silent active love for his brother sinners. The creature urged by her soul towards salvation. And the Savior Who prays and keeps watch, Who waits and hopes… My hope: that a soul may find salvation… Thank you, Andrew. Continue like that and be blessed for it. »

« Oh! Master!… Do not say anything to the others. When I am alone with a person, speaking to a leprous woman on a deserted beach, or speaking here to a woman whose face I do not see, I am still capable of doing very little. But if the others, and above all Simon, know about it and they want to come… then I am not able to do anything at all. You must not come either… I am shy of speaking before You. »

« I will not come. Jesus will not come. But the Spirit of God has always been with you. Let us go home. They are calling us for our meal. »

And it all ends between Jesus and His gentle disciple.

They are still eating and they have already lit the lamp, because night falls very rapidly and because of the bitterly cold wind it is advisable to keep the door closed, when someone knocks at the door and John's gay voice is heard.

« Welcome! »

« You were quick! »

« What is the news? »

« You are heavily laden! »

They are all speaking at the same time, helping the three to take off the very heavy bags which they are carrying on their backs.

« Slowly! »

« Let us say hello to the Master! »

« Just a moment! »

There is a bright homely excitement due to the joy of being all together.

« I greet you, My friends. God gave you good weather. »

« Yes, Master. But not good news. I foresaw that » says the Iscariot.

« What's the matter? What happened?… » Their curiosity is aroused.

« Let them have some refreshment first » says Jesus.

« No, Master. We will give You and the others what we have first. And the first thing… John, give the letter. »

« Simon has it. I was afraid of spoiling it in my bag. »

The Zealot, who has been struggling so far with Thomas who wanted to serve him with water for his tired feet, comes forward saying: « I have it here, in my belt purse. » And he opens a pocket inside his wide red leather belt and pulls out a roll which has now been flattened out.

« It's from Your Mother. When we were near Bethany, we met Jonathan who was going to Lazarus' house with the letter and many other things. Jonathan is going to Jerusalem because Chuza is putting his house in order… Herod is perhaps going to Tiberias… and Chuza does not want his wife to stay with Herodias » explains the Iscariot while Jesus undoes the knots of the roll and unrolls it.

The apostles whisper while Jesus reads the words of His Mother smiling blissfully.

« Listen. » He then says. « There is also something for the Galileans. My Mother writes:

"To Jesus, My gentle Son and Lord, peace and blessing. Jonathan, a servant of the Lord, has brought Me kind presents from Johanna, who asks her Savior to bless her, her husband and the whole household. Jonathan tells Me that he has been instructed by Chuza to go to Jerusalem to open his house in Zion. I bless the Lord for that, because I can thus let You have My words and blessings. Also Mary of Alphaeus and Salome send their love and blessings to their sons. And since Jonathan has been extremely kind, there are also the regards of Peter's wife to her far away husband and also the relatives of Philip and Nathanael send their kind regards. All your women, o dear far away men, have worked with needles, looms, or in the kitchen gardens and are sending you clothes for the winter months, and sweet honey, reminding you to take it with hot water in the damp evenings. Take care of yourselves. That is what your mothers and wives have told Me and I am telling you. Also My Son. We have not sacrificed ourselves for nothing, believe us. Enjoy the humble gifts that we, the disciples of Christ's disciples, are offering to the servants of the Lord, and give us only the joy of hearing that you are all well.

Now, My beloved Son, I think that for almost a year You have not been entirely Mine. And I seem to have gone back to the time when I knew that You were already here, because I felt Your little heart beat within My womb, but I could also say that You were not yet here, because You were separated from Me by a barrier which prevented Me from caressing Your beloved body and I could only adore Your spirit, o My dear Son and adorable God. Also now I know that You are here and that Your heart beats with Mine, never separated from Me even if we are not together, but I cannot caress, hear, serve and venerate You, the Messiah of the Lord and His poor maid.

Johanna wanted Me to go and stay with her, so that I would not be alone during the Feast of Lights. But I preferred to remain here with Mary, and light the lamps, for You and for Me. But if I were the greatest queen on the earth and I could light a thousand or ten thousand lamps, I would still be in darkness because You are not here. Whereas I was in a bright light in that dark grotto, when I pressed You to My heart, My Light and Light of the world. This will be the first time that I will say to Myself: 'My Child is a year older today.' and I have not My Child with Me. And it will be sadder than Your first birthday at Matarea. But You are fulfilling Your mission and I Mine. And we are both doing the will of the Father and we are acting for the glory of God. That wipes all tears.

Dear Son, I know what You are doing from what I am told. As the waves carry the voice of the open sea as far as a solitary enclosed gulf, so the echo of Your holy work for the glory of God reaches our quiet little house and Your Mother rejoices and trembles, because if they all speak of You, not everyone expresses the same hearty feelings. Friends and people You have helped, come to Me and say: 'Blessed be the Son of Your womb', and also Your enemies come to pierce My heart saying: 'Anathema on Him'. But I pray for the latter ones because they are poor unhappy people, even more than the pagans who come and ask: 'Where is the magician, the divine one?' and they do not realize that, while erring, they state a great truth, because You really are a priest and great, according to the ancient meaning of the word and You are Divine, My Jesus. And I send them on to You saying: 'He is in Bethany'. Because I know that I have to say so, until

You give Me different instructions. And I pray for those who come seeking health for what is to die, that they may find salvation for their eternal souls.

Please do not worry about My sorrows. They are compensated by the great joy of the words of those whose bodies and souls have been cured. But Mary has had a greater sorrow than Mine; I am not the only one to be spoken to. Joseph of Alphaeus wants You to know that in one of his recent business trips to Jerusalem he was stopped and threatened because of You. They were men of the Great Council. I think he must have been pointed out by one of the great men here. Otherwise who would have known that Joseph is the head of the family and Your brother? I am telling You this, because as a woman I have to obey, But for what concerns Me I say to You: I would like to be near You, to comfort You. But I leave it to You to decide, since You are the Wisdom of the Father, without taking into account My tears. Your brother Simon was on the point of coming to see You after that incident. And he wanted Me to go with him. But he was held back by the bad weather and even more by the fear he might not find You, because we were told, as a threat, that You cannot stay where You are.

Son! My adored and holy Son! I am keeping My arms raised, as Moses did on the hilltop, praying for You in Your battle against the enemies of God and Yours, My Jesus, Whom the world does not love. Leah of Isaac died here. And I was very sorry because she was always a good friend of Mine. But My greatest sorrow is that You are far away and not loved by people. I bless You, My Son, and as I give You peace and blessing, I ask You to give Yours to Mother." »

« Those impudent fellows reach even that house! » shouts Peter.

And Judas Thaddeus exclaims: « Joseph… might have kept the news to himself. But… I am sure he was dying to let people know! »

« The howl of hyenas does not frighten living people » states Philip.

« The trouble is that they are not hyenas, they are tigers. They are after a living prey » says the Iscariot, who then says to the Zealot: « Tell them what we have learned. »

« Yes, Master. Judas was right in being afraid. We went to see Joseph of Arimathea and Lazarus, and we went there as well known friends of Yours. Then Judas and I, as if we were very old friends, went to see some of his friends in Zion… And… Joseph and Lazarus tell You to go away from here at once during these feast days. Don't insist, Master. It is for Your own good. Judas' friends then said: "Be careful, they have already decided to come and catch Him so that they may accuse Him, during these feast days when there is no people. Let Him retire for some time and thus disappoint those vipers. Doras' death has roused their poison and their fear. Because they are afraid besides being full of hatred. And fear causes them to see what does not exist and hatred makes them lie." »

« They know everything about us! It's a hideous situation! And they distort and exaggerate everything! And when they think that there is not enough to curse us, then they start inventing. They make me feel sick and discouraged. I feel like going into exile, like going… I don't know… far away. Away from Israel which is nothing but sin… » The Iscariot is depressed.

« Judas, Judas! A woman to bear a child to the world carries it for nine lunations. Do you want to be quicker in giving the world the knowledge of God? Not nine, but thousands of lunations will be required. And as at each lunation the moon waxes and then wanes appearing to us as a new moon, then as a full moon, then as a waning moon, so in the world there will always be growing, full and decreasing phases of religion. But even when religion will seem to be dead, it will be alive, exactly as the moon is still there also when she seems to have disappeared. And those who have worked at this religion will have full merits even if only a tiny minority of faithful souls will be left on the earth. Cheer up! Do not be easily roused in triumph, or easily depressed in defeat. »

« But… let us go away. We are not yet strong enough. And we feel that in front of the Sanhedrin we would be afraid. At least I would. I don't know about the others… But I don't think it would be wise to try. Our hearts are not like the hearts of the three young men at Nebuchadnezzar's court. »

« Yes, Master. It is better. »

« It's wise. »

« Judas is right. »

« You see that also Your Mother and relatives… »

« And Lazarus and Joseph. »

« We should not let them come at all. »

Jesus stretches out His arms and says: « Let it be done as you wish. But later we

will come back here. You have seen how many people come. I will not force your souls or put them to the test. In fact, I feel that they are not yet ready… But let us see the work of the women. »

But while everybody with bright eyes and a joyful voice pulls out from the haversacks the parcels containing clothes, sandals, and the foodstuffs sent by the mothers and wives, and they all endeavor to get Jesus interested in admiring so many good things, He remains sad and self-absorbed. He reads His Mother's letter over and over again. Taking with Him a small lamp, He has withdrawn to the farthest corner from the table on which the clothes, apples, small jars of honey, small cheeses are, and shading His eyes with a hand, He seems to be meditating. But He is suffering.

« Look, Master, what a lovely tunic and mantle with hood my wife, poor woman, has made for me. I wonder how much she has worked on them, because she is not so skilled as Your Mother » says Peter, who is overjoyed while holding his treasures in his arms.

« Lovely, yes, they are lovely. She is a clever wife » says Jesus kindly. But His thoughts are far from the articles shown to Him.

« Our mother has made two tunics for us with thick woven cloth. Poor mother! Do You like them, Jesus? They are a lovely shade, aren't they? » says James of Zebedee.

« Really beautiful, James. It will suit you. »

« Look. I bet these belts were made by Your Mother. Only She can embroider like that. And I say that this double veil to protect us from sunshine was also made by Mary. It is like Yours. The tunic is not. Mother certainly wove it. Poor mother! After all the tears she shed last summer, she cannot see very well and often breaks the thread. What a dear! » And Judas of Alphaeus kisses the dark red heavy tunic.

« You are not very cheerful, Master » remarks Bartholomew at last. « You are not even looking at the things which were sent to You. »

« He cannot be » points out Simon Zealot.

« I am thinking… Well… Make the parcels up again. Sort everything out. It is not the time to be caught and we shall not be caught. At dead of night, in the moonlight, we will go towards Doco and then to Bethany. »

« Why to Doco? »

« Because there is a dying woman there, who is waiting to be cured by Me. »

« Are we not calling at the steward's? »

« No, Andrew. We are not calling anywhere. So no one will have to tell lies saying that they do not know where we are. If you are anxious not to be persecuted, I am anxious not to cause trouble to Lazarus. »

« But Lazarus is waiting for You. »

« And we are going to him. Or rather… Simon, will you give Me hospitality in the house of your old servant? »

« With pleasure, Master. You know everything, now. I can therefore say to you, on behalf of Lazarus, of myself and of him who lives in the house: it is Yours. »

« Let us go. Hurry up, so that we may be at Bethany before the Sabbath. »

And while they all scatter with lamps to do what is necessary for the sudden departure, Jesus is left alone.

Andrew comes back in, he goes near Jesus and asks: « What about that woman? I am sorry to leave her now that she was about to come… It is wise… You saw that… »

« Go and tell her that we will be coming back after some time and that in the meantime she should remember your words… »

« Your words, Lord. I only repeated Yours. »

« Go. Hurry up. And do not let anybody see you. Truly in this world of bad people, those who are innocent must look like wicked people… »

Everything ends on this great truth.

134. Cure of Jerusa, the Woman of Doco Afflicted with Cancer.

19th March 1945.

I see Jesus enter the little town of Doco, at daybreak, on a dull winter morning, and ask an early passerby:

« Where does Marian live, the old mother whose daughter-in-law is dying? »

« Marian? Levi's widow? The mother-in-law of Jerusa, Josiah's wife? »

« Yes. »

« Look, man. At the end of this street there is a square, on one side there is a fountain and three streets branch off from there. Take the street with a palm-tree in its centre and go along it for about one hundred steps. You will find a ditch. Follow it as far as the wooden bridge. Cross it and You will see a small arch-way. Go through it and you will find that it opens on to a square; you are there. Marian's house is yellowish because of its age. And with the expenses they have to meet, they cannot afford to clean it. You cannot go wrong. Goodbye. Are You coming from far? »

« Not very. »

« But You are a Galilean? »

« Yes. »

« And these? Have You come for the Feast? »

« They are friends. Goodbye, man. Peace be with you. » Jesus leaves the chatterbox, who is no longer in a hurry. And He goes His way followed by the apostles.

They reach the… little square: a small area of very muddy soil, in the centre of which there is a tall young oak, which has grown without any hindrance and is probably very useful in summer. For the time being it only causes melancholy, because hanging over the poor houses, thick and dark as it is, it obstructs light and sunshine.

Marian's house is the poorest. It is large and low, but thoroughly neglected! The front door is full of patches which cover up the splintered parts of the very old wood. A small window has no covering and it shows a black hole like an empty eye socket.

Jesus knocks at the door. It is opened by a little girl about ten years old, pale looking, with untidy hair and red eyes. « Are you Marian's granddaughter? Tell the old mother that Jesus is here. »

The little girl shouts and runs away calling at the top of her voice. The old woman rushes forth followed by six children, along with the previous girl. The tallest seems to be her twin brother; the last ones, two little barefooted haggard-faced children, are hanging on to the old woman's dress, and they can barely walk.

« Oh! You have come! Children, venerate the Messiah! You are welcome to my poor house. My daughter is dying… Don't cry, children, don't let her hear you. Poor creatures! the girls are exhausted through watching at her bedside, because I do everything, but I am no longer fit to watch at night, because I am overcome by sleep and I fall on to the floor. I have not slept in my bed for months. I now sleep on a chair, so that I am near her and the girls. But they are very young and they suffer from exhaustion. The boys gather wood to keep the fire burning and they sell some to buy bread. They are worn out, poor grandsons! But it is not work that kills us, but it's seeing her dying… Don't cry. We have Jesus now. »

« Yes, do not cry. Your mother will recover, your father will come back, you will not have so many expenses and you will not be so hungry. Are these two the last ones? »

« Yes, Lord. Although a weak creature she had twins three times… and her breast became diseased. »

« Some have got too many and some none » grumbles Peter through his beard and he takes a little one in his arms and gives him an apple to keep him quiet. And while the other little one also asks for one and Peter pleases him, Jesus goes with the old woman from the entrance into the yard, then climbs the steps and enters a room where a young emaciated woman is groaning.

« Jerusa, the Messiah is here. You will not suffer any more now. Can't you see that He has really come? Isaac never tells lies. And he told me. Do you believe that since He has come here, He can cure you? »

« Of course, my good mother. Yes, my Lord. But if You cannot cure me, at least let me die. I have horrible pains in my breast. The mouths of my children, to

whom I gave sweet milk, have given me back fire and bitterness. I suffer so much, my Lord! And I cost so much! My husband works far away to earn bread for us. My old mother is wearing herself out. I am dying… What will happen to my children when I am dead of my disease and she of exhaustion and privations? »

« There is God for the little birds and also for the children of man. You will not die. Does it hurt you so much here? » Jesus makes the gesture of laying His hand on her breast covered by bandages.

« Don't touch me! Don't increase my pain! » shouts the sick woman.

But Jesus gently lays His thin hand on the inflamed mamma. « You really have a fire in it, poor Jerusa. Motherly love has become fire in your breast. But you do not bear grudge to your husband and to the children, do you? »

« Oh! Why should I? He is good and has always loved me. We loved each other with wise love, and our love bloomed in children… And they… ! I am grieved at leaving them, but… Lord! But my fire is relaxing! Mother! Mother! It is as if an angel were blowing air from Heaven on my torture! Oh! How peaceful! Don't, don't take Your hand away, my Lord. On the contrary, press it harder. Oh! How strong! What a joy! My children! My children here, I want them here! Dinah! Ozias! Anna! Sheba! Melchi! David! Judas! Here! Here! Your mummy is not dying any more! Oh!… » The young woman turns over on the pillows weeping with joy while the children rush in and the old woman, on her knees, not finding anything else in her joy, intones the song of Azariah in the furnace and sings it all in the trembling voice of a deeply moved old woman.

« Ah! My Lord! What can I do for You! I have nothing to honor You! » she says at last. Jesus raises her up and says: « Just allow Me to stay here, for I am tired. And do not tell anybody. The world does not love Me. I must go away for some time. I ask you to be faithful to God and to be silent. You, the young mother, the children. »

« Oh! Don't be afraid! No one calls on poor people! You can stay here without being afraid of being seen. The Pharisees, eh? But… what about eating? I have only a little bread… »

Jesus calls the Iscariot and says to him: « Take some money and go and buy what is necessary. We will eat and rest with these good people until evening. Go and be quiet. » He then addresses the cured woman: « Take your bandages off, get up and help your mother and rejoice. God granted you the grace out of mercy on your virtues as a wife. We will break our bread together because the Most High Lord is in your house today and we must celebrate with great joy. » And Jesus goes out and joins Judas who is about to leave. « Buy plenty, that they may have enough for a few days. While we are at Lazarus', we shall lack nothing. »

« Yes, Master. And, if You will allow me… I have some money of my own. I made a vow to offer it for Your salvation from Your enemies. I will buy bread with it. It is better to give it to these brothers in God than to the greedy people in the Temple. Will You allow me? Gold has always been a serpent to me. I do not want to suffer from its charm any more. Because I feel so well now that I am good. I feel free. And I am happy. »

« Do as you wish, Judas. And may the Lord give you peace. »

Jesus goes to meet His disciples, while Judas goes out and it all ends.

135. At Bethany in the House of Simon Zealot.

21st March 1945.

When Jesus, having climbed the last hill, reaches the tableland, He sees Bethany bright in the December sunshine which makes the barren country less depressing. The sunshine also makes less gloomy the green spots of cypress-trees, young oaks and carob trees, which grow here and there, and look like courtiers intent on bowing to some very tall regal palms which stand upright and solitary in most beautiful gardens.

In Bethany, in fact, there is not only Lazarus' beautiful house. There are also other dwellings of rich people, perhaps citizens of Jerusalem, who prefer to live here, near their property, and their large beautiful villas with well tended gardens stand out amongst the small houses of the peasants. And it is strange to see in this hilly place some palm trees evoke memories of the East, with their slender trunks and stiff tassel-like heads, behind the jade green leaves of which one instinctively endeavors to see a yellowish boundless desert. Here instead are backgrounds of silver-green olive trees or ploughed fields, completely devoid

for the time being of any trace of corn. There are also skeleton-like fruit trees, with dark trunks and tangled branches as if they belonged to souls that writhe in an infernal torture.

Jesus also sees at once one of Lazarus' servants who is on sentry duty. He bows deeply and asks leave to take the news of His arrival to his master, and as soon as he is granted permission he departs.

In the meantime peasants and townsfolk rush to greet the Rabbi, and a young woman, who is certainly not an Israelite, peeps out over a laurel hedge, which encloses a beautiful house with its green scented foliage. Her peplum or, if I remember the name correctly, her stole, makes me think that she is either Greek or Roman. It is so long as to form a light train, but it is wide, of soft snow-white wool brightened by a border embroidered with a brilliant Greek fret, in which golden threads shine. It is held tight at her waist by a belt identical to the border. Also her hair-style, which consists of a gold hair-net holding in place a complicated hair-dressing that is curly in the front, then smooth, ending in a large tuft on the nape of her neck, gives me the same impression. She looks around herself inquisitively attracted by the trilling shouts of the women and the hosannas of the men. She then smiles scornfully, when she sees that they are going towards a poor man who has not even a little donkey to ride and is walking amongst fellows like himself, who are even less charming than he is. She shrugs her shoulders and with a bored gesture goes away, followed, as if by dogs, by a group of multicolored stilt-birds, amongst which there are two white ibises and many-colored flamingoes, as well as two herons, as red as fire, with small trembling silverlike crowns on their heads, the only white part of their splendid golden flamed plumage.

Jesus looks at her for a moment, then He listens again to a big old man… who would like his legs not to be as weak as they are. Jesus caresses him and encourages him to be… patient, because it will soon be springtime and with the beautiful April sunshine he will feel stronger.

Maximinus arrives, a few yards ahead of Lazarus. « Master… Simon told me… that You are going to his house… Sorrow for Lazarus… but it is understood… »

« We shall talk about it later. Oh! My friend! » Jesus hastens towards Lazarus, who seems embarrassed, and kisses him on his cheek. They have in the meantime reached a lane that leads to a little house situated between the orchard of Lazarus and those of other people.

« So, You really want to go to Simon's house? »

« Yes, My friend. I have all my disciples with Me and I prefer so… »

Lazarus accepts the decision but does not reply. He only turns round to the little crowd following them and says: « Go. The Master needs a rest. »

I now see how powerful Lazarus is. They all bow to his words and withdraw while Jesus greets them kindly: « Peace to you. I will let you know when I am going to preach. »

« Master » says Lazarus now that they are alone, ahead of the disciples who are talking to Maximinus a few yards behind. « Master, Martha is weeping bitter tears. That is why she did not come. But she will come later. I weep only in my heart. But we say: it is just. If we had known that she was coming… But she never comes for the feast days… True… when does she ever come?… I say: the devil has driven her here just today. »

« The devil? And why not her angel by God's order? But you must believe Me, even if she were not here, I would have gone to Simon's house. »

« Why, my Lord? Had You no peace in my house? »

« So much peace that after Nazareth it is the dearest place to Me. But tell Me: why did you say to Me: “Come away from the Clear Water”? Because of the approaching ambush. Is it not so? Well, then, I am placing Myself in the land of Lazarus, but I am not putting Lazarus in the situation of being insulted in his own house. Do you think that they would respect you? To trample on Me, they would tread on the Holy Ark… Let Me do as I wish. At least for the time being. Then I will come. In any case nothing forbids Me to have My meals with you and nothing prevents you from coming to Me. But make them say: “He is in the house of one of His disciples.” »

« And am I not one? »

« You are My friend, which is more than a disciple for anybody's heart. It is a different thing for wicked people. Let Me do as I wish. Lazarus, this house is yours… but it is not your house. The beautiful rich house of Theophilus' son. And that is very important for pedantic people. »

« You say so… but it is because it's because of her. I had almost convinced myself to forgive her but if she causes You to go away, upon my word, I will

hate her »

« And you will lose Me completely. Renounce that idea at once, or you will lose Me at once… Here is Martha. Peace to you, My gentle hotel-keeper. »

« Oh! Lord! » Martha is on her knees weeping. She has let down the veil which was laid on her hair dressed in the shape of a diadem, so that strangers may not see her tears. But she does not think to conceal them from Jesus.

« Why these tears? Truly, you are wasting them! There are so many reasons to weep, and to make something valuable with tears. But to weep for that reason! Oh! Martha! You do not seem to know any longer Who I am! You know that I have only the exterior appearance of a man. My heart is divine and it beats as a divine thing. Come on. Get up and come into the house… and with regard to her… leave her alone. Even if she came to laugh at Me, I tell you to leave her alone. She is not herself. It is he who keeps hold of her that makes her an instrument of perturbation. But here is One Who is stronger than her master. The struggle is now directly between Me and him. You must pray, forgive, have patience and believe. Nothing else. »

They go into the little house, which is a square one surrounded by a porch which makes it look longer. There are four rooms inside, divided by a cross-shaped corridor. The usual external staircase leads to the top of the porch which therefore becomes a terrace and gives access to a very large room, as wide as the house. Once it was certainly used as a store room but now it is clean and completely empty. Simon, who is beside his old servant, whose name I hear is Joseph, receives the guests and says: « You could speak to the people here, or take Your meals… as You wish. »

« We will think about that. In the meantime go and tell the others that the people can come after their meal. I will not disappoint the good people here. »

« Where shall I tell them to go? »

« Here. The day is a mild one. The place is sheltered from the winds. The bare orchard will not be damaged if people come into it. I will speak to them here, from the terrace. You may go. »

Lazarus is left alone with Jesus. Martha, who has to provide for so many people, has become the « good hotel-keeper » again and is working downstairs with the servants and the apostles preparing tables and beds.

Jesus lays one arm round Lazarus' shoulders and leads him out of the large room. They walk on the terrace that encircles the house in the lovely sunshine that makes the day mild and from above Jesus watches the work of the servants and disciples and smiles at Martha who comes and goes and looks up at Him. Although she looks grave she is not quite so upset as erstwhile. He looks also at the beautiful view around the place and with Lazarus mentions various places and people and at last He suddenly asks: « So Doras' death was like a stick stirred in the serpents' nest? »

« Oh! Master! Nicodemus told me that never before was a meeting of the Sanhedrin so violent! »

« What have I done to the Sanhedrin to upset it so much?. Doras died a natural death killed by his wrath, in the presence of a considerable crowd. I did not allow anyone to be lacking in respect to his dead body. So… »

« You are right. But they… are out of their minds with fear. And… do You know that they said they must find You committing a sin so that they may kill You? »

« Well, in that case do not worry! They will have to wait until the hour of God!»

« But Jesus! Do You know of whom we are talking? Do You know of what Pharisees and Scribes are capable? Do You know what Annas' soul is like? Do You know who his deputy is? Do You know… What am I saying? Of course You know! So it is quite useless for me to tell You that they will invent a sin in order to be able to accuse You. »

« They have already found it. I have already done more than what is necessary. I have spoken to Romans, to prostitutes… Yes. To prostitutes, Lazarus. One of them, do not look at Me so frightened,… one of them always comes to listen to Me and she was given hospitality in a stable of your steward, upon My request, because, to be near Me, she was living in a pigsty… »

Lazarus is petrified with astonishment. He does not stir. He looks at Jesus as if he saw someone shockingly strange and amazing.

Jesus rouses him smiling: « Have you seen Mammon? » He asks him.

« No… I have seen Mercy. But… I understand, those of the Council do not. And they say it is a sin. So it is true! I thought… Oh! What have You done? »

« My duty, My right and My desire: I endeavored to redeem a soul that had fallen. You can therefore see that your sister will not be the first mud I will approach and over which I will bend. Neither will she be the last. I wish to sow flowers and make them grow in mud: the flowers of bounty. »

« Oh! God! My God!… But… Master, You are right. It is Your right, Your duty and Your desire. But hyenas do not understand that. They are such foul carrion that they do not smell, they cannot smell the scent of lilies. And also where they grow, the mighty carrion smell sin and they do not realize that it comes from their own stench… I beg You. Do not stop in any place for a long time. Go, wander about, without giving them time to reach You. Be like a night fire, dancing on the stems of flowers, swift, elusive, disconcerting in its movements. Do that. Not out of cowardice, but out of love for the world that requires You to live to be sanctified. Corruption is increasing. Oppose sanctification to it… Corruption!… Have You seen the new woman citizen in Bethany? She is a Roman married to a Judaean. He is also observant. But she is an idolater and as she could not live comfortably in Jerusalem, because her neighbors complained of the animals she kept, she came here. Her house is full of animals which we consider unclean and… she is the most unclean of them all, because she lives laughing at us and with looseness which… I am not in a position to criticise because… But I say that whilst no one sets foot in my house because of Mary, who weighs heavily on the family with her sin, they go to the house of that woman. But she is in Pontius Pilate's good books and lives without her husband. He is in Jerusalem, she is here. And so they pretend, he and they, that they do not become profaned by coming here and that they do not realize that they are profaned. Hypocrisy! They live up to their necks in hypocrisy! And before long they will be drowned in it. Sabbath is the banquet day… And they are members of the Council! One of Annas' sons is the most devoted visitor. »

« I have seen her. Yes. Leave her alone. And leave them alone. When a doctor prepares a medicine, he mixes the ingredients and the water seems to become tainted, because he beats them and the water becomes cloudy. Then the dead parts are deposited and the water becomes clear again, although it is saturated with the juices of the healthy ingredients. That is what is happening now. Everything in mixed and I work with everybody. Then the dead parts will be deposited and thrown away and the living ones will remain active in the great sea of the people of Jesus Christ. Let us go downstairs. They are calling us. »…

… and the vision resumes when Jesus goes back up on the terrace to speak to the people of Bethany and nearby villages, who have gathered to hear Him.

« Peace to you. Even if I were silent, the wind would carry to you the words of My love and of the hatred of other people. I know that you are excited because you are aware of the reason why I am here amongst you. But let it be only an excitement of joy and bless with Me the Lord Who makes use of evil to give joy to His children, by leading, under the spur of wickedness, His Lamb amongst the lambs, to save Him from the wolves.

See how good the Lord is. As water flows into the sea, so a river and a stream flowed into the place where I was. A river of loving kindness, a stream of burning bitterness. The former was the love of you all, from Lazarus and Martha to the last inhabitant in the village, the latter was the unfair hatred of those who not being able to reach the Good which calls them, accuse the Good of being Evil. And the river said: “Come, come back to us. May our waves surround, isolate and defend You. May they give You what the world denies You.” The wicked stream hissed threats and wanted to kill with its poison. But what is a stream when it is compared with a river, and what when compared with the sea? Nothing. And the poison of the stream was reduced to nothing, because the river of your love overwhelmed it, and only the kindness of your love flowed into the sea of My love. Nay, it did a good turn, it brought Me back to you. Let us bless the Most High Lord for it. »

Jesus' powerful voice rings out through the calm silent air. Jesus, bright in the sunshine, waves and smiles from the terrace. On the ground, the people listen to him blissfully: a flourish of faces raised towards Him and smiling at the harmony of His voice. Lazarus is near Jesus, with Simon and John. The others are scattered amongst the crowd. Also Martha goes upstairs and sits down on the floor at Jesus' feet, looking towards her house, visible beyond the orchard.

« The world belongs to bad people. Paradise to good people. That is the truth and the promise. May your certain strength rest upon such promise. The world passes, Paradise does not. If by being good you gain it, you will enjoy it forever. So? So why get upset at what bad people do? Do you remember Job's lamentations? They are the eternal lamentations of those who are good and oppressed; because the flesh moans, but it should not moan, and the more it is trampled on, the more it should raise the wings of its soul in the jubilation of the Lord.

Do you think that those are happy who appear to be happy, because by legal means and even more by illegal ones they have opulent granaries, vats full to the

brim and jars overflowing with oil? No. They taste the blood and tears of other people in all their meals, and their beds seem to be bristling with thorns, so much they feel remorse. They rob the poor and despoil orphans, they rob their neighbors to hoard goods, they oppress whoever is inferior to them in power and in wickedness. It does not matter. Never mind. Their kingdom is of this world. But what will be left at their death? Nothing. Unless you wish to call a treasure the pile of sins that they will take with themselves and with which they present themselves to God. Never mind. They are the children of darkness, rebels to the Light and they are unable to follow the bright paths of the Light. When God makes the morning Star shine, they call it the shadow of death and as such they think it is contaminated and they prefer to walk in the glitter of their filthy gold and hatred, which blazes only because the things of hell shine with the phosphorous of the lakes of eternal perdition… »

« My sister, Jesus… Oh! » Lazarus sees Mary stealing behind a hedge of his orchard to come as close as possible. She stoops as she walks but her fair hair shines like gold against the dark box. Martha is about to get up. But Jesus presses His hand on her head and she is compelled to stay where she is. Jesus speaks louder.

« What shall we say of those unhappy people? God gave them time to do penance but they misuse it in order to sin. But God does not lose sight of them, even if He seems to. And the moment comes when, either because the love of God pierces their hard hearts, as a thunderbolt penetrates a rock or because the total mass of crimes carries the wave of their filth right into their throats and nostrils – and they are disgusted, at last they are disgusted with that taste and that stench which are nauseating also to other people and fill their own hearts – the moment comes when they loathe it and a feeling desiring good roots in their hearts. Each soul then cries: “Who will allow me to go back to former times, when I was a friend of God? When His light shone in my heart and I walked in its rays? When the amazed world was silent before my justice and who saw me said I was blessed? The world craved for my smiles and my words were received like the words of an angel and the hearts of my relatives leapt with pride in their chests. And what am I now? I am an object of derision to young people, of horror to elderly people, I am the subject of their songs and they spit scornfully in my face.”

Truly, that is how in certain moments the souls of sinners speak, the souls of the true Jobs, because there is no greater misery for man than to lose God's friendship and His Kingdom forever. And they must arouse pity. Only pity. They are poor souls, who out of idleness or rashness, have lost the eternal Spouse. “On my bed, at night, I sought him whom my heart loves. I sought but did not find him.” In fact in the darkness one cannot distinguish the spouse, and the soul, spurred by love, being thoughtless because enveloped by a spiritual night, seeks and wants to find relief from its torture. And the soul thinks it can be found with any love. No. Only one is the love of the soul: God. Those souls, spurred on by the love of God, wander seeking love. It would be sufficient for them to wish to have light and they would have Love as their consort. They wander like sick people, groping for love and they find all the loves, all the foul things that man has so called, but they do not find the Love, because the Love is not gold, pleasure, power, but God.

Poor souls! Had they been less lazy and had they risen at the first invitation of the eternal Spouse, of God Who says: “Follow Me”, of God Who says: “Open to Me”, they would not have opened the door, in the outburst of their awakened love, when the disappointed Bridegroom was already far and had disappeared… And they would not have desecrated the holy impulse of the need of love in a mire which disgusts even unclean animals, as it is so useless and strewn with trite troubles, which were not flowers but thorns which torture but do not crown. Neither would they have known the sneering words of the patrol guards, of the whole world, which, like God, but for opposite reasons, does not lose sight of the sinner, but waylays him to mock at him and criticise him.

Poor souls beaten, despoiled and wounded by the whole world! Only God does not join in such pitiless scornful stone throwing. But He lets His tears drop to cure the wounds and put an adamantine dress on His creature. Always His creature… Only God… and the children of God with the Father. Let us bless the Lord. He wanted Me to come back here for the sake of sinners to say to you: “Forgive. Always forgive. Make every bad thing become a good one and every offence a grace.” I do not only say to you “make”. I say: imitate My attitude. I love and bless My enemies because through them I have been able to come back to you, My friends. Peace be with you all. »

The women in the crowd wave veils, the men branches: then all slowly depart after greeting Jesus.

« Will they have seen my shameless sister? »

« No, Lazarus. She was well concealed behind the hedge. We were able to see

her because we were up here, the others could not see her. »

« She had promised us… »

« Why was she not to come? Is she not a daughter of Abraham? I want you, My brothers, and you, My disciples, to swear that you will not let her understand anything. Leave her alone. Will she laugh at Me? Never mind. Will she weep? Leave her alone. Will she be staying? Leave her alone. Will she be wanting to run away? Leave her alone. The secret of the Redeemer and of redeemers is to be patient, good, persevering and to pray. Nothing else. Every gesture is too much in the case of certain diseases… Goodbye, My friends. I am staying here to pray. Each of you may go to his own task and may God be with you. »

And it all ends

136. The Feast of Dedication in Lazarus' House with the Shepherds.

22nd March 1945.

Lazarus' splendid house is most brilliant this evening. It seems to be catching fire owing to the number of lights which are lit within. And the light spreads outside, in this early night, overflowing from the halls into the entrance and then into the porch, stretching out to gild the gravel on the paths, the grasses and bushes of the flower beds, struggling with the yellow sensual brilliance of the moonlight, and outshining it in the first few yards, whereas farther out everything becomes angelical due to the pure silver mantle which the moon casts over everything. In addition the silence that envelops the magnificent garden, where only the arpeggio of the water jet of the fishpond can be heard, seems to intensify the tranquil heavenly peace of the lunar night, whilst near the house, many merry voices and the lively tumult made by furniture moving and the carrying of dishes to the tables, remind man that he is still a man and not a spirit.

Martha moves about swiftly in her wide modest beautiful violet-red dress, and she seems a flower, a bell-flower or a butterfly fluttering against the purple walls of the entrance hall or against the dining hall walls, which are decorated with small designs and look like a carpet.

Jesus, on the other hand, is walking alone and thoughtful near the fishpool and He seems to be absorbed by alternatively the dark shadow thrown from a tall laurel, a real gigantic tree, and by the phosphoric moonlight which is becoming clearer and clearer. It is indeed so bright that the fountain jet looks like a silver plumule which breaks into diamond chips, which fall and get lost in the silvery water of the fountain. Jesus watches and listens to the words whispered by the water in the night. Their sound is so sweet that they awake a nightingale in the thick laurel and the bird replies to the slow arpeggio of the water drops with the high note of a flute, and then it stops, as if it were waiting, to be given the note and thus tune in with the water, and at last, as the king of song, it starts its perfect melodious soft hymn of joy.

Jesus stops walking lest the rustling noise of His steps should upset the calm joy of the nightingale, and I think, also His own, because He smiles with His head bent, a smile of pure joy. When the nightingale stops singing after a very clear note which is held and modulated by ascending tones, and I do not understand how such a small throat can do so, Jesus exclaims: « May You be blessed, holy Father, for such perfection and for the joy You have given Me! » and He resumes His slow walk, full of, I wonder what, deep meditation.

Simon goes towards Him and says: « Master, Lazarus asks You to come. Everything is ready. »

« Let us go. And thus may their last doubt, that I love them less because of Mary, be removed. »

« How many tears, Master! Only Your secret miracle has relieved their pain. Don't You know that Lazarus was about to run away, when, upon their return, she went out of the house, saying that she was leaving their sepulchre to go and live in joy… and other rude remarks? Martha and I implored him not to do it, also because… one never knows the reaction of a heart. If he had found her, I think he would have punished her once for all. They would have liked her to be at least silent about You… »

« And they would have liked Me to work a miracle immediately for her. And I could have done it. But I do not want a forced resurrection in hearts. I will force death and it will give Me back its victims. Because I am the Master of death and of life. But I will not force a resurrection on spirits, because they are not made of matter, which is lifeless without a soul, whereas spirits are immortal beings capable of rising of their own will. I give the first call and the first help, like one

who opens a sepulchre in which a man still alive has been closed and where he would die if he were to remain for a long time in that stifling darkness, and I let in air and light… then I wait. If the spirit is anxious to come out, it comes out. But if it does not want to come out, it grows darker and it goes to the bottom. But if it comes out!… Oh! If it comes out, I solemnly tell you that no one will be greater than a risen spirit. Only absolute innocence is greater than a dead person that becomes alive by force of love and for the joy of God… My greatest triumphs!

Look at the sky, Simon. You see there, stars, little stars and planets of various sizes. They all live and shine for God Who made them and for the sun that illuminates them. But they are not all equally bright and of the same size. It will be the same in My Heaven. All the redeemed will have life through Me and will receive brightness from My light. But they will not be all equally bright and great. Some will be plain star-dust, like the dust that makes Galathea milky, and will be those countless ones, who received from Christ, or rather, have taken from Him the minimum indispensable not to be damned, and only through the infinite mercy of God, after a long Purgatory, will come to Heaven. Others will be brighter and better formed, the just who have united their own will, please note that I am saying will, not good will, to the will of Christ and have obeyed My words not to be damned. Then there will be the planets, those of good will, and they will be brightest! Their light will be like a pure diamond or a bright gem of different hues: the red of a ruby, the violet of an amethyst, the gold of a topaz, the white of a pearl: the lovers faithful unto death for love, the repentants for love, the people active for love, the people immaculate for love.

And there will be some of those planets, and they will be the glory of the Redeemer, that will glare like amethysts, rubies, topazes and pearls, because they will be everything for the sake of love. They will be heroic to the extent of forgiving themselves for not having loved before, repentant to become saturated with expiations as Esther was saturated with perfumes before presenting herself to Ahasuerus, untiring in doing in a short time, the short time left to them, what they did not do in the years they spent in sin, pure to the extent of heroism in forgetting, also in their bodies, besides in their souls and thoughts, that they had senses. They will be the ones who through their multiform brightness will attract the eyes of the believers, of the pure, of the repentant, of the martyrs, of the heroes, of the ascetics, of the sinners and for each of those categories their brightness will be a word, a reply, an invitation, an assurance…

But let us go. We are talking and they are waiting for us. »

« The point is that when You speak, we forget that we are alive. Can I tell Lazarus all that? I think it contains a promise… »

« You must tell him. The word of a friend may soothe their wound and they will not blush for blushing before Me… We have kept you waiting, Martha. But I was talking to Simon about the stars and we forgot about these lights. Your house, this evening, is really a vault of heaven… »

« We have lit the lights not only for ourselves and our servants, but also for You and for Your friends, who are our guests. Thanks for coming this final evening. Now it is really the feast of the Purification… » Martha would like to say more, but feels she is about to burst into tears and keeps quiet.

« Peace to you all » says Jesus entering the hall aglitter with dozens of silver lamps, all lit and placed all around.

Lazarus comes forward smiling: « Peace and blessing to You, Master, and many years of holy happiness. » They kiss each other. « Some friends of ours have told me that You were born when Bethlehem was ablaze for the Purification Feast years ago. Both they and we are happy to have You here this evening. Do You not want to know who they are? »

« I have no friends but My disciples, the dear ones in Bethany and the shepherds. So it is the shepherds. Did they come? What for? »

« To adore You, our Messiah. We were informed by Jonathan and we came. With our herds which are now in Lazarus' stables, and with our hearts we are now and always at Your holy feet. » Isaac has spoken on behalf of Elias, Levi, Joseph and Jonathan, who are all prostrated at His feet; Jonathan in the soft tunic of the steward loved by his master; Isaac in his garment of a tireless pilgrim, a tunic made of coarse dark brown wool proof to water; Levi, Joseph and Elias are wearing fresh clean clothes given to them by Lazarus, so that they may sit at the table without their poor torn clothes smelling of sheep.

« Is that why you sent Me into the garden? May God bless you all! Only My Mother is missing to make Me completely happy. Stand up. This is My first birthday away from My Mother. But your presence relieves Me from the nostalgia of Her kisses. » They all go into the dining room. Most of the lamps in it are in gold and the metal is brightened up by the light of the flames which

seem more lively from the reflection of so much gold. The table has been laid in the shape of a U to make room for so many people and to facilitate service from servants and carvers. Besides Lazarus, there are the apostles, the shepherds, Maximinus and Simon's old servant.

Martha attends to the assignment of places at the table and she would like to remain standing. But Jesus objects: « Today you are not the hotel-keeper; you are the sister and you will sit down as if you were of the same blood as Myself. We are one family. Let us put rules aside to make room for love. I want you here, beside Me, and John near you. And Lazarus with Me. But, give Me a lamp. A light is to keep watch between Martha and Me… a flame: for the women who are absent and yet are present, for the women loved, waited for, dear to us and far away. For them all. The flame utters words of light. Love utters words of warmth and those words travel far, on the incorporeal wave of the spirits which are always to be found beyond mountains and seas, and they take kisses and blessings… They take everything. Is it not so? »

Martha puts the lamp where Jesus wants it, at an empty place… and, as Martha understands, she bends and kisses the hand of Jesus, Who then lays it on her dark hair blessing and comforting.

The meal starts. The three shepherds are at first somewhat embarrassed, whereas Isaac is more confident and Jonathan shows no uneasiness. The three shepherds take heart as the meal goes on and after being quiet for some time they begin to speak. And what should they speak of, if not of their recollections?

« We had not been long back in the pen » says Levi « and I felt so cold that I sought comfort among the sheep, weeping because I wanted my mother… »

« I, instead, was thinking of the young Mother I had met not long before and I was saying to myself: “Will She have found a place?” I wish I had known that She was in a stable! I would have taken Her to the pen!… But She was so kind, a lily of our valleys, that I thought it would be an insult to say to Her: “Come and stay with us.” But I was thinking of Her… and I felt even colder, thinking how much She must be suffering. Do you remember the light that night? And your fear? »

« Yes… but then… the angel… Oh!… » Levi, somewhat lost in reverie, smiles at his recollection.

« Oh! listen a moment, friends. We know very little and we are badly informed. We have heard about angels, mangers, herds, Bethlehem… And we know that He is a Galilean and a carpenter… It is not fair that we should not be informed! I asked the Master at the Clear Water… but then we spoke about something else. This young man who knows has not told me anything… Yes, I am speaking to you, John of Zebedee. Is that how you respect an elder? You keep everything to yourself and you allow me to remain a stupid disciple. Am I not already a dunce on my own? » They all laugh at Peter's benign indignation. But he addresses his Master: « They are laughing. But I am right » and he then says to Bartholomew, Philip, Matthew, Thomas, James and Andrew: « Come on, you tell them, too, protest with me! Why do we know nothing? »

« Really… Where were you when Jonah was dying? and when we were on Lebanon? »

« You are right. But in the case of Jonah, I thought it was the delirium of a dying man, at least I did, and on Lebanon… I was tired and sleepy. Forgive me, Master, but it is the truth. »

« And it will be the truth for many! The world of those who have been evangelised will often reply to the eternal Judge, to justify their ignorance despite the teaching of My apostles, what you have said: “I thought it was delirium… I was tired and sleepy.” And they will often not acknowledge the truth because they will mistake it for delirium, and they will not remember the truth because they are tired and sleepy as a result of indulging in too many useless, fleeting and even sinful things. One thing only is necessary: to know God. »

« Well, now that You have told us what we deserve, tell us what happened… Tell Your Peter. Then I will tell the people. If not, I have already told You, what can I tell them? I know nothing of the past, I am no good at explaining the prophecies and the Book, the future… oh! poor me! So what shall I evangelise? »

« Yes, Master. Let us know, too… We know that You are the Messiah and we believe it. But, at least as far as I am concerned, I found it difficult to admit that anything good could come from Nazareth… Why did You not make me acquainted at once with Your past? » says Bartholomew.

« To test your faith and the brightness of your spirit. But now I will speak to you, or rather, we will speak to you of My past. I will tell you what even the shepherds do not know, and they will tell you what they saw. And you will be

acquainted with the dawn of Christ. Listen:

When the time of Grace had come, God prepared His Virgin. You will readily understand that God could not dwell where Satan had put an undelible mark. The Power therefore took action to prepare Its future spotless tabernacle. And She, on Whom there is no stain, was conceived of two just people, in their old age, against the common rules of procreation. Who brought that soul into the embryonal flesh that rekindled the old womb of My grandmother, Anna of Aaron? Levi, you saw the Archangel of all the announcements. You can say: it is he. Because the Strength of God(1) has always been the victorious archangel who brought joyful tidings to saints and prophets, he has been the unconquerable warrior who smashed even Satan's great power as if it were the stem of withered moss, he is the intelligent spirit who with clever and bright intelligence warded off the snares of the other intelligent but wicked spirit, and thus had God's command promptly accomplished.

The Announcer, who was already familiar with the ways of the earth, as he had descended to speak to the Prophets, with a cry of joy took from the divine Fire the spark which was the soul of the eternal Maid and clasping it in the circle of the angelical flames of his spiritual love, brought it down on to the earth, into a house, into a womb. And the world, from that moment, had the Adoring Maid; and God, from that moment, could look at a spot on the earth, without feeling disgusted. And a little creature was born: the Child Beloved by God and the angels, the Child Consecrated to God, the Daughter piously loved by Her parents. “And Abel gave the first-born of his flock to God.” Oh! Truly the grandparents of the eternal Abel gave God the early fruit of their property, they gave Him all their goods, and they died because they had given everything back to Him, Who had given it to them!

My Mother was the Maid of the Temple from Her third to Her fifteenth year of age and She hastened the coming of Christ with the power of Her love. A virgin before being conceived, a virgin in the obscurity of a womb, a virgin in Her whimpers, a virgin in Her first steps, the Virgin was of God and of God only, and She proclaimed Her right, which was above the decree of the Law of Israel, and obtained from the husband given to Her by God, to remain inviolate after the wedding.

Joseph of Nazareth was a just man. The Lily of God could be given only to him, and he was the only one to have it. And, being an angel both in his body and his soul, he loved as the angels of God love. The depth of that strong love, which enjoyed all the fondness of married life, without going beyond the barrier of celestial fire beyond which was the Ark of the Lord, will be understood only by few people on the earth. It is the evidence of what a just man can do, if he only wants to, because also the soul, even if it is injured by the original sin, has a powerful strength of elevation, to remember and to go back to its dignity of a Child of God, and it works in a divine way for the sake of the Father.

Mary was still in Her house, waiting to be married to Her spouse, when Gabriel, the angel of divine announcements came back to the earth and asked the Virgin to become a Mother. He had already promised the Precursor to Zacharias, who had not believed him. But the Virgin believed that it could happen by the will of God, and sublime as She was in Her ignorance, She only asked: “How can that happen?” And the Angel replied to Her: “You are Full of Grace, Mary. Do not be afraid, for You have won God's favour also with regard to Your virginity. You will conceive and bear a Son and You will name Him Jesus, because He is the Saviour promised to Jacob and to all the Patriarchs and Prophets of Israel. He will be great and the true Son of the Most High because He will be conceived by deed of the Holy Spirit. His Father will give Him the throne of David, as it is predicted, and He will rule over the house of Jacob forever and His true Reign will have no end. Now the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are awaiting Your obedience to fulfill the promise. The Precursor of Christ is already in the womb of Elizabeth, Your cousin, and if You agree, the Holy Spirit will descend upon You, and so the Child born of You will be holy and will bear His true name of Son of God.”

Mary then replied: “I am the Handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done to Me according to His word.” And the Spirit of God descended upon His Bride and in the first embrace He bestowed upon Her His light, which super-perfected Her virtues of silence, humility, prudence and charity, of which She was full, and She was one thing with the Wisdom and could no longer be separated from Charity, and the Obedient and Chaste One was lost in the ocean of Obedience, which I am, and She knew the joy of being a Mother, without the perturbation of being touched. She was the snow that became a flower and offered Herself to God… »

« And Her husband? » asks Peter dumbfounded.

« The seal of God closed Mary's lips. And Joseph became aware of the prodigy

only when Mary came back from the house of Her relative Zacharias and appeared a mother to the eyes of Her spouse. »

« And what did he do? »

« He suffered… and Mary suffered. »

« If it had been I… »

« Joseph was a saint, Simon of Jonas. God knows where to lay His gifts… He suffered bitterly and he decided to desert Her, taking upon himself the reputation of an unfair man. But the Angel descended and said to him: "Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what is forming in Her is the Son of God and She is a Mother by the deed of God. And when the Son is born, you will name Him Jesus, because He is the Saviour." »

« Was Joseph a learned man? » asks Bartholomew.

« Like a descendant of David. »

« Then he will have received light at once remembering the Prophet: "Here, a virgin will conceive… »

« Yes, he did receive it. And joy followed the trial… »

« Had it been I » resumes Peter « it would not have happened, because before I would have… Oh! Lord, what a good job it was not I! I would have broken Her like the stem of a flower without giving Her time to speak. And after, if I had not been a murderer, I would have been afraid of Her… The fear for the Tabernacle, which the whole of Israel has had for centuries… »

« Also Moses was afraid of God, and yet he was helped and stayed with Him on the mountain… So Joseph went to the holy house of his Spouse and saw to the needs of the Virgin and of the Unborn Child. And when the time of the edict came for all the people, he went with Mary to the land of his fathers, and Bethlehem rejected them because the hearts of men are closed to charity. Now you go on. »

« Towards evening I met a young smiling woman riding a little donkey. There was a man with Her. He asked for some milk and information. I told him what I knew… Then night fell… and a great light… and we went out… and Levi saw an angel near the pen. And the Angel said: "The Saviour is born." It was the dead of night. And the sky was full of stars. But their light faded in the light of the Angel and of thousands and thousands of angels… (Elias still weeps remembering). And the Angel said to us: "Go and worship Him. He is in a little stable, in a manger, between two animals… You will find a little Baby wrapped in poor swaddling clothes…" Oh! How bright the Angel was when saying these words!… Do you remember, Levi, how his wings emitted flames when, after bowing to mention the Saviour, he said: "… Who is Christ the Lord"? »

« Oh! If I remember! And the voices of the thousands of angels? Oh!… "Glory to God in the Highest Heaven and peace on earth to men of good will!" That music is still here, in me, and it carries me to Heaven every time I hear it » and Levi raises an ecstatic face shining with tears.

« And we went » says Isaac. « Laden like pack-animals, as happy as if we were going to a wedding, and then… we were not capable of doing anything when we heard Your thin voice and Your Mother's, and we pushed Levi, the boy, forward that he might look. We felt like lepers near so much purity… And Levi listened and he smiled weeping and he repeated to us what he heard, with a voice so like that of a lamb, that Isaac's sheep bleated. And Joseph came to the entrance and let us in… Oh! How tiny and beautiful You were! A flesh-coloured rosebud on coarse hay… and You were crying… Then You smiled because of the warmth of the sheepskin we offered You and of the milk we milked for You… Your first meal… Oh!… and then… and then we kissed You… You smelt of almonds and jasmine… and we could not bring ourselves to leave You… »

« In fact, you have never left Me. »

« It is true » says Jonathan. « Your face, Your voice and Your smiles remained within us… And You were growing… more and more beautiful… the world of good people came to delight in You… and the world of the wicked did not see You… Anna… Your first steps… the three Wise Men… the star. »

« Oh! What a light, that night! The world seemed to be ablaze with thousands of lights. Instead, the night of Your birth, the light was pearly and steady. Now they were dancing stars, then they were adoring stars. And from the top of a hill we saw the caravan passing and we followed it to see whether it was going to stop… And the following day the whole of Bethlehem saw the adoration of the Wise Men. And then… Oh! Don't let us mention the horror! Don't let us talk about it!… » Elias turns pale remembering.

« Yes, do not tell. Silence on hatred… »

« Our greatest pain was that we no longer had You and we knew nothing about You. Not even Zacharias knew. Our last hope… And nothing more. »

« Why, Lord, did You not comfort Your servants? »

« Are you asking why, Philip? Because it was wise to do so. You can see that also Zacharias, whose spiritual formation was completed after that hour, did not want to lift the veil. Zacharias… »

« But You told us that he took care of the shepherds. So, why did he not tell them first, and then You, that you were looking for one another? »

« Zacharias was a just man, completely man. He became less man and more just during the nine months of dumbness, he improved himself in the months following the birth of John, but he became a just spirit when the refutation of God fell on his human pride. He had said: "I, a priest of God, say that the Saviour must live in Bethlehem" and God had shown to him that human judgement, even that of a priest, is a poor one, if it is not enlightened by God. Horrified by the thought: "I could have had Jesus killed because of my word" Zacharias became the just man, who is now resting awaiting Paradise. And justice taught him prudence and charity. Charity with regard to the shepherds, prudence with regard to the world, to which Christ was to be unknown. When, on our way back to our fatherland, we directed our steps towards Nazareth, with the same prudence that now guided Zacharias, we avoided Hebron and Bethlehem, and coasting the sea we went back to Galilee. Not even on the day that I became of age, was it possible to see Zacharias, who had left the day before with his son for the same ceremony.

God watched, God tested, God provided, God perfected. To have God implies restraints, not only joy. And My father by love and My Mother by My soul and flesh suffered from restraints. They were forbidden also what is lawful, so that mystery might envelop the Child Messiah with a shadow. And that should clarify to many people, who do not understand it, the twofold reason for the worry when I was lost for three days. The love of a Mother, the love of a father for the lost Child; fear of the guardians for the Messiah Who might be revealed before the time; terror of having badly protected the Health of the world and the great gift of God. That is the reason for the unusual cry: "Son, why have You done this to us? See how Your father and I have been worried looking for You!" Your father, Your Mother… A veil was cast on the splendour of the Divine Incarnate. And the reassuring reply: "Why were you looking for Me? Did you not know that I must be busy with My Father's affairs?" A reply which the Full of Grace accepted and understood for what it means. That is: "Do not be afraid. I am small, a child. But if I grow, according to My human nature, in height, wisdom and grace in the eyes of men, I am the Perfect One because I am the Son of the Father and thus I know how to behave perfectly, serving the Father by making His light shine, serving God by preserving the Saviour." And that is what I have done up to a year ago.

The time has now come. The veils are being lifted. And the Son of Joseph is showing Himself in His true nature: the Messiah of the Good News, the Saviour, the Redeemer, and the King of the future century. »

« And have You never seen John again? »

« Only at the Jordan, My dear John, when I wanted to be baptised. »

« So You did not know that Zacharias had helped the shepherds? »

« I told you: after the shedding of the innocent blood, the just became saints, and men became just. Only the demons remained what they were. Zacharias learned to sanctify himself through humility, charity, prudence, silence. »

« I want to remember all this. But will I be able? » says Peter.

« Don't worry, Peter. Tomorrow I will ask the shepherds to repeat it to me all over again, calmly, in the orchard. Once, twice, three times, if necessary. My memory is good, I exercised it at my excise-desk and I will remember for everybody. When you wish, I will be able to repeat everything to you. I did not even keep notes at Capernaum, and yet… »

« Oh! You never made the mistake of a didrachma!… I remember… Good! I will forgive you your past, wholeheartedly, if you remember this story… and if you repeat it to me very often. I want it to enter my heart, as they have it, as Jonah had it… Oh! to die saying His Name!… »

Jesus looks at Peter and smiles. He then gets up and kisses his greying hair.

« Why that kiss, Master? »

« Because you made a prophesy. You will die mentioning My Name. I kissed

the Spirit that spoke in you. »

Then Jesus intones a hymn in a loud voice and everybody, standing up, joins in: « “Stand up and bless the Lord your God, from everlasting to everlasting. Blessed be His sublime glorious Name with every praise and benediction. You are the only Lord. You made the Heavens, and the Heaven of Heavens with all their array, the earth and all it bears etc. (it is the hymn sung by the Levites at the Feast of the Consecration of the people, II Book of Ezra, Ch. IX)” » and it all ends with that long hymn. I do not know whether it is part of the ancient rite or whether Jesus says it on His own.

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(1) Such is, basically, the etymological meaning of the name « Gabriel ».

137. Return to the «Clear Water ».

15th April 1945.

Jesus is going across the flat fields at the Clear Water with His apostles. It is a rainy day and the place is deserted. It must be about midday, because the weak sun that appears now and again from behind the grey curtain of clouds, shines down directly.

Jesus is speaking to the Iscariot whom He entrusts with the task of going to the village to buy what is most urgently required.

When He is alone, Andrew goes near Him and, always shy, he says to Him in a low voice. « Will You listen to me, Master? »

« Yes. Come with Me, let us go ahead » and He quickens His step, followed by the apostle, until they are a few yards away.

« The woman is no longer there, Master! » says Andrew sadly. And he explains. « They have beaten her and she ran away. She was wounded and bleeding. The steward saw her. I went ahead, saying that I wanted to see whether there were any snares, but in actual fact I wanted to go and see her at once. I was hoping so much to bring her to the Light! I have prayed so much these past days for that! … Now she has run away! She will get lost. If I knew where she is, I would reach her… I would not say that to the others, but I am telling You, because You understand me. You know that there is no sensuality in this research, but only a desire to save a sister of mine, a desire so strong as to be a torture… »

« I know, Andrew, and I say to you: also now, after what happened, your desire will be fulfilled. A prayer said for that purpose is never lost. God makes use of it and she will be saved. »

« You say so? My pain is somewhat soothed! »

« Would you not like to know what happened to her? Do you not even care if you are not the one who will bring her to Me? Are you not asking how he will succeed? » Jesus smiles kindly while His blue eyes shine brightly when He looks at the apostle who is walking beside Him. One of those smiles and looks which are a secret of Jesus for conquering hearts.

Andrew looks at Him with his kind brown eyes and says: « It is enough for me to know that she will come to You. What does it matter whether it is I or someone else? How will he succeed? You know and I need not know. Your assurance is everything and I am happy. »

Jesus lays His arm on Andrew's shoulders and draws him to Himself in an affectionate embrace, which throws good Andrew into ecstasies. And holding him thus He says: « That is the gift of the true apostle. See, My dear friend, your life and the lives of future apostles will always be like that. Sometimes you will know that you have been the “Saviors”. But in most cases you will save without knowing that you have saved the very people you are most anxious to save. Only in Heaven you will see the people you have saved come to meet you or enter the eternal Kingdom. And the joy of your blessed souls will increase for each person saved. Sometimes you will know while on the earth. It is the joy I grant you to infuse you with greater vigour for new conquests. But blessed be that priest who does not need such spurs to do his duty! Blessed be who does not lose heart because he sees no triumph and does not say: “I am not going to work any more because I get no satisfaction out of it.” Apostolic satisfaction, considered as the only stimulus to work, shows lack of apostolic formation, degrades apostolate, a spiritual mission, to the level of common human work. You must never fall into the idolatry of your ministry. You are not the ones to be worshipped, but it is the Lord your God. The glory of saved souls is only His. The work of salvation is your task, and the glory of being the “Saviors” is to be

postponed till you are in Heaven. But you were telling Me that the steward saw her. Tell Me. »

« Three days after we left, some Pharisees came looking for You. Of course, they did not find us. They went round the village and the houses in the country saying they were anxious to see You. But no one believed them. They put up at the hotel, turning out arrogantly all the people who were in it, because, they said, they did not want to have any contact with unknown strangers, who might even profane them. And they went to the house every day. After some days they found the poor woman, who always went there, probably because she was hoping to find You and her peace. And they made her run away, chasing her as far as her refuge in the steward's stable. They did not assail her at once, because he came out with his sons, all armed with cudgels. But in the evening, when she went out, they came back together with other people, and when she was at the fountain, they pelted her with stones, calling her a “prostitute” and pointing her out to the scorn of the village. And as she was running away, they reached her and maltreated her, they tore off her veil and mantle so that everybody could see her, they thrashed her once again, and with their authority they imposed themselves on the head of the synagogue, requesting that he should anathematize her, in order to have her stoned, and he should also anathematize You for bringing her to the village. But he refused to do it and is now awaiting the anathema of the Sanhedrin. The steward tore her from the hands of those rascals and assisted her. But during the night she went away leaving a bracelet with words written on a bit of parchment. She wrote: “Thanks. Pray for me.” The steward says that she is young and beautiful, although she is very pale and thin. He looked for her in the country, because she was badly wounded. But he did not find her. And he does not know how she has been able to go far. Perhaps she is dead, somewhere… and she did not save herself… »

« No. »

« No? She is not dead? Or she is not lost? »

« Her will to redeem herself is already an absolution. Even if she were dead, she would be forgiven, because she sought the Truth, stamping Error down. But she is not dead. She is climbing the first slopes of the mountain of redemption. I see her… She is bent under the tears of repentance; but her tears make her stronger and stronger, whilst her burden becomes lighter and lighter. I see her. She is proceeding towards the Sun. When she has climbed all the mountain, she will be in the glory of the Sun-God. She is climbing… Help her with your prayers. »

« Oh! my Lord! » Andrew is almost amazed at the thought of being able to help a soul in its sanctification.

Jesus smiles even more gently. He says: « We must open our arms and our hearts to the persecuted head of the synagogue and we must also go and bless the good steward. Let us go to your companions and tell them. »

But while walking back to reach the ten disciples who stopped at a distance when they realized that Andrew was having a private conversation with the Master, the Iscariot arrives in great haste. He looks like a huge butterfly running on the meadow, as he moves so fast while his mantle flutters behind him and he makes wide gestures with his arms.

« What's the matter with him? » asks Peter. « Has he gone mad? »

Before anybody can reply to him, the Iscariot, who is now nearby, is able to shout in a choked voice:

« Stop, Master. Listen to me before going to the house… There is a trap. Oh! the cowards!… » and he continues to run. He has now arrived. « Oh! Master. It is no longer possible to go there! The Pharisees are in the village and they go to the house every day. They are awaiting You to hurt You. They are sending away those who come looking for You. They are frightening them with horrible anathemas. What do You want to do? You would be persecuted here and Your work would be frustrated… One of them saw me and attacked me. An ugly bignosed old man who knows me because he is one of the Scribes of the Temple. Because also some Scribes are there. He assailed me, laying hold of me with his claws and insulting me in a hawk-like voice. As long as he insulted and scratched me, look… (and he shows a wrist and a cheek adorned with clear nail marks) I did not mind. But when he spat on You, I caught him by the neck… »

« But Judas! » shouts Jesus.

« No, Master. I did not strangle him. I only prevented him from cursing You and then I let him go. He is now dying with fear for the risk he ran… But, please, let us go away. In any case, no one could come to You any more… »

« Master! »

« But it's terrible! »

« Judas is right. »

« They are like hyenas laying an ambush! »

« Fire of heaven that fell on Sodom, why don't you come back again? »

« Do you know, boy, that you have been brave? What a pity I was not there, too; I could have given you a hand. »

« Oh! Peter! If you had been there, that little hawk would have lost feathers and voice forever. »

« But how did you manage… not to finish the job? »

« Who knows!… A flash in my mind: a thought from I wonder which part of my heart: “The Master condemns violence” and I stopped. And it struck me harder than the impact on the wall against which the Scribe threw me when he attacked me. I felt as if my nerves had been shattered… so much so that afterwards I would not have had enough strength to be pitiless against him. What an effort it is to control oneself!… »

« You have been really brave! Hasn't he, Master? Are you not telling us Your point of view? » Peter is so pleased with Judas' behavior, that he does not notice that Jesus' face, which before was bright, has become severe and dark looking, while He tightens His lips so that His mouth looks smaller.

He opens His lips to say: « I tell you that I feel more disgusted with your way of thinking than with the behavior of the Judaeans. They are miserable people in darkness. You, who are with the Light, are hard, vindicative, grumblers, violent, and you approve of a brutal action as they do. I tell you that you are giving Me evidence that you are exactly the same as you were when you saw Me for the first time. And it grieves Me. With regard to the Pharisees, you must know that Jesus Christ does not run away. You may withdraw. I will face them. I am not a coward. When I have spoken to them and have failed in convincing them, I will withdraw. No one must say that I have not endeavored by all means to attract them to Me. They are children of Abraham, too. I do My duty, till the end. Their condemnation is to be caused only by their ill will and not by any negligence of Mine towards them. » And Jesus goes towards the house, the low roof of which is visible beyond a row of bare trees.

The apostles follow Him with drooping heads, speaking under their breath.

They are at the house and they enter the kitchen in silence. And they busy themselves around the fireplace. Jesus is engrossed in His thoughts.

They are about to eat their food, when a group of people appear at the door. « Here they are » whispers the Iscariot.

Jesus gets up at once and goes towards them. He is so stately that the little group move back for a moment. But Jesus' greeting reassures them: « May peace be with you. What do you want? »

The cowards then think that they can dare everything and presumptuously they enjoin: « In the name of the Holy Law we order You to leave this place, for You are a disturber of consciences, a transgressor of the Law, a corrupter of the peaceful towns in Judaea. Are You not afraid of the punishment of Heaven, You ape of the Just One who baptizes at the Jordan, You protector of prostitutes? Away from the holy land of Judaea! That Your breath may not arrive inside the walls of the holy City. »

« I am not doing anything wrong. I teach as a rabbi, I cure as a thaumaturge, I cast out demons as an exorciser. Such categories exist also in Judaea. And God, Who wants them, has them respected and venerated by you. I am not asking for veneration. I only ask to be allowed to do good to those who suffer from diseases in their bodies, their minds or their souls. Why do you forbid Me? »

« You are possessed. Go away. »

« An insult is not a reply. I asked you why you forbid Me, whilst you allow others. »

« Because You are possessed and You cast out demons and work miracles with the help of demons. »

« And what about your exorcisers? With whose help do they do it? »

« Through their holy lives. You are a sinner. And to increase Your power, you make use of prostitutes, because the possession of the diabolic strength increases in the union. Our holiness has purified the area of Your accomplice. But we will not allow You to stay here, so that You may not attract other women. »

« But is this house yours? » asks Peter who has gone near the Master with a rather menacing look.

« It is not our house. But the whole of Judaea and the whole of Israel are in the holy hands of the pure ones in Israel. »

« And that's you, presumably! » concludes the Iscariot, who has also come to the door, and then sneers at them. He also asks: « And where is your other friend? Is he still trembling? You disgraceful lot, go away! At once. Otherwise I will make you feel sorry for…»

« Be silent, Judas. And you, Peter, go back to your place. Listen, Pharisees and Scribes. For your own good, for the sake of your souls, I beg you not to fight the Word of God. Come to Me. I do not hate you. I understand your mentality and I feel sorry for it. But I want to lead you to a new, holy mentality, capable of sanctifying you and of giving Heaven to you. Do you think that I have come to fight you? Oh! no! I have come to save you. That is why I came. I take you upon My heart. I ask you to love and understand. Since you are the wisest men in Israel, you must understand the truth better than anybody else. Be souls, not only bodies. Shall I kneel down and beg you on My knees? The stake, your souls, is such that I would put Myself under your feet to conquer them for Heaven, because I am sure that the Father would not consider My humiliation a mistake. Say one word to Me who am waiting! »

« Be cursed, that is what we say. »

« All right. It has been said. You may go. I will go, too. » And Jesus turns His back on them and goes back to His seat. He lays His head on the table and weeps.

Bartholomew closes the door so that none of the cruel people who insulted Him, and who are now going away threatening and cursing Christ, may see His tears. There is a long silence then James of Alphaeus caresses Jesus' head and says: « Do not weep. We love You, also on their behalf. »

Jesus looks up and says: « I am not weeping over Myself. I am weeping over them, as they are killing themselves, deaf as they are to every invitation. »

« What shall we do now? » asks the other James.

« We will go to Galilee. We will leave tomorrow morning. »

« Not today, Lord? »

« No. I must say goodbye to the good people here. And you will come with Me. »

138. A New Disciple. Departure for Galilee.

16th April 1945.

« My Lord, I have done nothing but my duty towards God, towards my master and towards honesty of conscience. I watched that woman while she was my guest and I always found her to be honest. She may have been a sinner. But she is not now. Why should I investigate on a past which she has repented and for which she has atoned? My sons are handsome young men. But she has never shown her face, which is really beautiful, neither did she let them hear her voice. I can say that I heard the tone of her silver voice when she shouted because she had been wounded. Otherwise, the little she asked for behind her veil, and she always asked me or my wife, was whispered in such a low voice that we could hardly understand her. You can see how prudent she was, too. When she was afraid that her presence might be harmful to anyone, she went away… I had promised to defend her and to help her. But she did not avail herself of the opportunity. No. A fallen woman does not behave like that! I will pray for her, as she asked me, also without this souvenir. Keep it, Master. Give it in alms, for her good. If it is given by You, it will obtain peace for her. »

The steward speaks respectfully to Jesus. He is a stout handsome man with an honest countenance. Behind him there are six hefty young men, all like their father, six truly intelligent faces, and there is also his wife, a little gentle slender woman, who is listening to her husband as if he were a god, continuously nodding assent.

Jesus takes the gold bracelet and hands it to Peter saying: « It is for the poor. » He then addresses the steward: « Not everybody in Israel is as upright as you are. You are wise because you can tell good from evil and you follow uprighteousness without counting the cost, whether it is profitable to do so from a human point of view. In the name of the Eternal Father I bless you, your children, your wife and your house. Persevere in such spiritual proclivity and the Lord will always be with you and you will have eternal life. I am going away now, but that does not mean that we shall not meet again. I will come back and

you can always come to Me. God grant you peace for what you have done for Me and for that poor creature. »

The steward, his children and wife kneel down and kiss the feet of Jesus, Who after a last blessing gesture goes away with His disciples towards the village.

« And what if those ugly people are still there? » asks Philip.

« It is not possible to forbid people speaking in the streets » replies Judas of Alphaeus.

« No. But we are "anathema" to them. »

« Oh! Never mind! Does it worry you? »

« It only worries me because the Master does not want any violence. And as they know, they take advantage of it » grumbles Peter through his beard. And he certainly thinks that Jesus, Who is speaking to Simon and the Iscariot, does not hear him.

But Jesus does hear and He turns round, partly grave, partly smiling and says: « Do you think that I would be victorious if I used violence? That is a poor human system and serves, only temporarily, for human victories. How long does oppression last? Until by itself it causes reactions in the people held down, which reactions accumulating form greater violence that suppresses the previous oppression. I do not want a temporary kingdom. I want an eternal one: the Kingdom of Heaven. How many times have I told you? How many times will I have to tell you? Will you ever understand? Yes, the moment will come when you will understand. »

« When, my Lord? I am in haste to understand, that I may be less ignorant » says Peter.

« When? When you are ground like corn between the stones of sorrow and repentance. You could, nay, you should understand before. But to do so you should overcome your human nature and let your souls free. But you are not able to make such an effort against yourselves. But you will understand… you will understand. And then you will also understand that I could not make use of violence, a human means, to establish the Kingdom of Heaven: the Kingdom of the spirit. In the meantime do not be afraid. Those men who are worrying you, will not do anything. It is enough for them to have driven Me away. »

« But was it not easier to tell the head of the synagogue to come to the steward's house or to wait for us on the main road? »

« Oh! what a wise man My Thomas is today! Of course it was not easy. Or rather: it was easier but not fair. He showed heroism for Me and was abused in his house because of Me. It is just that I should go to his house to comfort him. »

Thomas shrugs his shoulders and speaks no more.

Here is the village. A large very rural one, with houses in the orchards which are all bare at present and there are many sheepfolds. It must be a suitable place for sheep-rearing, because there are sheep bleating everywhere, coming from or going to the pastures on the plain. There is the usual crossroad, with the square and the fountain in the centre. The house of the head of the synagogue is there. The door is opened by an elderly woman, whose face is clearly marked by tears. And yet, when she sees the Lord, she has a reaction of joy and she prostrates herself blessing.

« Stand up, mother. I have come to say goodbye to you. Where is your son? »

« He is in there… » and she points to a room at the end of the house. « Have You come to console him? I have not been able… »

« So, is he depressed? Is he sorry he defended Me? »

« No, Lord. But he has a scruple. But he will tell You. I will call him. »

« No. I will go. You wait here. Let us go, woman. » Jesus walks across the hall, only a few yards long, He pushes the door and goes into the room, He goes slowly towards a man who is sitting, bent towards the floor, engrossed in anguished meditation.

« Peace to you, Timotheus. »

« What! You! Lord! »

« Yes, it is I. Why are you so sad? »

« Lord… I… They told me that I have sinned. They told me that I am anathema. I examine myself but I do not appear to be so. But they are the holy ones in Israel and I am a poor head of the synagogue. They are certainly right. And now I dare not look up at the angry face of God. And I have such need in this hour! I was serving Him with true love and I was endeavoring to make Him known. I

will now be deprived of that opportunity, because the Sanhedrin will certainly curse me. »

« But what is your trouble? That you are no longer the head of the synagogue, or that it is no longer possible for you to speak of God? »

« It is the latter that afflicts me, Master! I think that You mean whether I am sorry for not being the head of the synagogue because of the benefit and honor one gets from it. I do not care for that. I have only my mother, who was born at Aera where she has a little house. She has a roof there and what to live on. I… am young. I will work. But I will never dare speak of God again, for I have sinned. »

« Why have you sinned? »

« They say that I am an accomplice of… Lord! Don't make me speak!… »

« No. I will speak. No, I will not mention it either. But you and I know their charges and we know that they are not true. Therefore you have not sinned. I am telling you. »

« Then, I can still look up at the Almighty? Can I… »

« What, son? » Jesus is extremely kind when he bends over the man, who has suddenly stopped speaking as if he were frightened. « What? My Father is anxious that you should look at Him, He wants you to look at Him. And I want your heart and your thoughts. Yes, the Sanhedrin will strike you. I am stretching out My arms to you and I say: “Come.” Do you want to be My disciple? I see in you what is necessary to be a worker for the eternal Master. Come to My vineyard… »

« Do You really mean that, Master? Mother… did you hear? I am happy, mother! I… bless that suffering because it gives me this joy. Oh! Let us make merry, mother. I will go with the Master, and you will go back to your house. I will come at once, my Lord, Who have banished all my fears, my sorrow and my fear of God. »

« No. You will wait the word of the Sanhedrin, with a peaceful heart, without hatred. Stay in your position as long as you are left in your place. You will then reach Me at Nazareth or Capernaum. Goodbye. Peace be with you and with your mother. »

« Are You not staying in my house? »

« No. I will come to your mother's house. »

« It is not a very loyal village. »

« I will teach them to be faithful. Goodbye, mother. Are you happy now? » Jesus caresses her, as He normally does with elderly women whom, I notice, he calls mother.

« I am happy, Lord. I brought up a son for the Lord. The Lord now takes him from me to be the servant of his Messiah. Blessed be the Lord. And blessed be You, Who are His Messiah. Blessed be the hour You came here. Blessed be my offspring who has been called to Your service. »

« Blessed be the mother who is as holy as Anna of Elkanah. Peace be with you. »

Jesus goes out followed by mother and son. He joins His disciples, says goodbye once again and starts His return journey towards Galilee.

139. On the Mountains near Emmaus.

17th April 1945.

Jesus is with His disciples in a very mountainous place. It is a bad and rough road and the elderly apostles find progress arduous. The younger ones, on the other hand, are very cheerful around Jesus and they climb nimbly, talking to one another.

The two cousins, the sons of Zebedee and Andrew are elated at the idea of going back to Galilee, and their joy is such that it enthralls also the Iscariot, who for some time has been in an excellent frame of mind. He simply says: « Master, at Passover, when we come to the Temple, will You come back to Kerioth? My mother is always hoping to see You. She sent me word. And also the people of the village… »

« Certainly. Now, even if we wanted to go, the season is too inhospitable to go

along those impassable roads. See how troublesome it is even here. And without that compulsion, I would not have set out on this journey… But we could not stay any longer… » Jesus becomes silent and pensive.

« And later, I mean for Passover, will we be able to come? I would like to show Your grotto to James and Andrew » says John.

« Are you forgetting how much Bethlehem loves us? » asks the Iscariot. « Nay, how much they love the Master. »

« No. But I could go with James and Andrew. Jesus could stay at Juttah or in your house… »

« Yes, I like that. Will You come, Master? They will go to Bethlehem, and You will stay with me at Kerioth, You have never been all alone with me… and I am so anxious to have You all to myself… »

« Are you jealous? Do you not know that I love you all exactly the same? Do you not think that I am with all of you, also when I seem to be far away? »

« I know that You love us. If You did not love us, You would have to be much more severe, at least with me. I believe that Your spirit is always watching over us. But we are not only spirit. There is man, with the love of man, his desires, his regrets. Jesus, I know that I am not the one who makes You most happy. But I believe that You know how eager I am to please You and how I regret all the hours that I lose You through my misery… »

« No, Judas. I do not lose you. I am closer to you than to the others just because I know who you are. »

« What am I, my Lord? Tell me. Help me to understand what I am. I do not understand myself. I seem to be a woman who is troubled by whims caused by her pregnancy. I desire both holy things and depraved things. Why? What am I? » Jesus looks at him with an inscrutable expression. He is sad, but His sadness is mingled with pity, with so much pity. He looks like a doctor who observes the state of a patient and knows that he cannot recover his health… But He does not speak.

« Tell me, Master. Your opinion will be the least harsh for poor Judas. In any case… we are all brothers. It does not matter if they know of what I am made. On the contrary, if they hear Your opinion on me, they will amend their own and will help me. Won't you? »

The others are embarrassed and do not know what to say. They look at their companion, they look at Jesus.

Jesus draws the Iscariot near Himself, to the place where His cousin James was before, and says: « You are only confused. You have all the best elements, but they are not well settled, and the slightest breeze upsets them. A short while ago we passed through that gorge and we were shown the damage caused by the water, the land and the trees to the poor houses of the little village there. Water, land and trees are useful and blessed things, are they not? And yet they became a curse there. Why? Because the water of the torrent did not have a fixed course, but, also because of the indolence of man, it had dug various beds, according to its whims. That was all right as long as there were no storms. The clear water that irrigated the mountain in so many tiny streams looked like a jeweller's work, like necklaces of diamonds or emeralds, according to whether they reflected the light or the shade of the forests. And man enjoyed them, because the murmuring streams were useful to his fields. Also the plants were beautiful; they had been planted by playful winds, with bizarre foliage and branches and had left wide glades open to sunshine. Also the soft soil was beautiful, it had been deposited by, who knows which remote floods between the undulations of the mountain and was so fertile for cultivations. But when the storms came a month ago, the freakish streams joined together and overflowed in an irregular way along a different course, sweeping away the plants and dragging the soil down to the valley. If the water had been maintained in an orderly way, if the trees had been grouped together in woods, if the soil had been supported methodically by a suitable protection, the three good elements, wood, water and soil would not have become the ruin and death of that little village. You have intelligence, boldness, education, readiness, fine appearance and so many other attributes. But they are disorganised within you and you leave them as they are. See: you must work patiently and constantly to put your qualities in order, as order is also strength, so that when the storm of temptation comes, the good that is within you may not become an evil for yourself and others. »

« You are right, Master. Now and again I get upset by a storm and everything becomes ruffled. And You say that I could… »

« Your will is everything, Judas. »

« But there are such strong temptations… We hide ourselves up because we are

afraid that the world might read them on our faces. »

« And that is the mistake! That is exactly the moment when you should not shut yourself up. But you ought to look for the world, for the world of good people, to be helped by them. A fever is abated also by contact with the peace of good people. And you ought to look also for the world of those who criticise you, because, owing to the pride which urges us to hide ourselves so that our tempted souls may not be “read”, that would serve as a reaction to our moral weakness. And you would not fall. »

« You went into the desert… »

« Because I could do it. But woe to those who are alone, unless in their solitude they are a multitude against a multitude. »

« How? I don't understand. »

« A multitude of virtues against a multitude of temptations. When virtue is feeble, one must do as this ivy, get hold of the branches of strong trees, to climb up. »

« Thank You, Master. I will cling to You and to my companions. But you must all help me. You are all better than I am. »

« It was the frugal honest surrounding where we were brought up, that was better, my friend. But now you are with us and we love you. You will see… I don't want to criticise Judaea, but believe me, in Galilee, at least in our villages, there is less wealth and less corruption. Tiberias, Magdala and other places of pleasure, are not far from corruption. But we live with “our” simple souls, which may be also coarse, if you wish so, but are active and holily happy with what has been granted to us by God » says James of Alphaeus.

« But, don't you know, James, that Judas' mother is a holy woman? Her goodness in written all over her face » objects John.

Judas of Kerioth smiles happily at the praise, and he smiles even more when Jesus confirms: « You are right, John. She is a holy creature. »

« Eh! It was my father's dream to make me a great man of the world and he took me away too early and too deeply from my mother… »

« What have you got to say that you are always speaking? » asks Peter from far away. « Stop! Wait for us! It is not fair that you should go on like that without considering that my legs are so short. » They stop until the other group join them.

« Ah! My little boat, how I love you! I have to work here like a slave… What were you talking about? »

« We were saying what is necessary to be good » replies Jesus.

« And are You not telling me, Master? »

« Of course: order, patience, perseverance, humility, charity… I told you many times! »

« Not order. What has it to do with it? »

« Disorder is never a good quality. I have just explained that to your companions. They will tell you. And I mentioned it first, whereas I mentioned charity last, because they are the two extremities of the straight line of perfection. Now you know that a straight line on a plane has neither beginning nor end. Each extremity can be either the beginning or the end, whereas in the case of a spiral, or any other design which is not enclosed in itself, there is always a beginning and an end. Holiness is linear, simple, perfect and has but two extremities, like a straight line. »

« It is easy to draw a straight line… »

« Do you think so? You are wrong. In a drawing, even if it is a complicated one, some imperfections may not be noticed. But an error is noticed at once in a straight line: either in inclination or uncertainty. Joseph, when he taught me the trade, insisted a great deal that the boards should be straight and quite rightly he used to say: “See, son? A small imperfection may not be seen in a decoration or in a turned work, because the eye, unless it is very experienced, if it watches one point, does not see another. But if a board is not as straight as it should be, even the most simple work will not be satisfactory, such as a poor table for a peasant. It will be on a slant or it will wobble. It is only good for the fire.” We can say the same applies to souls. If we do not want to be good but for the eternal fire, that is, if we want to conquer Heaven, we must be perfect like a board which is planed and squared properly. Who starts his spiritual work in an unplanned manner, starting from useless things, jumping from one thing to another, like a restless bird, will end up by not being able to join the various parts of his work.

They will not fit in. Therefore, order and charity. Then, holding those two extremities firm in two vices, so that they may not move, you can work at all the rest, decorations or carving, whatever it may be. Have you understood? »

« Yes, I have. » Peter endures his lesson in silence and suddenly concludes: « So my brother is more clever than I am. He is really tidy. One step after the other, calm and quiet. He does not seem to be moving, instead… I would like to do a lot of things quickly. And I do nothing. Who will help me? »

« Your good will. Do not be afraid, Peter. You do things, too. You are making yourself. »

« What about me? »

« You, too, Philip. »

« And what about me? I do not seem to be good for anything. »

« No, Thomas. You work, too. You all work. You are wild trees, but the grafts will slowly and certainly change you and you are My joy. »

« There You are. We are sad and You console us. We are weak, and You fortify us. We are afraid and You encourage us. You are always ready with advice and comfort for everybody and for every case. How can You be always ready and so good, Master? »

« My friends, that is why I came, knowing what I was going to find and what I had to do. If one has no illusions, one has no disappointments and thus one does not lose enthusiasm. And one proceeds. Remember that when you, too, will have to work at the animal man to make the spiritual man. »

140. In the House of Cleopas, the Head of the Synagogue.

18th April 1945.

John and his brother knock at a door in a village. I recognise the house which the two disciples of Emmaus entered With Christ after His resurrection. When the door is opened, they go in and speak to someone I do not see. They come out and walk along a street and join Jesus, Who is standing with the others in a lonely place.

« He is at home, Master. And he is really happy that You have come. He said to us: “Go and tell Him that my house is at His disposal. I am coming, too.” »

« Let us go, then. »

They walk for a little while and then meet the old head of the synagogue Cleopas, whom we saw at the Clear Water. They bow to one another, then the old man, who looks like a patriarch, kneels down in veneration. Some citizens, who see him, draw near curiously.

The old man stands up and says: « Here is the promised Messiah. Remember this day, o citizens of Emmaus. »

Some people watch with a completely human curiosity, some instead look with religious respect. Two men elbow their way through the crowd and say: « Peace to You, Rabbi. We were there, too, on that day. »

« Peace to you all. I have come as your head of the synagogue asked Me. »

« Will You work miracles also here? »

« If there are children of God who believe and need a miracle, I will certainly work it. »

The head of the synagogue says: « Those who wish to hear the Master, should come to the synagogue. Also those who have sick people. Can I say that, Master? »

« Yes, you can. After the sixth hour I shall be entirely at your disposal. Now I am entirely of good Cleopas. » And followed by a train of people He walks beside the old man to his house.

« Here is my son, Master. And this is my wife. And this is the wife of my son and her little children. I am sorry that my other son is in Jerusalem, with the father-in-law of my son Cleopas, and with another poor man from here… But I will tell You. Come in, my Lord, with Your disciples. »

They go in and are refreshed in the usual Jewish custom. They then sit near the fire burning in a large fireplace, because it is a cold damp day.

« We will soon be sitting at the table. I have invited the notables of the place. It is a great feast, today. They do not all believe in You. But they are not enemies either. They are only inquirers… They would like to believe. But we have been disappointed too often, lately, about the Messiah. People are distrustful. A word from the Temple would suffice to dispel all doubts. But the Temple… I think that if people see You and hear You, in a simple way, a lot can be done in that direction. I would like to give You some real friends. »

« You are one. »

« I am a poor old man. If I were younger, I would follow You. But old age is a burden. »

« You already serve Me by believing. You preach Me with your faith. Be good, Cleopas. I will not forget you in the hour of Redemption. »

« Here is Simon with Hermas. They are arriving » informs the son of the head of the synagogue.

They all stand up while two middle-aged gentlemanlike men come in.

« This is Simon and this is Hermas. They are true Israelites. But their souls are genuine. »

« God will reveal Himself to their souls. May in the meantime peace descend upon them. Without peace one cannot hear God. »

« It is also stated in the book of the Kings speaking of Elijah. »

« Are these Your disciples? » asks the one named Simon.

« Yes, they are. »

« They are of every age and from every place. And are You Galilean? »

« From Nazareth. But I was born in Bethlehem at the time of the census. »

« You are a Bethlehemite, then. It confirms Your figure. »

« It is a benign confirmation, for human weakness. But the confirmation is in the supernatural. »

« You mean, in Your works » says Hermas.

« In them and in the words that the Spirit puts on My lips. »

« They have been repeated to me by those who heard them. Your wisdom is really great. And are You going to found Your Kingdom on it? »

« A king must have subjects who know the laws of his kingdom. »

« But all Your laws are spiritual! »

« You are right, Hermas. They are all spiritual. I will have a spiritual kingdom. I have therefore a spiritual code. »

« What about the reconstruction of Israel then? »

« Do not fall into the common error of understanding the name Israel for what its human meaning is. Israel means “People of God”. I will rebuild the true freedom and power of this people of God and I will rebuild it by giving back to Heaven the souls which have been redeemed and made wise of the eternal truth. »

« Please, let us sit at the table » says Cleopas who sits with Jesus at the centre of the table. Hermas is on Jesus' right and Simon is next to Cleopas, then the son of the head of the synagogue and the disciples.

Jesus, at the request of the landlord, makes the offering and blesses and the meal starts.

« Have You come to this area? » asks Hermas.

« No, I am going to Galilee. I will pass here later. »

« What? Are You leaving the Clear Water? »

« Yes, Cleopas. »

« Crowds of people used to come there, notwithstanding it was winter. Why disappoint them? »

« Not I. That is what the pure ones of Israel want. »

« What? Why? What harm were You doing? Palestine has many rabbis who speak where they wish. Why are You not allowed to do so? »

« Do not investigate, Cleopas. You are old and wise. Do not put the poison of

bitter knowledge into your heart. »

« Perhaps You were preaching a new doctrine, which through an error of evaluation, was considered dangerous by the Scribes and Pharisees? What we know of You does not seem… is that right Simon? Perhaps we do not know everything. According to You, in what does the Doctrine consist? » asks Hermas.

« In the exact knowledge of the Decalogue. In love and mercy. Love and mercy, this breath and this blood of God, are the rule of My behaviour and of My Doctrine. And I practise it in all my daily difficult situations. »

« But that is not a fault! It is goodness. »

« It is considered a sin by the Scribes and Pharisees. But I cannot misrepresent My mission, neither can I disobey God Who sent Me as "Mercy" on to the earth. The time of full Mercy has come after centuries of Justice. Justice is the sister of Mercy. They were born of the same womb; but whereas before Justice was stronger and the other only mitigated its rigours – because God cannot be forbidden to love – now Mercy is the queen and Justice rejoices, because it was so grieved at having to punish! If you consider the situation properly, you will easily see that they always existed since Man compelled God to be severe. The fact that mankind still exists is the proof of what I say. Adam's very punishment is blended with mercy. God could have burnt them to ashes in their sin. He granted them expiation. And he made a Woman, the cause of good, shine in the eyes of the woman, the cause of all evil, depressed for being the cause of evil. And He granted both of them children and the knowledge of existence. To Cain, the killer, together with justice He granted the mark, which was mercy, so that he might not be killed. And He granted Noah to mankind corrupted, that he might save man in the ark and He then promised the eternal covenant of peace. No more fierce deluges. Justice was subdued by Mercy. Do you wish to go back through Sacred History with Me as far as My moment? You will see greater and greater waves of love follow one upon the other. Now the sea of God is full and it lifts you, o mankind, upon its clear tranquil water, it lifts you cleansed and beautiful up to Heaven, and says to you: "I hand you back to my Father." »

The three men are absorbed in the astonishment of so much loving light. Then Cleopas sighs: « It is so. But You are the only one like that! But what will happen to Joseph? Should they have already listened to him? Will they have listened to him? »

Nobody replies.

Cleopas addresses Jesus: « Master, a man of Emmaus has fallen into a grave sin. His father, a long time ago, repudiated his wife, who went to Antioch and settled there with her brother, who owned an emporium. He had never met that woman, who, for reasons which I am not investigating, was repudiated a few months after she had been married. He had been told nothing about her, because her name had of course been banished from that house. When he grew into a man and he inherited his father's wealth and business, he decided to get married and having met a woman at Joppa, who owned a rich emporium he married her. Now I do not know how, but it became common knowledge that that woman was the daughter of his father's first wife. It was therefore a grave sin, although, from my point a view, the paternity of the woman is most uncertain. Joseph, who was condemned, all at once lost his peace both as a believer and as a husband. And although he most regretfully repudiated his wife, perhaps his sister, who was so grieved that she became feverish and died, he has not been forgiven. In all conscience I say that, if he had had no enemies eager for his wealth, he would not have been hit so hard. What would You do? »

« It is a very grave case, Cleopas. Why did you not speak to Me about it, when you came to see Me? »

« I did not want to keep You away from here… »

« Oh! But I am not driven away by such things! Now listen. From a material point of view, there is an incest. And consequently a punishment. But a fault is a moral sin, only when there is a will to commit a sin. Did the man consciously commit incest? You say no. Well, where is the sin? I mean, his guilt in wanting to commit a sin? There is still to consider the fault of a common life with the daughter of his father. But you say that it is uncertain whether she was such. And even if she were, the fault ended when their common life ended. And it certainly ended both because of the repudiation and of her subsequent death. I therefore say that the man should be forgiven his seeming sin. And I say that since there is no conviction for the royal incest, which persists and is known to the whole world, people should feel pity for this sad case, the origin of which goes back to the right of repudiation granted by Moses to avoid more evils, if not graver ones. I do not approve of that right, because man and wife, whether they are married happily or unhappily, should live together, without any repudiation, which encourages adultery and situations like the present one. And

further, I would repeat, if you are going to be severe, you must be equally so with everybody. First of all with yourselves and then with the mighty ones. But as far as I know, with the exception of the Baptist, no one has raised his voice against the royal sin. Are those who condemn, immune from similar or worse sins, or does their name or their power cast a veil over them, as their pompous mantles protect their bodies, which are often unhealthy because of their vices? »

« You are right, Master. It is so. But, in short, who are You?… » ask together the two friends of the head of the synagogue.

Jesus has no time to reply because the door opens and Simon, the father-in-law of Cleopas junior comes in.

« You are welcome. What is the news? »

They are all so curious that no one thinks of the Master any more…

« Well… he has been condemned. They would not even accept the offer of the sacrifice. Joseph has been cut off from Israel. »

« Where is he? »

« Out there. He is weeping. I have tried to speak to the most powerful ones. But they rejected me as if I were a leper. Now… But… That man is ruined. Both his wealth and his soul. What can he do? »

Jesus stands up and goes towards the door, without saying one word.

Old Cleopas thinks that He has taken offence for being neglected and says: « Oh! forgive me, Master! But I am so grieved that my mind is upset. Please, stay here! »

« I will stay, Cleopas. I am only going to see that poor man. Come, if you wish, with Me. » Jesus goes out into the hall.

There is a strip of ground in front of the house, with some small flower-beds, and beyond it there is the road. There is a man lying on the threshold. Jesus goes near him with His arms stretched out. Behind Him are all the others who are anxious to see.

« Joseph, has no one forgiven you? » Jesus speaks most kindly. The man starts on hearing a new voice which sounds so kind after the many voices that condemned him. He looks up full of amazement.

« Joseph, has no one forgiven you? » asks Jesus once again and He bends to take the hands of the man, trying to lift him up.

« Who are You? » asks the unhappy fellow.

« I am Mercy and Peace. »

« There is no more mercy or peace for me. »

« There is always some in the bosom of God. That bosom is full of them, particularly for unhappy children. »

« But my sin is such that I am separated from God. You are certainly good, but leave me, that You may not get contaminated. »

« I will not leave you. I want to give you peace. »

« But I am… Who are You? »

« I told you: Mercy and Peace. I am the Saviour, I am Jesus. Stand up. I can do what I want. In the name of God I absolve you from your unintentional contamination. The other evil does not exist. I am the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world. All judgement has been given to Me by the Eternal Father. Who believes in My word will have eternal life. Come, poor child of Israel. Refresh your tired body and fortify your depressed spirit. I will forgive much graver sins. No. The desperation of hearts will not come from Me! I am the spotless Lamb, but I do not run away from wounded sheep, lest I should get contaminated. On the contrary I look for them and take them with Me. Too many people have been completely ruined through an excessive and also unfair sternness of judgement. Woe to those who lead a spirit to desperation because of their intolerant strictures! They do not act in the interests of God, but for Satan's. Now I have seen a prostitute, who was anxious to redeem herself, driven away from the Redeemer, I have seen the head of a synagogue persecuted because he was a just man. I now see a man struck for an unintentional fault. I see too many things being accomplished where vice and falsehood are thriving. And like a wall that is raised by placing one brick on top of another and thus forms a barrier, so the things I have seen, and I have already seen too many in one year, are building up a wall of hardness between Me and them. Woe to them when it will be completely built with the materials supplied by them! Take this, eat and drink. You are exhausted. Then, tomorrow you will come to Me. Do not be afraid. When You are back in a peaceful frame of mind, you will be free to

decide on your future. You are not able now and it would be dangerous to let you do it. »

Jesus has taken the man back into the dining room and has forced him to sit in His place. He then serves him and addressing Hermas and Simon He says: « That is My Doctrine. That and nothing else. And I do not only preach it. I practise it. Let those who thirst for Truth and Love come to Me. »

Jesus says:

« And My first year of evangelisation ends here. Take note of that. What shall I tell you? I gave it because it was my wish to make it known. But what happens with the Pharisees, happens also with this work. My desire to be loved – to know is to love – is rejected by too many things. And that deeply grieves Me, the Eternal Master imprisoned by you… »